

Stanford University Football

Media Conference

Saturday, September 10, 2022

Stanford, California, USA

Coach David Shaw

Postgame Media Conference



USC - 41, Stanford - 28

DAVID SHAW: Bottom line, you can't turn the ball over and beat good football teams. That's a really good football teams. A lot of really good players. We gave them opportunities, and they took advantage of them.

Got an outstanding quarterback, got one of the best receivers in college football, and you can't keep giving them chances.

Offensively, outside of turning the ball over, there's some really, really good things, some really good things.

Outside of the two tipped interceptions, I thought Tanner played well. Up until the end when we were trying to force it and get the ball down the field.

E.J. Smith had a great game, outside of two fumbles. Two of our best players had two turnovers.

That being said, defensively I thought we played them pretty straight up as long as we could, but we put the defense in a lot of bad positions. Too many bad positions. We had opportunities to keep the ball a little bit longer, score some more points. Could have gone into halftime with the lead if we didn't turn the ball over.

So that, to me, is the story of the game. We gave the ball away against a really good football team, and they took advantage.

So we've got the bye week here. We've got a lot of guys we've got to take care of. E.J. came out a little bit late, had a couple other guys get banged up. The bye is so early that we still have to work. We can't just give everybody the week off. Anybody who's banged up, we'll take care of them.

Other guys, particularly our younger guys, are going to need to practice. We'll get three good practices in, then we'll give the guys some time off. Then we're going to come back the following Monday, and it's a ten-week

stretch. It's a ten-week stretch that, if we play our cards right, should be one heck of a run.

We got a lot of the pieces. We've got to grow a lot. We've got to take care of the football. If we can do that, it could be a lot of fun.

Q. Coach, we talked about this last week, the turnovers. So how key was that to the psyche of the players? When you guys scored the touchdown, looks like it's a tie game, that's turned over, then they get the interception and it's scored immediately after that, so now it's 14-0.

DAVID SHAW: Yeah, I'm kind of looking forward to seeing that myself on the big screen. I thought I saw grass between his foot and the white line. That's just what I thought I saw. I couldn't get a close view on the jumbotron, and if that happened, it doesn't matter what the second foot did. So I'm curious to see that for myself.

But they reversed it. We've got a 6'3", 236 pound receiver/F tight end one-on-one in the end zone, and we'll take that every single time. Ball bounces funny, bounced up in the air, and they got it. You know, ball bounced off of Ben's fingertips going down the middle versus two high. I don't know how many times we've made that throw in practice and in games last year. Ball gets tipped, tipped again, intercepted.

So two tipped interceptions, both in scoring position, and then fumbled the ball inside the 5 yard line. I mean, that's the ballgame. You don't come back from that against a good football team. You're taking away 21 points. At the minimum those are two touchdowns inside the 5 yard line and a field goal; at minimum it's 17 points.

Now we could've put 17 points on the board in the first half, different ballgame.

So those are momentum killers, and those are the fastest way to lose a football game is turn the ball over.

Q. Wrinkles, offensively the slow mesh we hadn't seen before. Wake Forest did it last year; we're seeing it

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now in Stanford. And defensively in the second half looked like there was a wrinkle with one downed lineman and three edge players playing much of that half. Take us through both of those wrinkles, where they generated from, and your thoughts on how successful those were.

DAVID SHAW: Those were off-season projects for us. Offensively had a chance to meet Coach Caldwell over the off-season. Just met him and asked about some things that they did. They're very close-knit there. They don't give out a lot of information. So he just gave me some advice, watch the film.

So I went back through, watched all their film, watched what they did and said, hey, you know what? I think that could fit our players, fit our quarterbacks. He did some similar things in high school with a little bit slower mesh than most RPOs, so he was very comfortable with it.

Great fit for our running backs and opportunities to get our outside guys one-on-one if the safety -- if the (inaudible) gets in the box.

Like I said, I'm happy with a lot of things that we did show today. Not happy with the turnovers, but that, I thought, did well. Second half in particular on the defensive side we got the stops that we needed. We just couldn't generate the offense in the second half as much as we did in the first half.

