



Wisconsin Media Day

Saturday, December 31, 2016
AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas



QUESTIONS FOR HEAD COACH PAUL CHRYST

COACH CHRYST: The first time I was able to speak to y'all down here was we had just come in. And we'd heard so much about the Cotton Bowl and the experience our players and families were going to have. It's been unbelievable. And yet it's really neat, I think, for all of us to be this close to the game, and I've loved the approach that our players have had. Certainly enjoying the different experiences. But our practices have had good energy, and I've liked what they've done. We've got one more day to prepare. And we're looking forward to playing, obviously, a very good Western Michigan team.

Q. Could you explain the development of Corey Clement from New Jersey all the way to Madison, his development as a player?

COACH CHRYST: I wasn't at Wisconsin when Corey first came there. Actually, I was recruiting him at a different school. But Corey was talented in high school. When he came to Wisconsin, had the opportunity to be around some really good backs. James White, Melvin Gordon. And yet Corey found early ways to contribute. And I've loved seeing the development that he's made really the last two years in two different years. Last year was hard on him. He missed a lot of time. And yet I think what he's done this year and particularly I'd say the last two months, you know, I think Corey has developed a genuine confidence in himself. And on the field, I think it's relaxed him. He's shown patience in the running game. He's trusting what's happening around him. And, certainly, he's been a big part of us getting the running game going. We're going to be challenged again with Western Michigan. But I thought he's done a great job of developing here and cares a ton about this team. And he's been fun to be around in so many ways, not just the production as a back. He's been really good.

Q. I just wondered have you seen any differences with Alex [Hornibrook] these last few weeks since the Big Ten championship maybe, obviously, having to do with the injury but also maybe a chance to take a step back and kind of see how this year's gone maybe taken a few steps in leadership and things like that?

COACH CHRYST: Yeah, I don't know. I mean, after the championship game, which he, obviously, didn't play in, we had about a week off. And then we were into planning and going forward. And, certainly, you know, you try to teach and try to look back on things that you can get better at. That's part of learning, right?

And so I don't think that we want him to have the big, all right, let's take a step back, deep breath, what's this year been and going forward. We'll have time for that. And yet, I think he's done a great job of just jumping back in to the bowl prep that we've had. And I feel good with where both he and Bart are in the preparation for this game. But I don't think it's been, like, the big deep thoughts reflective as much as just, all right, what do we need to do to get ready to play

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our best game, hopefully, and our last game here.

Q. I know you said you expect to play both quarterbacks as you have for most of the season.

COACH CHRYST: Right.

Q. Have you decided to name a starter at this point?

COACH CHRYST: No, not for you guys.

Q. Do the players know?

COACH CHRYST: Our players know that both are going to play and the quarterbacks know.

Q. When you look at paper, maybe this would seem to be very contrasting styles. They're a high-powered offense. You guys more of a slug-it-out defense. Is that the way you see it? Is that too simplified?

COACH CHRYST: Offensively, they've scored a ton of points and have the ability to be really explosive. But they do a great job, I think, of being balanced and can control the ball. It's -- I think, when you watch Western, it's a really good football team. And, offensively, they can beat you a number of different ways. Defensively, they've got a lot you have to prepare for and have a really good pressure package and do a nice job of changing up in their zones and different fronts you've got to look at and special teams.

Kind of similar where you have to defend a lot or prepare to do different things against a lot of looks. And so I think that it's never -- I don't think any game is ever, boy, this is just how it's -- you don't know how it's going to play out. That's the fun part about these games. You have to be ready for everything. And yet I think that at some point you've got to be who you are. And I'm looking forward to it. I think we've had good preparation. But we know we're going up against a really good football team, and we've got to play well to give ourselves a chance.

Q. When we talk about Western Michigan, we talk about their speed and agility and athleticism. How are you able in your practice this week to simulate their speed and athleticism?

COACH CHRYST: I think what's helped us, because we've had more time, is that our scout teams have gotten better at trying to mimic. No way are you going to run it as well as they do, no matter what it is -- special teams, offense, or defense. But our kids have done a lot of things that they're getting better at trying to mimic what Western's doing schematically. And then we do a lot of good against good. And so I think it's always important. And I think that's one thing that you'll see in bowl games. This is the biggest time off or time in between games that we will

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have had and same for every team that's playing these bowl games. So I think how you start and coming out and getting into that flow of the game, that's always a big part of bowl games.

And so you can talk about it with your players and make them aware of it. And that's where experience helps. But you've still got to do it. So I think you'll never be able to mimic the execution of the opponent.

