



Western Michigan Post-Game Quotes

Western Michigan vs. Wisconsin
Monday, January 2, 2017
AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas



QUESTIONS FOR HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK, QB ZACH TERRELL, AND WR COREY DAVIS

COACH FLECK: First and foremost, just want to give Wisconsin all the credit in the world. What a football team. I tell you what, they are as good as advertised. And they play they're style of football almost perfectly.

And I think tonight they played their style of football better than we played our style of football. You got to give them all the credit in the world. They're well-coached. Coach [Paul] Chryst does a tremendous job. Coach [Joe] Rudolph on offense, Coach [Justin] Wilcox on defense. You can see their culture running through them their entire game.

I think ours was doing the same thing. But you got to give them a lot of credit. They're an incredible football team. Cotton Bowl champs. And Coach Chryst should be very proud of his football team.

On our side, obviously disappointed with the outcome but not disappointed in our kids' efforts, the way they played, how they played, and the spirit they played with. You don't get any points for that. You don't get a trophy for that. We don't want a trophy for that.

We ended up getting beat. And we did a few things, some critical things in some critical times. I think we had four balls on the ground at some point. And then we had an interception. And when you do that against the sixth-ranked team in the country, that's what happens.

And the thing that really kind of got us to this point, the ball security just looked at times like it wasn't us. But, again, we're going to take credit for all the things we do. This team should hold their head high and show the type of response that this culture is.

I'm very proud of the two guys to my left. I'm really going to miss them. They're amazing, elite people, and elite players. But, like I said, got to give Wisconsin a lot of credit and Coach Chryst. They're an outstanding football team that deserves to be Cotton Bowl champs.

Q. Zach, what did you see on the interception?

QB ZACH TERRELL: It was just a force on my part. We had kind of talked about a certain situation in which if the safety did one, we're going to try to hit Donnie [Ernsberger] in the seam. And he made a good play. And the ball is the program.



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It's something that Coach Fleck has instilled in us since he first got here. And I didn't take care of it. Costly error. Put the defense in a tough position, and Wisconsin did a tremendous job of capitalizing on it.

Q. Zach and Corey, I know it's just after the game but can you put in perspective just how special your time at Western Michigan was during your four years.

QB ZACH TERRELL: I don't know if really I can adequately put words towards it.

And it's just been special. And I can't thank Coach [Fleck] enough for kind of what he's done for me and obviously Corey [Davis] and our senior class. We've been through a lot. And from 1-11 to -- the worst team in college football to 13-1 playing in the Cotton Bowl, what a tremendous opportunity. And I said once I got to Western Michigan, I just wanted to leave it a better place than when I found it. And I can hold my head high knowing that I did that.

Q. Corey [Davis], you made a great catch on that last touchdown. What did you see, and how did you do it? And summarize your four years coming from Wheaton South to Western Michigan?

WR COREY DAVIS: On this first question, I mean, I saw the ball, and I just pretty much -- Coach [P.J.] Fleck taught us every ball is an elite ball because it was thrown to you.

And it doesn't matter if the defender is grabbing you or whatever it is, go make a play on the ball if it's in the air and go attack it. That's what I did. Zach [Terrell] trusted me. Threw the ball up there, and I went to go get it.

My four years here at Western has been phenomenal. Like Zach said, we've been through so much and I've learned so many lessons not only on the field but off the field as well. I'm going to take them with me for the rest of my life, and I can't thank Coach Fleck enough for taking a chance on a kid with little to nothing. He's just a blessing what he's done for me and for this entire program. And this has been a great four years, a great ride, and I'm proud of each and every one of these guys for everything that they've done. It's been a great year, great four years.

Q. Zach [Terrell], the Bronco faithful really turned out today. Your reaction to everybody in the stands? They really came out for you.



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QB ZACH TERRELL: Yeah, can't thank them enough. Their support all season has been tremendous, making their way all the way down to Dallas. What a tremendous sight. It's starting to become what you do in Kalamazoo, support the football team and show up.

They did an awesome job of keeping us in the game with their energy, and I can't thank them enough for how supportive they've been throughout our career but especially tonight.

Q. Zach [Terrell], the first quarter touchdown, we got to see one of the last few moments of crazy legs. Can you just walk us through that call and being able to execute it the way you did?

