



**Cincinnati Football Week Five Tuesday Press Conference
Sept. 26, 2023**

Opening Statement

"First, I want to say what an incredible atmosphere last Saturday. The fans were awesome. I think whenever Oklahoma was backed up, that as loud as I've heard any stadium, it was incredible. We have to continue to have that whenever we get back to Nippert for home games. It's an incredible home-field advantage for sure. I am disappointed again in the loss. We're going out there to try to compete and win the football game. We were in the game, really all the way up to the end we just didn't get it done. I think particularly not scoring enough points offensively. Touchdowns are one thing we have to get better at. We're moving the football well, top 20 in the country in yards. We are actually moving it, we're running it well, just have to get the points. I am proud of our defense, they held an explosive offense that was averaging 55.7 points to only 20 points, and I said this at the end of the game, they played good enough for us to win. Proud of our secondary, our guys up front. Those guys just did a great job. We had some guys get dinged up in that game, but I think it'll be fine to go this week. They've been practicing, so they should be good to go. I was proud of the way they continued to fight and play through getting dinged up. Ken Willis had his first start and was proud of why he went out and played, very solid game, which will help us as we move throughout the season. Special teams did a great job. [Mason] Fletcher downing the ball, flipping the field inside the 10 which was incredible, it really helped us hold them to 20 points. Carter Brown knocking down that 54-yard field goal was awesome to see. BYU this week, a great football team, lot of respect for them. They've had years of being a really good football team. Short week, having to go out and travel there. We're prepared for that. So far ahead of schedule, as far as the short week goes for game planning. We had practice on Sunday and Monday and today will be our big workday. They are very solid on defense. They made a change last year, a new defensive coordinator that came in this year. They've been very solid on that side of the ball. Offensively, they have a transfer quarterback, [Kedon] Slovis, that we played against last year when he was at Pittsburgh. He is a little bit like Emory [Jones] has been at this his third school and played a lot of ball. Very experienced player, very poised. Throws a really good, catchable ball, probably not going to rattle him with anything that you're doing defensively. A very solid player and really has helped them get off to the start that they're on right now. I think there are just very solid football team. You look at their kicking game, their punter is one of the best in the country. He can and they flip fields that way. They play solid defense, and that's how they've been winning games and done some great things. It's another challenge for us, going on the road, but looking forward to going out and playing these guys. Again, a lot of respect for what they do."

On preparing for the altitude change on a short week.

"I've coached on the West Coast, Wyoming, Montana, Boise, I don't think there's a whole lot we can do with that. We've trained in high-humidity heat here in the last couple of weeks. Offensively, we run 91 plays and 82 plays and our guys are getting a lot of work in. The temperature out there is going to be in the low 70s and probably in the 60s. That will probably help a little bit. It's something that we can't control, can't worry about, our guys just have to go out and prepare. I think the big thing we've talked about this week is getting rest. Really just getting your mind and body rested well this week as much as we can prior to going out there to help us on that Friday night."

On noticing any changes in BYU quarterback Kedon Slovis tape from last year to this year.

"Obviously a different school, but there are some of the same things that he did last year that they are doing again this year. They do have some good skilled wide receivers that have made some great catches. They certainly have some good players that he can get the ball to. I know that they want to get their running game going a little bit more. They're probably disappointed in how they run the football because that'll certainly help Slovis. So, we anticipate them trying to get the running game going this week. That always helps the quarterback for sure. Slovis is a good football player. He's won a ton of football games in his career and again great poise and I think that's the one thing that you will see when we face him."

On improving in high leverage situations

"I think we were really close. We are moving the ball, we are making plays. It seems like we get bogged down or we have a bad play at the wrong time, and the next thing you know, you're off the sticks. Then that's more difficult for the offense and we have to do a great job of staying on the sticks and doing what we do and just executing. When you get down in the red zone everything shrinks and is condensed. You're going to have to win some one-on-one battles. We look at it every week. If you look at an NFL game, or if you look at, Saturday after our game, there's contested throws, there's tight catches, there's guys breaking tackles and running through them to get to the endzone. That's what we have to do because that's how you have to score. There are not many times when you're just free to go run into the endzone. That just doesn't happen. So, we have to continue to do what we're doing and trust the plan that we have and execute."