But you're just playing catch-up.

Offensively in the second half I thought we did well. Defensively in the first half we weren't terrible. We weren't terrible, but we've got -- you're pitching to Judge. You'd rather pitch to him five pitches instead of 15. 15 pitches, he's going to get one of them.

You give this quarterback and that receiver a whole bunch of pitches and they're going to hit a couple of them out of the park, and that's what happened.

On defense I thought we fought hard. We got some tough matchups, but they got too many bites at the apple. So I'm looking forward to us getting back and working on some ball security and protecting the football. Get some guys healthy. We've got ten weeks to make the season special.

Q. David, they have 20-something transfers, a new coaching staff. Is there anything that -- I mean, they seem like relatively clean game. They had a lot of penalties, but I don't know, I guess as a coach, does that surprise you that they put all that together and be where they are, or does it just speak to the talent?

DAVID SHAW: So much I can say and things I won't say. We're in a new era right now. Giving a lot of opportunities to our student-athletes. The way the transfer portal works right now can create large waves of young people changing schools.

I don't know if it's a good thing, I don't know if it's a bad thing, but it's a different era.

I give their coaching staff a lot of credit. With all those guys coming in and out putting together a good football team. The penalties are the penalties, but they went out there and they made plays. Guys that transferred in went out there and made plays, and that's what they were brought in to do.

As for us, I would have loved to play this game without turnovers and see how it went, but you can't play it over again. We've got to learn our lessons. We've got to grow from it and continue to grow. Look forward to the next ten games.

Q. I know you said you put the defense in a bad position and they didn't play that poorly, all things told, but the fact is they did give up the five touchdowns in the first five possessions and didn't really face a third down during that time, I guess.

DAVID SHAW: Are you asking a question or just contradicting me?

Q. I appreciate that you don't want to criticize the defense, but I guess could you pinpoint kind of what was happening in the first half there? Then how much can you -- did you just throw it away and say, well, we're not going to face Caleb Williams again?

DAVID SHAW: Obviously, they've got a great quarterback and a great receiver. That kid got one-on-one a couple times, and can't double him the whole game because they've got a lot of things they can do.

Some games we rolled safety over the top; sometimes we didn't; sometimes we cheated a guy over there; sometimes we had to play man to man.

So, yeah, they scored five touchdowns in five possessions, but we gave them two of those touchdowns. It would be nice to give it to them on a kickoff after we scored, but we gave it to them.

I'm not saying the defense played perfectly. It's a different game if it's 7-7 than 7-0. It's a different game if it's 14-14 instead of 14-0. Yeah, I'm not saying we played perfectly

on the defensive side. We just put them too many difficult -- they got too many opportunities. They got too many drives with the lead.

I think we have a better chance of winning the football game if it's 7-7 and 14-14 and now you got a chance to play it straight.

Q. Obviously a few plays impacted how this one played out, but I feel like you probably still have a pretty good sense of where the team is, and I'm wondering where that kind of compares to where you hoped to be at this point coming into the year?

DAVID SHAW: The easy answer, I hoped to be at 2-0.

Q. But as far as how you're actually playing.

DAVID SHAW: I know what you're asking. I'll just tell you what I told the team. I mean, there are some things that happened tonight that are really exciting and some things that are sitting in my stomach right now.

So where we are in an execution standpoint as a team probably hovering right around a B-minus. Without the turnover, it's probably a B-plus. We have to give ourselves opportunities and not give them to the other team.

I'm harping on it, but ask any coach in America -- high school, college, or the NFL -- what's the easiest way to win the game, it's win the turnover battle.

So we can dive down on a bunch of other things, but we don't turn the ball over four times, this is a completely different ballgame. But against a really good football team with those cats they've got over there, we gave them too many opportunities.

We're not in a terrible position right now. We're in an okay position with a chance to be really good. A chance to be really good. There's a lot of really good things out there.

But the score was what it was. We lost the game to a really good football team. Opportunity to make some corrections, make some changes, and get back after it. Ten weeks straight.

Q. Two questions for you. First one, you seemed to indicate injury with E.J. Was that why he came out, or was that because of the fumble?