QB ZACH TERRELL: Yeah, a lot of that has to go to our offensive line. We've run a similar play where I hand the ball off all season and I think we kind of took Wisconsin by surprise. So the offensive line and running backs has been an effective play, a dive play that we run a lot. Crazy legs kind of got loose, and sometimes that's a good thing. So it worked out.

But a lot of credit went to Wisconsin. They've got a tremendous defense, and they showed that today.

Q. Zach, Wisconsin has a good defense but can you just talk about your defense today? Obviously early on Wisconsin had its way in the running game and the defense really kept you guys in the game. Can you reflect on that and talk about that?

QB ZACH TERRELL: That's what our team is built off of. It's both offense and defense and special teams. I think they did an awesome job of responding. I think both offense and defense did a great job of responding. Me after the pick, we came back the next series, scored a touchdown.

Defense first half, like you said, they struggled a little bit stopping the run. But second half they did a much better job of it, and they did an elite job of keeping us in the game. I can't say enough about those guys and the effort they put forth. Like I said, I'm very proud of our whole team. And I don't feel like anybody really can hang their head at the effort we gave today.

Q. Coach, you called the guys over right at the game was ending. Can you just summarize what you were saying to them?

COACH FLECK: Yeah, teaching moment. It's teaching them how to lose. They haven't lost in 14 months, right? And told them I was very proud of them, how much I love them. And the effort they gave. And we will continue to learn from this.

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We will embrace our past to create our future, and it just wasn't enough tonight. But I did tell them how much I love them and how we will respond to this.

But, also, I think the biggest message was winning or losing should look the same when you kind of -- when it's all kind of done, you come out of that locker room and you go to shake hands. That's just respecting the game.

And I don't have to worry about that with our football team. But I did want to make sure before we went across that I had them all together, and I just wanted to make sure they knew to hold their heads high, how proud of them I really was of them. And that's all I said.

Q. What about Wisconsin's passing game was effective? And why do you think it worked so well?

COACH FLECK: I tell you what, that tight end (Troy Fumagalli), he's unbelievable. I thought -- we knew he was really good, right? But we don't have some 6'3" safeties or anything really to contest with him. You see some of his catches were contested by Darius Phillips, and we put our best cover guy on him at different times.

Schematically created some mismatches here and there that we felt, hey, we got a shot to be able to do this. But when you have a 6'6" tight end that has range like that, you got a quarterback as accurate as they have, two of them, that's what happens. There were multiple catches he had that were contested, and we just didn't come down it with.

The last play, I'll be honest with you, they got us. They got us. We had to say we can't let them get much. This is our only shot. Pretty much thought they were going to run. Threw a pass. And they had an incomplete pass there. Everybody said, Why did you throw it? Well, that's why they're elite coaches. And that's why they have got elite players.

But you got to give them a lot of credit. Their quarterback is incredibly accurate, and that's the best tight end we have faced in the four years here. He's incredible. Got to give him a lot of credit.

Q. P.J., you looked a little emotional coming off the field. Was that so and, if so, what was the cause?

COACH FLECK: Absolutely. I'm an emotional guy. I know that's not a secret for any of you. I'm an emotional guy. I am.

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Think about your kids. Think about if you have -- a lot of you drop your kids off at college and you never see them again. Some of you are very excited to drop them off. But think just giving up your kids right now and sending them off and never seeing them again or having them just come back and visit.

I have children. I have a 9-year-old, a 7-year-old, a 4-year-old and a 3-year-old. And if you took them away from me right now, I'd be emotional.

These are my kids. We have four children, Heather and I. But we have got 105 of them in there. That's the way I feel. This senior class has done so much for this football program, as a lot of seniors do as they leave their programs.

But this has been special because they took, I think, one of the worst college football teams in the country, with all due respect, and made it eight points away from winning a Cotton Bowl championship, which you don't get any credit for. You lost.

But what they did and what they accomplished this entire year, the 76 "nevers" to get to where they got to, it's a legacy they'll leave here and that we can continue to build on as you continue to move forward. So you're right I'm emotional because those kids are like my children.