But I really do think our players have done a nice job as probably best they can. So I feel good in the preparation knowing that you've still got to go play it, and it's going to be a little bit different. We don't have a receiver that's going to mimic what he does. Their quarterback does a great job. Some of the things they do on defense, not going to be able to be the exact look. But I like the way our kids have prepared.

Q. Coach, I know the players took that Big Ten championship loss pretty hard. Have you seen a different energy or enthusiasm from them in the last couple of weeks that could be encouraging for the game on Monday?

COACH CHRYST: Quite honestly, I've been encouraged. They are who they've been this whole time. And we had some tough losses during the season. Now, we had to switch gears a lot faster, right? You get the rest of Saturday, Sunday. And you come back Monday and we're on to the new.

I thought their response after the game was appropriate. They put a lot into it. And yet, when we came back and started practicing for the bowl, great energy. And that's who they've been all year. And so it's one of the things I really like this about this team is they're consistent in their approach, and they're not afraid to put it out there. And, when you do that, there's emotions, good and bad, right? Not bad. I guess there's no bad emotions. But it hurts.

And yet they've come back. And I've really liked the way their energy has been in all of our preparation. And, when we were in Madison getting ready for the bowl game, they were dealing with final exams and kind of that last week of finishing up with school. They've done a great job of being able to take care of all the things that are going on in their life. And, when it's time for football, they've been good.

QUESTIONS FOR QB BART HOUSTON

Q. Are you going to start on Monday?

QB BART HOUSTON: We don't know, swear to God.

Q. Does that kind of make it harder mentally when you're not sure if you're going to play in

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your final game?

QB BART HOUSTON: No, I think it makes it easier honestly for both Alex [Hornibrook] and me. That's been the status quo this whole year. Don't get me wrong. Coach [Paul] Chryst -- they let us know before the game, and they know -- they tell us the plan and what's going on for every game plan. But they just haven't told us yet. I think it makes it easier because it kind of takes the stress off starting in the Cotton Bowl.

When you're done prepping, you kind of get to relax a bit. And then I think they'll tell us tomorrow or something. Maybe later today.

Q. Has it sunk in at all yet that this is the last game?

QB BART HOUSTON: Not yet. It will after the game, I know that. But we've been preparing so hard as a team that it really hasn't sunk in it's the last one, in my opinion, for the whole team. We're so focused on the task at hand that if we started thinking about the other stuff, we won't be thinking about what we have to do on Monday.

QUESTIONS FOR QB ALEX HORNIBROOK

Q. Does it matter to you who starts on Monday?

QB ALEX HORNIBROOK: No, it doesn't. To me and Bart [Houston] we're here for the team, and we're here to help us win. Whether it's myself or Bart out there, we're doing as much as we can to help.

Q. Any indication from Coach [Paul Chryst] at this point?

QB ALEX HORNIBROOK: No, you have to ask him. We're both ready to go. Whoever.

Q. Bart said, yeah, it's kind of relaxing to not know who is the starter until the day of. Would you rather know in advance?

QB ALEX HORNIBROOK: I think it really doesn't make a difference. Going in we both know we're going to play. And whether we're taking the first snap or not is really not going to impact how you're thinking. You're still preparing the same way if you're on the sideline so it's not a big difference.

Q. Having missed the Big Ten title game, how important is it for you personally to get on the field and play well going into the off-season?

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QB ALEX HORNIBROOK: That one hurts, to not be able to play and to watch my team and see it end like that. But it's going to be definitely good for me to get out there on Monday and play, and I'm really excited for it.

Q. How about as a group, you ready to go up against another team rather than yourselves?

QB ALEX HORNIBROOK: Yeah. It's been a while since that last game, and we've been practicing against ourselves and competing against our own defense. But it will be fun to get out there and compete against Western Michigan.

QUESTIONS FOR RB COREY CLEMENT

Q. How ready are you to get all this talking over with?

RB COREY CLEMENT: I'm ready for all the talking to just be silence and just finally get back on the field, the gridiron and play with the guys I've been battling with all season. So this season has definitely been one to remember. Especially when I leave, I can look back and say everybody's given 110%. Every time we came out to practice, practice has been outstanding this time coming down to Dallas Cowboys stadium. Been a privilege and another opportunity to make a stand for Wisconsin.

Q. You have quite a bit of depth with the running backs and stuff like that. And Bradrick Shaw, I guess, is a freshman and you guys are seniors. Have you guys been mentoring him, or what's your relationship with him?