DAVID SHAW: He got banged up a little bit. We had him out the beginning of the second half, checked him out, passed all the tests, was good enough to go. And then just -- you know, probably could have gone back out there, but

we pulled the plug.

We've got a bye week next week and a long season, so decided to take care of him there.

Q. Just to specify, was the injury on the first fumble down around the goal line?

DAVID SHAW: No comment.

Q. Second question. You talked about the new era of college football. Where does Stanford fit into that new era?

DAVID SHAW: Where does Stanford fit into what? I didn't hear you.

Q. The new era of college football.

DAVID SHAW: I'll tell you at the end of the season. And even to expound upon that, I mean, we have a different approach than our opponents today. We'll never have 20 guys transfer in. We're going to take freshmen. We're going to take great students and great football players. We're going to teach them. We're going to develop them. That's going to be our mode.

We may get a grad transfer or two. We got one. We've had a couple in the last ten years. We'll see how that goes. But we believe in the collegiate model that we recruit freshmen, come in, get a great education and learn how to play football, and end up in hopefully years like this where we are a senior heavy football team.

As I said, we'll see at the end of the year because, like I said, we've got a bunch of seniors that we feel really good about, and we might be able to get on a roll here and have some fun.

Q. Just want to get your thoughts on the pass rush that you guys had tonight. There were some moments where you guys -- David Bailey getting his first half sack, first of his career. Just talk about what needs to happen for you guys to utilize that more throughout the entire game? Because the second half it seemed to pick up for you guys.

DAVID SHAW: I can't answer that question just yet. We'll see what happened on the film. I know there were a couple opportunities that, even in the first half, where Caleb just escaped. There were two plays on the top of my mind right now. One was David Bailey, I think another one was somebody else -- were beating down on him and he just escaped before -- he felt it coming before we got close to him.

But I think that's something that's going to grow throughout the year. Stephen Herron, David Bailey, Jaxson Moi got in there, got some penetration. Everybody I mentioned to you is either a sophomore or junior or freshman football-wise. That's exciting.

We've got a bunch of guys who have a chance to do something special, and they're going to grow. I anticipate over the next month or so you're going to see some more of that.

So it wasn't necessarily just play calling. It was guys doing their jobs and doing it well and still playing with some juice at the end of the game.

Like I said, there are things on the film that are going to be really exciting, and that was one. See those young guys go out there and create a pass rush. It was good to see.

Q. What did you think of the way your offensive line played? I guess especially in the context of maybe what it was last year.

DAVID SHAW: Yeah, and that's one of the things that hurts. That's one of the things that really hurts because I thought they played really well.

But at the end of the game, they got a few sacks, so it looks like they dominated on the defensive side. Made over 300 yards of total offense in the first half. We're moving the ball up and down the field and blocking them well for the run, blocking them well for the pass.

That's even without Branson Bragg, one of our top offensive linemen. Levi Rogers went in there and played really well. So a lot of positive things. We played well up front. I think we took a big step against some really good competition and didn't blink, especially early in the game, the first half.

As the score got out of whack, it became a pass rush game, and that's a tough game to win. But I thought through the first quarter and a half, our guys up front played really well. I'm proud of those guys and sad that we put them in a difficult position too to become just a pass rush game at the end of the game because we're down by so many points.

But a lot of positives in all three phases right now. They're just drowned out by the negatives. Thank you all.

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Tanner McKee

Postgame Media Conference



USC - 41, Stanford - 28

Q. Just what did you see on that -- maybe not what the refs called, but just talk about that play that was reversed, a touchdown to Brycen. Just talk about that play call and kind of just that whole sequence there.

TANNER McKEE: Yeah, just roll out to the right, check the flat. They covered it pretty well. They kind of had a linebacker that was kind of floating in the end zone. Brycen did a good job of finding that back end line.

Just really unfortunate that it's a game of inches, that we didn't hit that.

But regardless, we've got to come back and answer. Sometimes we're going to get calls; sometimes we're not. We've got to come back, and we've got to score it regardless.

Q. Tanner, this USC defense, it seemed kind of unorthodox. Did they like show anything that maybe caught you guys by surprise, or would you say everything you guys saw on film, it came into fruition on the field?

