



2018 Academy Sports + Outdoors Texas Bowl Vanderbilt University vs. Baylor University



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2018 ACADEMY SPORTS + OUTDOORS TEXAS BOWL VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY VS. BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

VANDERBILT HEAD COACH DEREK MASON

Opening Statement:

"First of all, congratulations to Coach Rhule and Baylor. I thought they played one heck of a ballgame. I'd like to thank the Texas Bowl for their hospitality and really, just for providing a great Bowl week and a great Bowl experience for our young men. I tell you, it was a heck of a ballgame. I saw great offense on both sides. You know, explosive plays. I thought (Charlie) Brewer was exceptional for them. I thought he played well. I thought their backs made plays. They made plays when they had to. Ke'Shawn Vaughn, special player. Obviously, he had a banner day. I feel for these 26 seniors, I do. They have put a lot into this program, and we weren't able to finish today. That's the tough part of Bowl season is that, when you're done, you're done. It's done. It's over and you don't get a chance to get it back. But, I do know this: this group's going to bounce back. I believe this group is resilient. I think all year, we sat with a young man by the name of Turner Cockrell, and we worked hard, extremely hard to honor his memory all year long. I know Turner is up there smiling. We didn't get the outcome we wanted, but his offense battled and it's just really a microcosm of the season. Defensively, we didn't play well, we didn't tackle well and that reared it's ugly head. Generally during Bowl season, it does, but today, just some missed opportunities and that's unfortunate. It's unfortunate for this football team because again, I thought our offense played well enough, but not good enough to win. With that being said, I'll turn it over for questions."

Just playing off of what you said about RB Ke'Shawn Vaughn, he looked like an NFL-ready back tonight do you think that performance affects his decision or affects your conversation with him going forward?

"It doesn't affect my conversation. I think Ke'Shawn, you know, will get the information from the NFL and really respond to that information accordingly. The reality is, he's always been a good back. I mean, I don't think that's changed. I think he's an elite back. I think, capable of when the time is right of maybe being a first-round back, but there's a lot of distance between now and then, like in my opinion. But I've always said he's special. That's why I wanted Ke'Shawn back here at Vanderbilt and I'm glad to have him, and as of now he's a Commodore."

It seemed like Baylor's offense, whenever they got to the line, they were looking to the sideline to audible or pick a play right then and there. How did that affect the way your defense approached it and how did that play into some of the issues you had in stopping those big chunk plays they were able to get?

"I thought they did a good job of keeping us off balance. The dual-threat at the quarterback position, I thought was huge tonight. I thought he ran as well as their running backs did. The reality was, he was the difference in this ballgame when you look at it. I know they had some explosive plays, but he was able to keep drives alive with his legs and that was tough for us. You know, even when it got to fourth down, they went for it. I don't know what the percentages are, but they were pretty high on fourth down. They were pretty good on fourth down and that was, again, the difference in this ballgame. For me, I look at Bowl games. I mean, it's a slugfest. It's a heavy weight fight and when you look at this one, we didn't throw enough punches, we couldn't get them off the field and really that was the difference in this ballgame for us, stopping the quarterback."

DB LaDarius Wiley said yesterday that tackling is often lacking in Bowl games because players haven't finished tackles in a month. Do you think the month off played into that at all?



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"I really don't. I think, for what we did fundamentally in practices – what I saw sometimes in this process was just guys measuring and not bringing their feet to, through and beyond contact and that happens. I truly believe not going for three weeks with a ballgame can be difficult, but what else do you do? I think you put your players in position to be able to tackle, OK, and they were in plenty of position to tackle. Bring your feet to, through and beyond contact, wrap up and then get guys on the ground. Again, it showed on both sides, but we happened to be the bigger culprit tonight."

How different do you think the performance of this team and this Bowl was from the Bowl two years ago?

"Much different, I thought really, offensively, we were able to put up points and sustain some drives and really when we didn't sustain drives, it had more to do with us. I thought we were more fluid offensively. Defensively, again, couldn't get off the field on third and fourth down. That was the difference in this ballgame. But, our offense kept us in it. Our offense really kept us in it. We had some timely stops at times defensively, but explosive plays sort of ruled the day. For our guys, it feels similar because you don't get the outcome you wanted."

What did you think about that crazy interception in the end zone off deflection?

"It's football. You know, I look at football nowadays and nothing really surprises me. I thought, a receiver goes to make a play, hits his legs, it pops up and Randall (Haynie) is aware enough to grab it out of the air. That's just a great football play by the DB and a missed opportunity on their part. It's football."

When you look at the players that are graduating after this year, and moving into next year, what can you kind of take away from this game for the players that are going to still be here, and kind of let them learn and let them move forward into what's going to be another tough season?

"Yeah, well, we'll assess, play what we did, where we need to go, how we need to supplement this roster and make sure that we're moving forward. That's one thing about football, football continues to move forward. Our last game was today, guys will be traveling tomorrow and then we'll get back to it as a coaching staff and figure out exactly where we're going to be. But, I do believe that we've got a good football team coming back. I think we have the remnants of a good football team coming back, a lot of guys have grown up and even though we lose some guys, I think there's so much maturity from some of these young guys who have had to play that, you know, we're going to be better."

You mentioned Turner Cockrell, can you think back even as a player, going back in your career, have you been around a team that's been as much as this team's been through this fall?

"No. No. Not really, not teams that I've been involved with. I mean, I've had a thing or two happen, but this year's been a little taxing on this group. But I thought it galvanized this group a little bit. I think it helped them understand their purpose and that the game is a special game. Play it as hard as you can for as long as you can because you never know when that opportunity will be taken from you. And like I said, Turner is up in heaven right now smiling down, and our guys know and understand where he is, but they will all go forward looking to honor his memory and his name. I think that that's something that shouldn't be looked at as just a low point in our season. We saw a young man live his life strong, and in doing that, these young men have been given an opportunity to do just that, except they are living. They are going to fight for life. They are going to work extremely hard to be good football players and great people."

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