RB COREY CLEMENT: Me and Dare [Ogunbowale] have definitely been mentoring Bradrick into a role that we know he can be part of this offense and potentially lead this team next year. So, if anything, he just has to keep a right mind on it, just don't get too big-headed as far as any compliments he may receive because sometimes it can factor into a negative situation because I'm a prime example. I let things get to my head, as far as my junior year. So anything I can give to him, or Dare, just stay humble. Stay respectful to your coaches and teammates and really embrace the role that you want to be in.

Q. How have the three of you worked as far as is there certain situations where you're a more likely player? Can you kind of describe how you guys work as a team to be so effective.

RB COREY CLEMENT: Coach has done a great job of making sure everybody has a great rotation. I'm more first through third down or Dare [Ogunbowale] comes in on third downs and Bradrick [Shaw] sometimes he's giving one of us a breather. But when he uses that, he's making the most of his opportunities. And that's what I did when I had my freshman year going with James [White] and Melvin [Gordon], and I'm pretty sure he's really excited to see what he can

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break out to his own.

Q. When it's fourth and goal from the three, whose hands do you want the ball in?

RB COREY CLEMENT: I want the ball in my hands. I want the ball in my hands every single play but I know that's not ideal. As a player, you want to make big time plays. So, if you want to do that, you've got to try to be willing to put the team on your back in some moments and really look back and say I did it for the guys in front of me. The guys out front put it out there. It wouldn't be possible if it weren't for them.

QUESTIONS FOR RB BRADRICK SHAW

Q. A lot of depth in your running back position. I guess the other two guys both are both seniors, and you're the freshman coming in. How has it helped you become a better player from their mentoring?

RB BRADRICK SHAW: They helped me a lot to just sit back and observe how they go throughout their day. They've been helping me, been telling me how to do stuff the right way and how I can handle playing football and going to school. So they've been a tremendous help. I'm going to miss them next year when they leave and go to play at the next level. So I'm going to take what I learned and just build off it.

Q. Is there anything specifically that Corey [Clement] may have said to you or he's shown you or something that's helped you particularly?

RB BRADRICK SHAW: Corey has just shown me how to be a more patient runner and how to just prepare and how to go throughout the week. We go out to every practice hard and practice like you play. And he plays great, so that's what I've been taught. So that's what I try to do.

Q. And then Dare Ogunbowale as well, anything specifically?

RB BRADRICK SHAW: Dare has been helping me learn the plays, learn the offense as a whole and just how to -- pass protection, to be a better pass protector. And he's been a tremendous help to me.

Q. How has college football been different than high school football. And is it what you expected?

RB BRADRICK SHAW: College football is a lot faster than high school football. It hurt a little bit more in college. But the game itself is the same. But just the speed of the game is a lot

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faster, I would say.

Q. And tell me about the Coach (Paul Chryst). Did he recruit you? I guess he recruited you himself. What is it like to work with the coaching staff here? How are they helping you to become a better person as well as player?

RB BRADRICK SHAW: It's been great working with Coach [Paul] Chryst and Coach [John] Settle every day. They really taught me -- Coach Chryst taught me how to play football. But the bigger picture is learning how to network myself and meet new people and expand my horizon. And he's been a big help for me to learn those for my future after football.

QUESTIONS FOR OL DAVID EDWARDS

Q. What is the biggest challenge?

OL DAVID EDWARDS: Their two ends are really, really athletic guys. And they throw a lot of pressures at you. I think they're going to challenge you in all three phases of the game, not just defensively. But those guys, those two ends, are really athletic.

Their linebackers are tough and pose challenges on different fronts. So it will be a real tough challenge for us.

Q. How have game preparations gone?

OL DAVID EDWARDS: I think they've gone well. I think the biggest thing for us was we had to get healthy. From playing Penn State to today I think we've done that as well as getting back into the swing of things. We played quite a while ago.

So I think our preparation has gone real well. And I think we're ready to play. I've only been at two bowl games. But being around all the other seniors, they say this is one of the coolest experiences they've ever been on.

QUESTIONS FOR LB VINCE BIEGEL

Q. We talked last year, when you walked out of the locker room in the Holiday Bowl and decided you were going to come back for another year, two days from now you get the final run out of the tunnel as a Badger. That's got to be a big deal for you.

LB VINCE BIEGEL: Yeah. Looking forward to it. It's a great opportunity to play in the Cotton Bowl, a great venue to represent the last game of your college career. So I'm excited to go out there and play against a talented Western Michigan team and put our last stamp on the

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season.

