



UCF Football Postgame Quotes - Aug. 29, 2024

UCF 57, New Hampshire 3

Head Coach Gus Malzahn's opening statement:

Okay, first of all, proud of our team. Taking care of business with a convincing win against a lesser opponent. Looking at the game, I just told the players, the thing that stood out to me is only three penalties. We had a face mask. I think we had a late hit, late in the game with one of our backups and we had a delay a game on a field goal, we ended up making it. But the three penalties, we've been focused on not beating ourselves. Now defensively, we played a big-time game. I think Pace's Interception, was the one that turned the game into being able to breathe a little bit and play with that. Tennison had the blocked punt right there. He was one of the better special teams players in college football last year, and it showed. Xavier Townsend was big-time in the return game. I thought we had a really good field position. Offensively, the first quarter struggled. We had a little trouble. We had some sacks. I called a couple of bad plays, and put our quarterback in a bind a few times. And then we were able to kind of get in a rhythm. Able to run the football play fast second half we kind of got going and so real excited. I think we rushed for 454 yards and I think everybody sees we got real running backs. When you put in your backups some guys would start for most teams in America. The running backs are right there, so there's a lot to build on, I told our guys, there are some mistakes but the great thing is they're all correctable and I think anytime you've got 50 new players. That's to be expected to certain points, but I'm excited for our guys. We're 1 and 0. We got a little extra time before game two.

Malzahn on K.J. Jefferson:

I thought after that first quarter, I think he settled in and started playing. Obviously, he'd like to have the interception back right there. But he responded and came back. I think he threw two touchdowns after that and started getting more in control of the offense.

Malzahn on the toughness of the team:

I think our guys, they played hard. They played their guts out. They were flying around. Our defense was flying around. And I think you can see, we've got some playmakers on defense. And we've got quite a few more experienced guys that played a lot of football. And you saw that. And then offensively, it's just learning to play with each other. New quarterback, a couple of new running backs, new receivers, and some new starters up front. So it's just a matter of correcting the things. I've said this every year, game one. But the good teams from game one to game two improved more than any other time. And we need to do that. And I think we can.

Malzahn on if there were home opening butterflies:

I don't know. I think we just didn't do a really good job of executing. The unique thing about offense is that 11 guys got to do what they're supposed to do. And if one guy doesn't, it makes everything look bad. Like I said, I made a couple of bad calls. I put a quarterback in a bind twice early on. That didn't help. So I got to do a better job of that.

Malzahn on his halftime message to the team in the locker room:

Well, I mean, I wasn't happy. We slogged around on offense. You all saw it in the first quarter. In the second quarter, we got in a rhythm. We scored right there and got in a rhythm. We scored right before halftime. That was good. But, hey, we got to respond. And I just told our guys a zero, zero, go out like a championship team in the second half, and let's get better and let's play. And I feel like they did that.

Malzahn on if KJ Jefferson was rusty:

It's been a year since he went live, but you could see him in the second half. He started getting his pads down doing some things and making some plays with his feet. I think he just needs to get more comfortable with our offense and be more efficient, that's probably the big thing. And playing a new offense with new players, there's going to be growing pains. That's to be expected. That was the first time we played an opponent and all that. So a lot of good things to build upon. I'm excited to watch him next week.

Malzahn on what he will take away from this game:

My whole deal was you've got 50 new players. How are guys going to respond? How are they going to respond to adversity? How are they going to respond to success? How are they going to respond? We got depth. I mean, guys ain't getting to play. If they over there are a pouting or are they a team? That's really what I'm looking for in a game like this.

Malzahn on the dominant rushing performance:

They're real running backs. They're all a little bit different, and you put Peny in there, and he's a full-grown man. He's going down, and he's running over lineman, offensive lineman, defensive lineman. He's got a little speed to him, too, and Johnny's got his deal. Miles Montgomery, he's been like the MVP of Fall Camp. He carried that over, and then RJ, RJ's elite and I think everybody knows that. And so we got a lot, and I think you'll see more two of those guys on the field at the same time. First game's first game. We were pretty vanilla, okay? And sometimes when you're vanilla, it is what it is, but we've got a lot of good things to build upon.

Malzahn on Jacurri Brown getting in the ballgame:

There's nothing like getting in there to play. And it was good. I mean, he'd like to have a couple of things back, but, he's got a live arm. He can run. It was good for him to get in there and play. And I know he had the fumble at the end. That was tough right there, but he did some good things where he was.

Malzahn on Xavier Townsend returning kicks:

Xavier Townsend, man, it's hard to grab his flag sometimes. I thought he did a really good job, broke tackles, showed a lot of courage, went north-south, and protected the football.

