

Stanford University Football

Media Conference

Saturday, September 3, 2022
Stanford, California, USA

Coach David Shaw

Postgame Media Conference



Stanford 41, Colgate 10

DAVID SHAW: So played hard tonight. I know it's tough for Colgate traveling all this way. They fought like crazy. Especially in that first half. They were opportunistic, took advantage of some of our miscues, kept the game close.

Had a chance to really tie it or take the lead a couple times. So a lot of credit to them for coming out all this way and fighting hard.

We were talking about a lot this off-season, training camp in particular, really talking about our standards. First and foremost, of course, we want to win, but we're chasing our standards.

I thought in some ways we were close to our standards tonight in certain areas -- being physical, running the ball. Some areas I thought we weren't. Special teams-wise, it was well below our standard.

I thought defensively we played in stretches extremely well, and some stretches we gave up a little bit too much. But we got stingy in the red zone, which is huge. If we can keep people out of the end zone, we'll have a good opportunity to win football games.

Got to get our return game going. With the guys we have, we made some bad errors today. We need to be a better return football team.

Offensively, like I said, up front is a lot of what we're looking for -- physical, played hard, had some nice runs; great way to open the game up. Big run by E.J. Nice job by the offensive line. I thought our quarterback played well. I think there's another level for him as well.

It's not about statistics. I think there's about four or five plays he'd love to have back.

Like I said, we're not just going to pat ourselves on the back. We're happy to win, but at the same time, we have higher standards than our execution was today.

That being said, proud of how we bounced back from some critical errors. E.J. fumbled and came back and played a great game. Casey Filkins messed one up, came back and played a great game. We missed a couple other things, guys came back.

Stephen Herron missed a sack, came back and got a big one at the end.

We didn't play perfectly, but I love the fight. I love the fact that we came back and we fought back after making some errors early on, and ended up making some nice plays.

Great to see some other guys get out there, make big time plays. Actually, let me say this: A shout out to our guys who were injured last year that fought hard to come back. Our training staff, our doctors, rehab specialists did a really good job in ramping these guys up to come back and be healthy.

To see Brycen Tremayne go out there and be Brycen Tremayne again, making those big time catches. We saw Michael Wilson come back last year, but now come back and see him faster and stronger than he was last year after injury.

See John Humphreys, who battled injuries at the end of last year, come back and make some big plays tonight as well.

We mentioned Jonathan McGill, seeing him fly around the field again.

Like I said, this is the healthiest team that we've had probably in three years. A lot of work went into it. Good to see those guys go round and go out there and fly around today.

Open it up for questions.

Q. What will you emphasize the most in practice? The great offensive play by the quarterback, 300 yards passing, 100 yards rushing for E.J., or the four or three fumbles -- four fumbles, four turnovers. Which one will



you emphasize more coming up in practice?

DAVID SHAW: Yeah, the hard part is both. We emphasize so many things. We talked about taking care of the football. We did not do that tonight.

But we talked about running the ball with efficiency and having the ability to be explosive, and we did that.

We talked about passing the ball and being efficient with the ability to be explosive, and we had that.

So those are a lot of the ways we wanted to play, but we can't turn the ball over. We can't give them short fields. We certainly can't give them touchdowns in special teams, which we did tonight.

We're going to continue to emphasize ball security, taking care of the ball, and we've got a couple of nice drills for the guys that we haven't done in a while to remind them how important that thing is.

But at the same time, there's some positives from tonight too, a lot of real good positives. Guys went out there and played fast. Didn't have a lot of errors on the defensive side. A couple of missed tackles, a couple of mistakes that will happen in Game 1.

For a veteran crew, a lot of old guys out there, I thought they played well together, played smart. It was great communication. We can only get better from here.

Q. What was going through your mind on that first play? I mean, good start to the game, and what did you think of E.J.'s performance tonight?

DAVID SHAW: I said it over the headset. That's how you start the season. Old school, single back power play, linebackers overran it. And we talk so much about don't take the back side A gap. You don't choose to go back there.

The defense tells you to go back there. And E.J.'s been really good all camp, because he hit a big one in spring and then went back there a couple times when it wasn't time to go back there.

This time he was patient. He felt all the guys' flow. He cut the back side. And like we've known about E.J., he's big, he's strong, he's physical, but he's got that finishing speed as well.