TANNER McKEE: Yeah, I think they kind of run an interesting defense as far as like their defensive line are always stemming, looping, doing tons of different games.

So I thought our O-line did a good job of picking that up.

As far as coverages, they changed a ton of it. Knew coming into it everything was going to start looking like cover four and they were going to change from there.

So got a pretty steady dose of cover one, cover four, clouding the field, boundary, cover two, things like that. So just changing things up on us. But, yeah, they definitely switched up their looks throughout the game.

Q. I guess what was the feeling like at halftime? You guys did put up something like 300 yards of offense,

but to still be down 21 at the half, I guess what was the feeling at halftime?

TANNER McKEE: Yeah, it just felt like we were beating ourselves obviously with turnovers. Coach Shaw said it: you can't turn the ball over and expect to beat anybody.

It didn't feel like we were getting stopped at all. We felt like we were moving the ball totally fine. We've just got to eliminate the turnovers. Just do what we do as an offense. There was a few times that maybe the adjustment was different or on an option route things were different. Like we've got to practice like -- execute the play like how we do it in practice all the time. It's just those little details that make a huge difference.

So like I said, it didn't feel like they really stopped us at any point, but definitely that we were hurting ourselves a lot.

Q. Tanner, we saw a lot of different things from this offense -- empty sets, different formations, tempo, run early. Just kind of take us through some of the things that you guys would kind of throw at USC and just kind of what sort of things you were trying to emphasize with the game plan out there today.

TANNER McKEE: I think today we tried to throw everything at them honestly, like you said. Had a few empty packages, had a few get up to the line, snap it quickly, and then our normal huddle, call the play, make adjustments. So just changing up the tempo, trying to catch them off guard.

They were changing so many things, trying to keep their defense vanilla, eliminate different subs or stunts, things like that. So definitely changed up the tempo.

I thought we did a decent job, but definitely something that we can press the gas pedal on or try to go fast, try to go slow to catch the defense off guard, have their guys off their hips, and explode off the ball.

Q. If you have the two throws back that were tipped, how would you execute them differently?

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TANNER McKEE: If I had those two throws back? The first one to Ben, I'll have to watch it on film because I didn't fully see where the ball ended up. Reading that mike linebacker, maybe I could have come down to the follow inside. I'll have to check that on film.

I think to Elijah just put the ball outside a little bit more. He's a big body, so letting him go use his body, attack the ball. That's just one more thing that we're going to rep a hundred times at practice. We're going to get it right.

He's shown we can do it in the past. I've shown we can make the throw in the past. We're not going to shy away from that by any means just because it didn't work out one time.

But we just have to be just a little bit better because, like you said, it's a game of inches. If it was six inches more outside, if it was a little bit higher, then maybe the result would have been a little bit different. So we're just going to have to rep that out through practice.

Q. That slow mesh kind of concept that you guys ran, what was that like from your perspective? Do you think it's something you guys would be able to continue? Like how effective do you think it was?

TANNER McKEE: Honestly, I thought it was great. A good mix of pass and run. I felt like it was the most balanced we've been running the ball and throwing, but mainly I thought it helped our run game a lot. Definitely stretches the defense, makes them change things.

I feel like everybody knows that Stanford makes a lot of different calls and changes before the snap. So just solving them post snap I think has been great.

Q. You had a couple of rushing plays to Yurosek and Higgins. Just talk about kind of utilizing that particular aspect, particularly seeing Ben do that was something I'm not sure we saw last year.

TANNER McKEE: Yeah, we're just trying to get the ball in our playmaker's hands. I feel like that's my job as a quarterback, is to really get the ball in the playmaker's hands. So whether that's a reverse, a handoff, a shovel pass, a seam ball, a go in any way possible.

So it's just changing up the different looks and trying to let Ben and Elijah run in space because they are very good at it.

Q. Just thoughts on the bye week? What are you guys hoping to focus on during that time? And just the thoughts on timing of the early bye, if it's going to

help you guys? Just thoughts on that.