Malzahn on working with helmet communication and tablets in a game situation:

It's really good. In the first game, we had some growing pains. There's no doubt about it. It was good to see the information. Half-time is completely different now. And so it was really good for us to go through that. We got to be better organized the next time and halftime. Then the helmet communication, my thought was early on, to not say as much, and then we're getting used to working together and what you like, because there's sometimes too much information and so we kind of got in a better flow in that second half that I think we got some things to build upon moving forward





Malzahn on being back in front of Knight Nation:

Hats off to the fans. Man, on Thursday night it was awesome. They were loud, really excited. That's what building into a program and getting to be a big-time program. That's what it's about. And hats off to our fans, man, the first game on a Thursday night. That was really big time.

Malzahn on the versatility of the offense, specifically relating to Xavier Johnson, Randy Pittman and Johnny Richardson:

I know Randy didn't do a whole lot with the ball, but Randy's been one of the more consistent offensive players all through fall camp, and he will be in the mix moving forward. Johnny's Johnny. He's going to do stuff that other guys can't. They were doing something. Give them guys credit, too. They were playing a four-down front, and they were taking chances, mixing matches. We had a couple of ugly plays, trying to draw a play. It was minus three or something like that. But, no, Johnny's a dynamic guy.

UCF Quarterback KJ Jefferson

Jefferson on his first game at UCF:

It was a great turnout. I mean, I was excited. The main thing was for me to try to get settled in as quick as possible and make sure that I'm having good body language because everybody looks to me. So when the team is down and we needed that momentum, just to make sure that I'm just telling guys on the sideline it's going to come. Just stay patient. It's going to come. It's going to happen.

Jefferson on being comfortable in the UCF offense:

I'm extremely comfortable. Like the main thing, it's the first game. So a lot of emotions going on, just a lot of factors just played into it. The main thing is just me being able to just get settled in as quickly as possible, and understand what Coach Gus is going to call and things that me and him can communicate better with. That getting me going early and getting me in the rhythm early to make sure that I'm settled in and we can play the game how we need to play.

Jefferson on scoring right after an interception and celebrating:

Just a lot of emotions that I just needed to let out at that moment. The first touchdown in the bounce, you know, and then just that momentum, that spark that we needed. At that point, I feel like, I'm back to being casual. I'm back to doing what I love to do and it's not me just being out there so seriously and treating it as a business. Just me back to a little kid playing ball and having fun. That was the main thing just being able to get back to that having fun. It's perfect.

UCF Running Back Myles Montgomery

Montgomery on his first game at UCF:

It was great, you know, being back home in Florida. This environment is crazy. It's different when you're on the other side of the ball. I mean, the other side of the field is coming in. But being on this side is just insane. These fans, these students are crazy. We're so appreciative of it. Had a great game.

Montgomery on UCF's running back group:

We're hungry. We all have a why that we're playing for. And we make sure that we never forget that. Have a chip on our shoulder. And we're the type of group where that's not going to leave. And hopefully, this is more to come. I feel good, you know. See, when you have a room full of alpha meals, you know, you just feed off each other, you know what I mean? So I just feel like that's really what it is, you know, you feed off each other. Someone makes a big play. I want to go make a big play. You know what I mean? So hopefully, like I said, we can get this thing rolling. And, man, we're going to be scary this season.

Montgomery on UCF's second half rushing attack:

Coach made an emphasis that we wanted to run the ball a bit more. That's really what we did. I mean, as you can see, we almost had 500 yards rushing. So, we did what we said.

UCF Defensive Back Braeden Marshall

Marshall on making plays early on:

Felt amazing. Just felt good to be back out there with my brothers in front of the great UCF fans. I'm happy to be back.

Marshall on transfers making big plays tonight:

It was great. You know, because I feel like we're all jailing together and everybody's, you know, playing comfortably and everybody knows they have their brother next to them. And so I feel like if everybody feels that way and no matter what transfer or not, you're just gonna play your best type of football,

UCF Linebacker Deshawn Pace

Pace on getting his interception:

It was really exciting, just being in the bounce house felt really amazing. I came here a couple times before but I feel this was the best one yet. Having my daughter in the stands is a blessing, it just made me get more motivated, made me go harder and the pick just came to me. He stared me down the whole play and I just made the right decision.

Pace on playing for UCF's defense and how good it can be this season:

We can be a great defense, number one defense in the country if we just execute and play together as one. Like I said, we got emphasize on turnovers, 11 me to the ball. Feel me, I gotta be in the right spot, gotta learn your keys and communicate out there. If you ain't communicating, we ain't in a whole defense.





New Hampshire Head Coach Rick Santos

Opening Statement:

Yea you know what, I mean that's a really talented football team that we went up against. Both sides up front, you know that was a determining factor physically opposing, defensive line that gave us a lot of issues. We struggled to run the ball and then personally I think they did a really good job wearing us out, particularly going into the second half. They kind of ran it well down there. I'll give our guys a lot of credit. We fought and certainly didn't back down. They gave a ton of effort and I thought that was as good as a start as we could've wanted in this game. And ultimately I think the size, speed, and talent discrepancy kind of wore on us in this game a little bit, but you know I'm happy with the way we fought and I think the last couple drives showed a lot of character from our guys.