So great way to start the season, and at the same time, he can also play much, much better.

Q. Just your thoughts on what for some of those special teams errors, muffed punts. Was that just first game nerves, jitters? Any more to it than that?

DAVID SHAW: Yeah, I don't know if it was nerves. The guys that we put back there have been back there. Casey Filkins was leading the conference in punt returns when he got hurt, I think in second place.

Bryce Farrell played a lot of football for us the last couple years. Made some big plays, big play against UCLA last year, catch and run, had a couple of nice punt returns last year.

So it wasn't anxiety or nerves or anything. Just poor execution, decision-making. Reading the ball in the stadium is a little bit different than reading on the practice field. We had a couple of bad jumps off the ball, which kind of makes you more uncertain.

Casey's play, he makes the poison call to get everybody away from the ball, and if it gets a friendly bounce, you can still take it. That was not a friendly bounce. He should have gotten out of the way. Tried to field it and didn't get it.

I think we learned some lessons there. I think we have to nail down our technique and our decision-making, but I have a lot of confidence those guys will bounce back and play better next week.

Q. Two things if I can. First, your thoughts on the run defense, initial impressions on how things went in that department tonight?

DAVID SHAW: I thought very well. It's tough when they involve the quarterback so many times. As a runner, you have to account for the guy he's faking to but account for the quarterback also.

In particular, a big physical kid that's rushed for a lot of yards in his career. Last couple games last year was like 150, 175 yards rushing. Big, physical kid, and you saw him drag a couple of guys for some extra yardage.

So I thought it was good that we missed a couple of tackles. Not that many, but we missed a couple. I was going to stress that. I thought we ran to the ball. I thought guys came up and were physical.

I thought it was a good start. Not perfect yet, but a good start for us.

Q. Second thing, we got a little bit of a glimpse of Caleb Robinson and Brendon Barrow, and each of them seemed to have relatively nice runs, especially in



the fourth quarter. Brief glimpse, but what did you see from those guys tonight?

DAVID SHAW: What we've seen all training camp. These guys are young, but they're ready. Brendon Barrow sadly missed the year last year. Real excited about him. He's got so much speed and explosion. When we had the opportunity to get him in the game, really wanted to get him in.

Caleb Robinson has been steady for us all the way through spring, all the way through training camp. We trust those guys to go out there and run the offense. Had the opportunity to get him in and was excited to get him in. Been talking about it all training camp for us.

We had a couple of transfers, but I love our running back room. I think our running back room is special and deep.

Q. You mentioned guys bouncing back, like E.J. and Casey bounced back from fumbles and Stephen bounced back from getting the sack. I guess maybe Michael Wilson could be thrown in there because he dropped the first ball to him but then he kind of high pointed that first touchdown and got another touchdown. What did you see from him tonight?

DAVID SHAW: Yeah, I don't worry about Mike. Apparently, it might have been a sod issue or something on the first drop. What I love about Mike is he was upset, but he was focused. He didn't lose it. He wasn't yelling and screaming.

He was upset that he dropped that one, but we trust him to go back there. He came back and made a couple plays. Then that one at the end of the first half was just a great play.

That was a too high deal where not always a great decision for the quarterback to work the outside guy with the safety, but we have a phrase here, the ball is faster than the man. Tanner's got that arm strength. He threw a high heater, Nolan Ryan fastball to get it there before the safety got there and Mike climbed the ladder and went up and got it. There's not a lot that Michael Wilson can't do.

It was great to see him bounce back from that difficult play, but come back and make some big time plays and some really nice blocks as well. On top of that, played about five or six plays of special teams as well covering kicks.

So Mike is one of those guys that we point to, and he really came through for us today.

Q. So Tanner McKee had a really good game today,

and throughout camp you were talking about how he grew. But in the first half he was throwing 19 for 21. Can you just comment on kind of the success of going through last year and then coming into this year for him and how he progressed so far and how today kind of showed what has happened.

DAVID SHAW: Yeah, big difference from last year. Last year he was going into the season quarterback battle, played great in spring, didn't play as great in training camp.

Came out and won the game, won the job at the end of the first game. Came out and played well.

So going into this year, all off-season he's been the guy, leader on the football team, voted the captain. Has high expectations for himself, and we have high expectations for him as well.