On the defense

"We work really hard in the offseason, particularly in the spring and in August camp. Every day we're doing turnovers, shortcuts and just harping on it. I think anything you emphasize in practice; you get that back when you start playing games. So, number one thing on defense is to chase the football and if you chase the ball, a lot of times the ball will bounce your way and you'll end up getting it. If you're an aggressive defense, then those things are going to happen. I also think if you look at it, third downs are a big downer to get turnovers on because you're putting pressure on quarterbacks, quarterbacks feel like they have to throw the ball and next thing you know the balls tipped or it's thrown into coverage and some things are going happen. Third down emphasis is really big and defensively trying to get those turnovers as well. I think

more than anything, just being aggressive and playing extremely hard. The ball is going to find you more times than not.”

On Deshawn Pace’s return

“He was (emotionally) hurt last week, and he didn't get opportunity to play but obviously wants to play. He's hurt because we didn't win. I think he has shown great focus so far this week, very determined. I hope he goes out and has a great week and a great game Friday. I think he will. He certainly has the ability to do that and, in play making, he has the ability to go out and make those plays. He's a guy who can cause havoc and we're going to need that this week for sure.”

On the pressure of this game being BYU’s first Big 12 game

“It's exciting. For us, last week, to host our first Big 12 game and all the things that go around that, you try to as a coach, and we try to insulate our guys as much as we can, to say, Listen, it's a football game. It's Oklahoma. They're great. Let's just go out, play well and try not to get caught up in all that. At the end of the day, it's a football game, and we have to go try to win. So that's our look this week. It's different for us. We're traveling, having a short week and playing on a Friday night, there's a lot of things that are different. We try to create the same routine for our guys, and we'll try to do that again this week with the same routine that we normally have. We'll go out and play a great game. As we get into this conference play now, it's going to be a broken record week in and week out because there are lot of really good football teams that we have to play in this league. There are some great coaches, some really great venues that we will play in as well as this one. You have to go execute; you have to be spot on. There's not a whole lot of room for error. You can't make some mistakes here and there and think you're going to win. You have to be spot on. You look at BYU last week. Kansas had a couple of touchdowns, unconventionally, but ended up losing to them. So, we have to play smarter, we have to take care of the ball, all those types of things because those are the things that get you beat.”

On getting splash plays back on track

“Well, they were there last week. We just didn’t finish the plays. You go back and watch the film we had some. We had guys running wide open and a couple of times we were getting pressured and getting hit as the ball was getting thrown. We need a little bit more protection on those particular plays and if you hit those, that's 14 points and now it's a different game. That’s what we talked to our guys about. It comes down to a few plays. You can’t just go ahead and change a whole lot. We're going to keep doing what we're doing because there's plays to be made out there. We have to go execute and make our play. If we have to sit on a five technique and pass pro him, we have to block him. If we have a running back and we have a blitz coming, we have to go hit him right in the mouth and stone him. So, we have to throw the ball down the field so it all works together. That’s where all 11 guys have to be playing as one. You can't have one guy that isn’t doing his job because it's going to throw the whole thing off. We have to make good plays and we have good players. We have to go execute.”

On changing anything with the offensive line rotations

We rotated more up-front last week. We had Trevor [Radosevich] in, we have Phil [Wilder] in. Both of those guys played a lot of snaps and we felt like we needed to do that. Probably should have done that in Miami game just to give some of those guys a break. 91 snaps, that's a lot and, because they're rotating defensive lineman, you know, and if you're an offensive lineman, you're playing the whole time. You tend to get worn down a little bit and I thought we did that better this week. To be able to rotate some of those guys in there, that certainly will help as we move forward in the Big 12. We're always looking at what formations can we get in to help our guys? How can we create ways to get our guys in space to free them up? That's what we're looking at all week and we're trying to do a great job with that. Sometimes when you call it, the defense doesn't cooperate in a particular place, so it's not going match up very well. That's the cat and mouse game that goes on throughout the whole week and then of course on game day. You're always trying to figure out ways to free your guys up in the best possible manner and we have to do a better job with that. There's no question."