TANNER McKEE: I don't know. I'm going to control things that we can control. Bye weeks after two games, that's fine. We definitely have enough film. So we're going to work on it.

I was kind of telling the guys it can't be a normal bye week that we take off because it is so early. Everybody else is getting an extra week of practice and games, so we have to work, and we're going to work like it's an actual game week.

So I'm really excited about that, and a lot of things I feel like we showed this week that we can watch on film and change. Like we said, the different tempos that were great. USC showed so many different fronts. So just a lot of adjustments and a lot of really good film I think we can watch after this game.

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Jonathan McGill

Postgame Media Conference



USC - 41, Stanford - 28

Q. Jonathan, just want to get your thoughts on what were some adjustments you guys made defensively in the second half? Because it looked like you guys started to kind of figure things out and play better in that second half than the first. What were some adjustments you guys made?

JONATHAN MCGILL: I would say some of the things we did in the second half is honestly just play things the way we're supposed to play them. We kind of had a little bit of adjustments, kind of got a chip on what they were trying to do in some of our coverages, what they were trying to attack.

So just being able to have that open dialogue with Coach Akina in the back end, being able to, hey, he's looking at this for his first look, he's looking at this for his second look. Just being able to have those tendencies and openly have an open dialogue about it. It's an opportunity to kind of game a couple things that were different than what we normally run.

But in terms of kind of just the momentum, I feel like we kind of just settled in as a defense later into the game, and it took us way too long to get to that point.

I felt like we kind of didn't do anything really different besides just execute our assignment and just do our job.

Q. You guys went against Jordan Addison. What was that matchup like, and how were you guys able to adjust to him like as the course of the game went on?

JONATHAN MCGILL: We feel real confident as a secondary with Kyu and Ethan and Salim, and so all of our DBs we felt like could hold up.

So just being a middle safety, just always knowing where the quarterback wants to go, where his look is. So that's kind of the way we kind of viewed Jordan Addison, kind of just keeping an eye on him, but also having the confidence

that our corners and our secondary could hold up against him.

Q. What didn't go right in the first half, and what lessons can you all take from that going forward?

JONATHAN MCGILL: I would say kind of the first thing, we kind of didn't get lined up a lot. You kind of saw it, guys were running to spots, not really looking, understanding the call that we were supposed to do.

We also didn't really execute as high as we should have in the first half, you know giving up -- I want to say it was 35 points in the first half, something like that.

So obviously, we're not playing great team defense giving up 35 points, no matter the situation. Turnover, sudden change, it doesn't matter. At the end of the day, the defense has the opportunity to either allow a field goal or have them attempt a field goal or get a chance to score a touchdown.

I felt like as a defense we didn't execute as well as we should have in that first half, and it took us, as I said earlier, a long time to kind of get that groove, kind of get that understanding. But too little too late at that point.

Q. What is your thoughts on the bye week, the time from a defensive standpoint? What are you mostly going to focus on during this stretch? Does this come at a good time? Do you wish it was a little later? Or is this an okay time to get a bye, do you think?

JONATHAN MCGILL: Usually in the course of the schedule, bye weeks are around week 6, week 7, around that time. But I felt like as a team this is a timely bye week for us.

The biggest challenge honestly is how we're going to respond to adversity. We get a chance to really dive in and dissect this game compared to if we were to play another game. You kind of watch the film on Monday from the previous game and you move on to game plan and everything else on Tuesday.



I feel like this is a real timely bye week. USC is a great opponent. They put a lot of things on film that were challenging for us, for our coverages, and kind of gave us a way to continue to get better.

Their offense is probably one of the most complex in the conference that we're going to see, so as a back end and as a secondary and as a defense, we felt like it's going to be timely because we can really have the opportunity to evaluate.

Self-evaluation is huge, especially after a loss. So just moving forward, I feel like this is going to be a perfect bye week for us. We have guys that are kind of banged up and stuff, but give them that extra week to get their legs back under them because we've got that ten-week stretch. Just can't wait for the opportunity ahead of us.

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Coach Lincoln Riley Caleb Williams

Max Williams

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USC - 41, Stanford - 28

LINCOLN RILEY: We're really excited about the win. We came down here for one reason. This series has been really one-sided over the last 15 years, especially here, so we took that personal.