Winning this game, really thinking about being great. Not just about going out there and trying to do a couple things, going out there and executing. We've kept the game plan tight. We've kept it in things that he can do and do well. We've got a good crew around him. Went out there and made some great decisions, made some great throws.

There's another reason why preseason polls don't matter and preseason accolades are not even really accolades. I've heard everywhere from Tanner McKee is the third best quarterback in the conference to the seventh best quarterback in the conference. Some watch lists he's on, some he's not.

Not that our standard is met by who we play, whether it's Colgate or USC or whoever. I thought he played at a high level. I think that's the anticipation for him this entire year to play at a high level and finish the season as one of the best quarterbacks in America.

That's what we believe he is. He's been playing that way all the way through training camp and played that way today.

Q. What do you think the offense needs to do to not really come out as flat as they did in the third quarter? You guys had a little dry spell compared to the second quarter and the first quarter. What would you guys need to do to kind of address not being as productive on the offensive side of the ball?

DAVID SHAW: We just didn't convert the third down. We shot ourselves in the foot. It wasn't halftime speeches or any of that stuff. You've just got to go out and execute. We didn't execute that first drive, but then came back and played well the entire rest of the second half.

I'm not going to worry too much about that. The guys' focus was there. Didn't play great that first drive, but it is a focal point for us to come out the second half and play at a higher level.

Defensively kind of got -- gave a little bit too many yards in that third quarter, but then we clamped it back down again and played well.

Always talk about starting fast beginning of the game, finishing the first half in a wise way, which we did. And then starting fast in the third quarter. We didn't quite do that. We turned it on a little bit about halfway through the third quarter. Didn't start the way that we wanted to in any of the phases.

Q. I don't want to put the cart before the horse, but what would be the significance of next week being that USC and UCLA will be leaving the conference? So how big will this game be for you and the team?

DAVID SHAW: That doesn't even do anything for our guys. Most of our guys are seniors and juniors. They're not going to be here when USC and UCLA leave the conference. So not really worried about that.

Bigger thing for us is trying to find a way to get to 2-0. Once again, not that USC has to be a big game, any more than just being our second game of the year. That's what it will be billed as. That's what it will be hyped as.

But for our guys, we're going to keep our focus on what we need to do to be a better team next week than we were this week. We have to play at a higher level and have to cut out some of our miscues, especially on the special teams side.

Got to play much better possessing the ball, got to be even better against the run, and be ready to come back against a really good football team and hopefully be a better team next week than we were today.

Q. In the first half you had about a 2-1 passing-rushing ratio for play calling, which is not something we see from your teams. Is that something you'd like to see this year, or is that more of a product of this game, this game plan?

DAVID SHAW: I honestly don't think about that. It's hard to tell. We ran some RPOs today. Some of those passes were actually run, so we kicked the ball out on. We sprinkled passes here and there. I don't know how many of those were quick passes that were actually runs or runs that we changed the play out of to a pass.

So I'm not really worried about that necessarily. I think we were doing a good job being physical up front, running the ball. There's a lot more active safeties later, as we got past the midway point of the second quarter.

So passing-wise we knew we had one-on-ones outside. They did a lot of role coverage, we were rolling back to the field, which is why our single receiver was open, or at least one-on-one multiple times.

Brycen Tremayne had a nice game, back side one-on-one. Same thing, John came back and made a couple of plays back side.

So, yeah, I don't really worry about the ratio as long as we're being efficient, because we're going to call some RPOs that, if it's good for the run, we'll run. If it's good for the pass, we'll throw it.

Biggest thing for me is for the most part we were efficient, outside of about four drives. Getting positive yards. Kicking the ball out quickly. Nice play action passes.

We missed two big time play action passes. That's about four plays that Tanner is going to want back, and two of those had a chance to be big as well, but we hit a couple big ones too.

So, yeah, running game, I think the reason why -- how we ran the ball early on helped set up those play action passes, helped them drop safeties down so we could throw the ball and get some one-on-ones.

Q. I was just wondering your thoughts on how nice is it to see Ari Patu and Mudia Reuben connect for the touchdown, get both of those guys some experience, especially Mudia being a true freshman.

DAVID SHAW: Early in the season I wasn't worried about running up the score. Worried about getting guys opportunities and get them ready to play.