Q. You're one of those guys that's kind of like a heart and soul Wisconsin Badger. So have you had to check your emotion this week knowing that it's the final time as a Badger?

LB VINCE BIEGEL: I think we've got a lot of guys who are the heart of the team. There's not just one guy. What makes our team special is we're a collective group. I think not just myself but our whole team was hurt after the Penn State game. And the best thing for us to kind of overcome those things is to get back to work. And that's what we did right away. Getting prepared, doing those things get you prepared to turn the page and move forward. That's what we've done. All eyes on Western Michigan.

Q. Personally, your emotion is that wait until after it's all done?

LB VINCE BIEGEL: Yeah. This isn't a me thing. This is a team. And I'm not trying to put anything on myself. It's all about the team. And we've had a great season, a great ride. And it's the 2016 Badger football team. It's not individuals. I'll have time to reflect after the season and when that time comes. But, currently, I'm going to enjoy my teammates and enjoy the Cotton Bowl here today.

Q. Finally, on Western Michigan, is it one of the more talented offenses you guys will have seen?

LB VINCE BIEGEL: Absolutely. I think Western Michigan poses a lot of different challenges everywhere, from the wide receiver to quarterback, the running back position. They are all talented. They have a lot of playmakers on their team that can make plays, but I think we also have great weapons on our side to help kind of facilitate some of those things. Couldn't be more excited for the challenge.

QUESTIONS FOR LB T.J. WATT

Q. From everything I've heard from players, administration, coaches' perspective, this has been really good as far as treatment?

LB T.J. WATT: Yeah. We've been treated like royalty around here. It's crazy. We've been to really good bowl games, but nothing matches up to the hospitality here. The way you're treated and the way everyone greets you with a smile in the morning and at night and the amenities that they have for us and the activities, it's incredible here. And I'm really thankful that they're putting this all together for us.

Q. How long did it take you personally to get past the game in Indianapolis on December 3rd?

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LB T.J. WATT: Not too long. Obviously, there's still a bad taste in our mouth. But it didn't take too long. That's a credit to Western Michigan. We can't take them lightly. And we knew that coming in, so we couldn't stress over the loss too much.

Q. A lot of times when people from the outside look in, they say the favorite to win a bowl game is the team that wants to be there the most. How have you guys handled the disappointment and the want to be here?

LB T.J. WATT: Just we want to show people what happened in the Big Ten game was a fluke. It's not who we are. We're men on a mission to show people that we're a really good football team especially defensively. And we're going to show people what we can do. We're focused. We don't care who they've played, what conference they're from. They're undefeated. That's a really big accomplishment no matter who you play. We're taking this game, very seriously.

Q. Is it an advantage that you guys have played at AT&T Stadium before?

LB T.J. WATT: I don't know. Maybe just the locker room is familiar. But, other than that, I don't think so. Maybe playing in bigger venues is an advantage for us, but I don't think so.

Q. Nationally, this game may be flying under the radar a little bit. Do you know why? Do you get it?

LB T.J. WATT: I don't get it. To be honest with you, two really good football teams. You've got an undefeated team, one of two in the country. And you've got a good Wisconsin team. It's going to be a challenge for both teams. It's going to be a chess match early on. And we're going to figure out who is the best team at the end of the day.

Q. Is this a battle of contrasting styles: Their offense against a smash-them-up defense? Or is that too simplified?

LB T.J. WATT: That's a little too simplified. Our defense is so good at adjusting to each offense, no matter what scheme they're on. That's what we pride ourselves all season long. Even though we didn't perform as well against Penn State, a lot of what they do carries over to Western Michigan. A lot of the game plans are going to be familiar.

Q. Have you made up your mind about tomorrow being your last game or not?

LB T.J. WATT: No, I haven't. All that is going to come after the game.

Q. Knowing you haven't made up your mind mentally, does it feel different knowing it could be your last time putting on a jersey?

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LB T.J. WATT: I don't think any of that is going to cross my mind. This game is so important. I'm going to treat it like any other game, and all that stuff will come afterwards. I don't think I'm going to think differently.

Q. Motivation is such a huge factor in bowl games. People seem to think because they're the underdog, they might care more. How do you view this?

LB T.J. WATT: I promise you, they do not care more. We want this game bad. We have such a sour taste in our mouths, such a bitter taste from a performance we're not very proud of. And we're men on a mission to show people that we're out here to kick butt and show people what Wisconsin football is all about.

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