Kind of the two sides of you right now, I'm thrilled for the victory, and that overshadows, I think -- not overshadows. That's definitely the number one thought and take-away.

Just look at 12 months ago. Look at 12 months ago. This is a good Stanford team and a lot's changed. I'm proud of the way our guys responded. Getting road victories in conference are like gold. I told you all that at the beginning of the week, and that was huge for us.

The good is really, really good on all three sides. The bad is not good enough right now. The bad is -- and that's coaching. That's offense. That's defense. That's special teams. There's too much inconsistencies. For us, that would be great to raise the ceiling of our play, but more than anything, we've got to take the bottom part of our play, the not good plays, we've got to raise those up. That's the number one thing for us right now.

But I thought the sides complemented each other, took care of each other. The turnovers, I think, were the biggest thing again two weeks in a row defensively. Obviously, the two red zone turnovers were huge at that point, and offense did a good job of taking advantage of those turnovers in the first half and built a pretty nice lead.

Didn't play very good -- didn't play up to our standard offensively in the second half. Had some opportunities, had some good field position. We didn't do a good job on third downs. The Rice offensive PI was a huge play in the game. Wasn't very good by me; wasn't very good for the offense in the second half.

Loved our defense closing it out. Still had a few too many mistakes, like you're going to have in a second game, but we found ways to win and separate it on the road.

Proud of these guys. I know we've got a lot of work to do. Our best football is a long ways away from where we are right now.

Q. What did you think of the slow mesh offenses they were throwing, something you really hadn't really seen before?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, it's their RPO game. It's unique, kind of how long they take, especially to not have any linemen downfield calls with that, I would consider that not a minor miracle, but a major miracle.

But you've got to defend it. You've got to defend it. You've got to -- we missed a couple of gaps in the run game. I thought we defended the throws honestly pretty well. We had a lot of PBUs. We had a couple with a pick. I thought a couple of the interference calls were -- I'm not saying they're bad calls. They're competitive calls, but I thought a couple of them we were in really great position, and we take that exact same technique all season.

But we needed to do a little bit better job in the run game. So we were explosive defensively -- the sacks, the turnovers were great. We've got to be more consistent.

Q. What do you attribute the (indiscernible) of the defense to? What's the one area you can fix?

LINCOLN RILEY: I think the easiest fix is just that we're still making a few too many mental mistakes throughout the course of the game where we're not in a gap or not lined up or not playing a call the way that it's designed.

Because I thought we did a pretty good job tackling. We're getting the ball out. We're playing really, really hard. There's a lot of good physical plays out there, but we've got to clean up the mental execution.

Right now in this game we gave up a few too many plays



where we're not in the gap, and against a good offense like that, you make it a lot easier on them than obviously we planned to.

Q. How much of that is just maybe -- I mean, it's a new coaching staff, so many new players, and just a function of time?

LINCOLN RILEY: We're just not going to use that crutch. Our opponents aren't going to play us any different. We've got to get better. We're doing a lot of good. We know we've got to get better. Coaching-wise, we've got to get better. Playing-wise, we've got to get better.

Should it get better as we go? If we're the team we think we can be, then yes.

So you definitely expect constant improvement, but I'm not the guy who's going to sit here and say, well, it's just not good enough right now because we haven't had enough time yet. No excuses. We can play better. We can coach better.

That's offense too. Look at offense in the second half. No excuses from us. We know what to do. We know how to coach. We did it a lot. There was much more positive than negative tonight, so I do not want that to be the vibe walking out here, and it's darn sure not in that locker room right now.

Again, look at 12 months ago. But the best teams do continue to improve throughout the year, and that's our expectation.

Q. Caleb, could you walk us through that long touchdown to Jordan Addison?

CALEB WILLIAMS: Caleb Williams. Yeah, we worked it all week. We got a lot of practice with it. We got the right look at the right time, and we just executed the offense overall. All 11 guys on one page. Jordan did his job. Our routing receivers did their job. All the linemen and the tight ends, running backs, everything like that, we all executed all as one at one time, and it worked out perfectly.