Ari Patu is our backup quarterback. He's got to get out there and make some throws, and he did that to Mudia on the sideline and Mudia in the end zone.

Very excited about Mudia Reuben right now. He's had a very good training camp. A lot of things he can do for us. We're going to continue to sprinkle him in throughout the season. He's big. He's fast. He's got great hands.

We have a great receiving corps, but we've got a spot for Mudia as well.

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Saturday, September 3, 2022
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E.J. Smith

Postgame Media Conference



Stanford 41, Colgate 10

E.J. SMITH:

Q. This is the easy question tonight. Just walk us through that 87-yard touchdown. What did you see? Yeah, there we go.

E.J. SMITH: You know in that play, I was just supposed to follow my pullers. The linebackers ended up over pursuing, so I took it back side, had that long run.

My O-linemen blocked really well. I just executed off of those blocks.

Q. E.J., you got that run first play of the game. What's going through your mind? And then you get the fumble and the face mask. Which one will you be thinking about the most going into next week?

E.J. SMITH: I'm going to be thinking about all those plays honestly. Coach G teaches us every day about ball security and just being able to run the ball downfield. There's some times when I wasn't able to do so.

So I'm going to look back on my film and work on that throughout the week next week and just get ready for USC.

Q. E.J., good job describing the 87-yard run technically, but how did you feel emotionally to have that be your first play from scrimmage and score a touchdown?

E.J. SMITH: Honestly, it's a blessing. Any opportunity that you get to score a touchdown is a blessing. That's pretty much all that I can say.

We were preparing for this team all week, and it just happened. So that's all I really have to say about that.

Q. Can you describe the feeling of finally being the lead back for Stanford?

E.J. SMITH: It's a great opportunity to have. There's been great running backs in the past -- Christian, Bryce, and so forth. Just being able to have this opportunity, it's a blessing.

First game we didn't play to the best of our ability, but we just have to watch film and get better.

Q. One of the things that I feel like kind of went overlooked was your blocking abilities this game and how you were blocking the inside rusher coming in. So just want to talk about how you developed that process over camp and how it's kind of progressed in terms of your game from the blocking perspective.

E.J. SMITH: Pass protection is important. Coach G especially talks about it all the time. You can't pass protect. You have to pass protect if you're a running back. So it's really important just to work on that every day.

And for myself, just being able to improve every week, especially during camp, was important for me.

Q. Overall grand scheme of things, what do you think this offense showed out there tonight?

E.J. SMITH: Our resiliency. We had a couple bad plays throughout the game, but we're still able to overcome those. That's very important.

But at the end of the day, we still have to work and get better. We have 'SC and other teams down the road, so we just have to watch this film and just continue to improve.

Q. Just in general, how good does it feel to get a game under your belt? I'm sure after training camp and everything you guys are itching to get out here. Does it feel good to come in and maybe shake off some of the rust, get rid of some of those butterflies, and just kind of get into a bit of a groove? Just talk about how good it feels to have a game under your belt from that standpoint.

E.J. SMITH: It feels great, especially to come out 1-0.



That was our goal. So just being able to go out and play the game that we love, it's a great feeling to have.

Nine months ago we were just getting prepared for the off-season. Now we're already in the season. So we're just all excited and ready to go.

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Stanford University Football Media Conference

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Kendall Williamson Postgame Media Conference



Stanford 41, Colgate 10

KENDALL WILLIAMSON: No clue.

Q. How proud or excited were you guys in the defensive room with how the defense performed today with the new scheme?

KENDALL WILLIAMSON: I think we were proud. I feel like we definitely expect better out of ourselves. We respect every single opponent that we play, but I feel like there were definitely certain times that we didn't play up to our standard.

It's really picky, it is, but of course we want our team to perform the best as possible and our defense to perform as good as possible.

So I feel like we were proud of the way we played, but we could definitely play better.

Q. Take me back to when it was 7-7 after Colgate recovered that ball in the end zone to tie up the game. What was the mood like on the sideline? What were some of the things that were going through the guys' heads at that point?

KENDALL WILLIAMSON: 7-7 -- we were definitely just feeling like this game is ours. I mean, I feel like the whole game we were feeling like this game is ours, but at that moment, you know like a lot of games there's certain momentum schemes, maybe early on, later on in the game that you don't really want.