On Chamon Metayer

"He's certainly another guy that needs to make plays for us. The tight ends, we've used them every week. Whether it's Payton [Singletary] or Chamon. The thing last week, you go back and look at it that really hurt us. We had 15 third downs, 10 of them were third and eight or more. I didn't know how at the end of the game how many it was, but I knew it was a lot. If you're a third and 10 or more against a [Coach Brent] Venables type of defense, good luck because you're going to see so many different things, so many different pressures and therefore it's very difficult to get those first downs. We have to do a better job with that. What's disappointing is the third short. We ran an inside zone and didn't block and now we're off the field. We have to do a much better job in that regard. Converting and getting those first downs. We had been going on fourth down prior to Saturday. We'll come up at yard short on two of them. We have to continue to execute and get those across the first down."

On the importance of getting first win in the Big 12

"Absolutely. It's our second game in Big 12 and we need to win, we need to get a win desperately. For them [BYU] too. Looking at, we're both 0-1. You want to try to stay on the top of the Big 12. It's a big game in that regard. You want to at least get a win. So, you're sitting there at the 1-1 mark in the Big 12 instead of 0-2. Again, four newcomers, one of us getting a win for sure this week, it'll certainly be exciting and hopefully it's the Bearcats."

On opponents continuing to take advantage of the A and B gap blitz

"No, I don't think so. I think there's times Saturday where we had some good outside zones when they were blitzing us. Guys picked it up great and we were repping 10-12-yard runs, which is awesome. There are other times they guess right, and they hit us and get us. We're prepared for those types of stunts and blitzes. I think number 28 [Danny Stutsman] was the guy last week, the linebacker that was really coming into the A gap and I thought he was a really good player. They got us a few times. He made the stop on the third and two. He sacks Emory [Jones] when we got Xzavier [Henderson] running free wide open. We have to do a better job of solidifying that on the line of scrimmage and obviously not allowing that penetration to get

in the backfield. Here's the thing about defenses, if they're going to have some success with that, then we're going to keep seeing it. I tell our guys if you don't want to see it then you have to stone it, and if they do, they're probably not going to call it anymore. So, we have to do a better job of stoning those type pressures."

On the amount of blitz play calls

"Yeah, you can't. It's hard to dial up a blitz as fast as they're going because what you don't want to do is call a blitz and then somebody didn't see it or starts the wrong way and all of a sudden you have a guy running free for a touchdown. What we wanted to do last week was keep everything in front of us and not give up those big plays. We did a great job with that, and now they have to drive the ball. We saw what happened, sometimes along the way, the offense will screw up and they did that. We forced several punts for them. They hit the one ball down the sideline, and I thought Justin [Harris] was in great shape on that, when he's right there and running, toe to toe with him and made a great play on it. But overall, it'd be hard to stump them like you'd like to do. If they were more conventional, it'd be easier, but that wasn't the case."

On Emory Jones taking responsibility for the loss

"He's a mature guy, he gets it. He's played a bunch of ball. The thing is as a quarterback, you have to make every play, you have to. If you don't make it, then you're going to have to punt or you're going to give the ball back to them. Those third downs where you put the ball in the hands of the quarterback, he has to see it, make the proper reading, and make the throw. If he doesn't, then it's going to be bad news for us, because we're going to either punt the football or have to go for it on fourth down. Here's the other thing, there's times in the game where you're going to have a guy running free, you have to throw one catch, if you don't do that, then you just lost an opportunity. I was thinking back to the Miami game right before halftime when he overthrows [Dee] Wiggins. That's a great opportunity right there. He has a wide open, you got to hit him, and he knows that. You don't get those over, and as a quarterback, you have to be able to make those plays. We put a lot of pressure on our quarterbacks in practice to make every single throw perfect. I thought yesterday had a great day, he threw the ball awesome. He knows what he has to do. There's a fine line from pressing too much and being able to cut loose and play. That comes from confidence in a game plan and confidence in your ability to make it happen. I think yesterday, he cut loose and had a great day and hopefully he'll have another one today. Go look at any quarterback in the league and in college that they're playing well, then use an offensive plan well."