Q. Lincoln, where do you feel like the offense is given that it's week two for this coaching staff? Does it feel on schedule to you?

LINCOLN RILEY: I don't really try to decide like if it's on or off schedule. Like to me, it's just -- I believe that group, like the other groups in our team, can be really, really good. We've had some really good moments here in the first two games that I'm extremely excited about. We have a lot to clean up and a lot of consistency to find again

coaching-wise, playing-wise.

We're just on our climb, right? We're just on our journey. I think all three units of this football team can be really, really good, but we've got to continue to improve and do it more often.

Q. How do you think you did physicality-wise on both sides of the football tonight?

LINCOLN RILEY: I thought for the most part we were pretty physical. I did. I thought we hit. I thought the O-line for the majority of the game did a nice job up front. I thought we tackled. We knocked the ball out. We held onto the ball. We ran through tackled, like we did most of the things you need to do.

Can it get better? Sure. Of course it can. But we are certainly improving there and embracing the team we want to be in terms of physicality.

Q. Caleb, what did you see when you audibled at the line on Travis Dye's touchdown run?

CALEB WILLIAMS: I'm trying to think. You talking about the one where he split down the middle? That was actually Coach. We had another call. I looked over at him, and he ended up just checking me. So that was on big dog.

LINCOLN RILEY: No, that was him. (Laughter).

Q. You called timeout before a screen play to Jordan for a touchdown.

LINCOLN RILEY: I'm trying to remember. Yeah, play clock was just getting down. Play clock was low. Glad I didn't, right? No, no, no, yes, yes, yes.

Q. Max, what have the emotions been on this journey coming back from the second injury to be able to make a big play like that, get involved? What does it mean to you to have some impact plays once again?

MAX WILLIAMS: I would say this time last year I was on the sideline rehabbing from injury and not being able to contribute. It just makes me much more appreciative. I'm having fun out there. I'm healthy, and it's just a blessing to be out there making plays.

LINCOLN RILEY: I say too this guy's been a warrior for us. He had a little medical thing done after spring. He could easily not push through spring and had it done then. He didn't do it. He waited and got every single rep he possibly could, fought for it, got everything cleaned up, and was back full go in fall camp when he wasn't quite 100 percent.

So this guy in a lot of ways embodies what we want in this program, a toughness, an edge, a desire to be out there. And that's why you see him making some of the plays he is and improving like he is. He's been an absolute warrior for us.

CALEB WILLIAMS: Also to add to that, he's played -- since I've gotten here, he's made me better. Two, like Coach said, he fought through all those little injuries, anything like that, all the little medical stuff. Then he came back in the fall and played five different positions on defense, wherever they needed him. Like Coach said, that's kind of what we need and the type of players we need mentality-wise.

Q. Next week is Fresno State, Coach. That's a program that has a lot of momentum. What's your early thoughts on that matchup?

LINCOLN RILEY: It will be fun. An in-state matchup. I have a ton of respect for Jeff Tedford. I coached against him a long, long time ago when I was just getting started and obviously watched the jobs he's done at his various spots. He was always one of those guys you looked up to.

So it will be very cool to get to coach against him. We'll be excited to be back in the Coliseum. I'd imagine people back home are pretty excited about this team, and you've got to come watch them. They're pretty fun to watch.

Q. What's been the biggest challenge of just -- you've got a new coaches, new scheme, and a lot of new players. Just trying to get that all to mesh.

MAX WILLIAMS: Probably just adjust to the speed of the game again. I was out for a while. So just getting back, adjusting to the speed of the game again, learning the techniques again, getting my body right, pushing through things. So, yeah, that's about it.

Q. Is there anything about integrating all these new things since you've been back?

MAX WILLIAMS: What do you mean by that?

Q. Just new coaches, new scheme, a lot of new players.

MAX WILLIAMS: I would just say we all came together really fast. So it's not -- I don't really look too much into that because like when new coaches came, when new players came, we all bonded so fast. We all came together fast during the workouts, locker rooms. Just bonded really fast. So it's like truly a brotherhood.