Obviously we didn't want that.

We saw it happen, and the defense just saw -- I feel like the whole team saw it as an opportunity to go out there and really just dominate the rest of the game. We wanted it and needed it even more after that because we felt like obviously we made a mistake as a team, and we wanted to make up for it.

Q. Can you just walk us through your interception, how the play trickled out and how you reacted to it?

KENDALL WILLIAMSON: That play, I was in man coverage to the boundary, No. 6, who's a pretty big target for them, what we know from the film last year. He walked off the ball pretty much every single time they did a walkoff during that game; it ended up being an out route or corner ball seven.

So I jumped it out, sat on the outside. Quarterback started scrambling. I felt him go back inside, and he just kind of threw it behind him and it landed in my hands, and that was that.

Q. Just want to get your thoughts on -- you had a couple of defensive stops there where you forced them to attempt a field goal and they missed. Just talk about what you guys did well defensively to not give up the touchdowns. When you did kind of get a short field there.

KENDALL WILLIAMSON: I feel like we just held our ground. Like we didn't let like the change of pace in the game, the momentum shift control us. Our coaches did a really good job of game planning and making sure that they set us up for the players to be in the best possible position to defend their offense when they were in good position, and we just held them.

I feel like we just stood our ground and didn't allow a momentum change to alter like how we played defense. Regardless we had to go out there and stop them.

Q. No disrespect to Colgate, but you have kind of a step up in competition next Saturday. What do you think you guys need to do to kind of clean up tonight?

KENDALL WILLIAMSON: Defensively?

Q. Yeah.

KENDALL WILLIAMSON: I'd definitely say one thing is tackling. We missed a couple of tackles on the edge, myself included. So making sure that like we're wrapping

up, we're driving our feet. Not letting them get extra yards.

That was definitely one big thing. Stopping the run game obviously. A majority of their yards came on the run game, and that ties back in with tackling.

USC obviously has weapons in every position, so we need to be ready for anything. But definitely tackling is going to be something that's big next weekend.

Q. From your vantage point, obviously the defensive line is going to be one of the key units to watch for the squad this year. From your vantage point tonight, how do you think those guys fared?

KENDALL WILLIAMSON: Honestly, I felt like they were doing good. I feel like they were doing good. I was really excited. I remember Zach Buckey got this QB hurry. He was all in the quarterback's face. I think that's the one where he almost threw the pick to Levani. I was just excited. I love seeing that out of those guys.

I know some of them don't have as much experience, so I felt like this was a good game to get out there, get your legs moving, kind of feel the speed and the pace of the game. But I'm excited for what they did tonight and excited for what they'll do next weekend.

Q. What do you guys as a secondary need to focus on to kind of contain all of USC's weapons? They have Jordan Addison, Mario Williams, and everybody else. What do you guys need to focus on next week, because they're definitely more pass oriented than Colgate?

KENDALL WILLIAMSON: I feel like just sticking to our guns. Every person we play is a human being, regardless of who it is. Not to in any way disrespect any other team, but every person is a human.

We have great athletes on our defense as well, like guys had great camps that maybe people haven't seen as much, like Ethan Bonner; great camp. Kyu Blu, obviously everybody knows about him.

John had a phenomenal last season. Patrick Fields, Salim Turner-Muhammad. We go deep in the secondary, so I feel like just continuing to have the confidence. Obviously it's going to be completely different game, completely different matchups, but just to carry the confidence to know that we can ball with anybody.

Q. Kendall, did you guys feel a sigh of relief after those two field goal misses, and it ends up being 7-0 at the end of the first, and then that play happens where

they get the touchdown where they would have been ahead of you guys if they made those field goals?

KENDALL WILLIAMSON: I feel like I definitely did. I feel like the defense did. It's kind of hard not to when you as a defense get in a position like that. You're kind of backed up, and they're already almost in field goal range.

So obviously it turned in our way, and obviously we were happy about it because I guess, when they're getting in the red zone or ending up in the red zone or on the plus 50, it's hard to like go straight three and out because that's honestly one of the only ways you can hold them to not even getting a field goal, just to punt. So definitely a sigh of relief.

I feel any time the offense doesn't score in a position like that, it's definitely like a sigh of relief because we wanted to be up obviously and dominate them today.

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