Q. I know there's been talk all season, there's talk now, the season is over, where you go next. Where does that stand?

COACH FLECK: I'm going to Kalamazoo. I don't know where you're going or where everybody else is going. I'm on the bus unless they don't want me. Kathy [Beauregard] -- if 13-1 gets you fired around here, you know -- I love where I'm at, period. It's as simple as that. We're heading back to Kalamazoo.

Q. You spoke of the teaching moment there towards the end of the game, and you've also talked about how the players teach you things as well. Did the players or the game teach you specifically or your coaching staff anything today whether it be clock management or anything associated with how the game was managed?

COACH FLECK: No, I thought we did everything we could to win the football game. When you have a team like that that can control the clock -- and you look at the two teams. We were Number 1 and Number 4 in time of possession. There was ten seconds apart I think at the end of the game, just ten seconds in terms of time of possession.

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We did everything we could to win the football game, both offensively, defensively, and special teams. There's a lot of things we wanted to be able to create in special teams that never brought themselves to the forefront. You've got to be able to call it depending on how the game goes. We dug ourselves a 14-0 hole, hole, hole, hole. That's what happens.

Q. Coach, you talk about making history. You talk about taking a team that was at its worst to its best, 13-0, make it 13-1. What's this do for you, for your team and the future with a Cotton Bowl appearance and putting this school, Western Michigan, on the map?

COACH FLECK: I think the first thing it does is it helps recruiting. Recruiting is the lifeline of any football program. Any former coach or any athletic director, anybody who knows anything about football will tell you, if you don't have players you're not going to win, first and foremost.

Then they've got to be elite people. You've got to make sure of that, get the right people into your system. So that's what it helps.

I want people to understand, if you come to Western Michigan University, you have an opportunity to win a national championship. That's true. For all the talk out there, that is true.

Now, it's a little bit harder to win a national championship and get to the playoff or get to the Cotton Bowl when you're in the Group of 5. However, it can be done, and we've proven that. Northern Illinois has proven that. Boise has proven that. Houston has proven that. If we remember back when Houston being 6-0 or whatever they were, there was talk of them being in the final four? Why? Because they did it two consecutive years. Again, that's where the next step of our football program is.

I'm not saying we're going to be in the national title talk next year, but we have to take the next right step and that's by upgrading our recruiting, upgrading our facilities, continue to take our program from where it is and take the next right step.

For that to happen, there has got to be a lot more people committed than just Coach Fleck. There's got to be a lot more people committed to that. And I think this type of game helps that.

You saw the crowd out there. Some of you don't even think there's a Kalamazoo, Michigan, that exists. There's 150,000 people within a six-mile radius of Kalamazoo. It's a fabulous little town. You've got to come out and see it. But my point is that's what we have to be able to do, capture what you saw out there at AT&T Stadium, capture it in a bottle, and spread it to everybody else and continue to get Bronco Nation to rise and grow higher.

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Q. You've beaten Big Ten teams before. So when you had to take their punch early, you punched back. So the moment wasn't that big for you guys. You think the fact that you have beaten Big Ten teams before helped a little bit?

COACH FLECK: I think it helped with our players listening to the outside media. But inside our walls, we take one game at a time. If anything, from the outside noise, it gave validity to what everybody was saying.

But Wisconsin -- with all due respect, Wisconsin is a different animal. They were a few seconds away from winning the Big Ten championship, and here they are in the Cotton Bowl. And you're talking about a top six, top seven team in the country.

When you play a team like that, you almost have to be flawless, both teams. Something is going to give. I think a lot of you said that. Something's going to give.

Well, something did give. We screwed up first. We threw the big interception and, go figure, the guy that was committed to us that flips to Wisconsin picks it. There's a reason why we recruited that guy. I promise you. There was a reason. That was it. Got to give T.J. [Edwards] a lot of credit. He did come up to me after the game. I do want to say that. He did come up to me. It was kind of ironic.

Q. You guys also probably haven't been down 14-0 much this season.

COACH FLECK: At all.

Q. What was the mood of your team at that point? And what was your message to them to stay in it?

COACH FLECK: It's probably going to be really shocking to you, but it was "Row the Boat." Put your oar oar in the water and just keep rowing. We're in a storm right now, and it's pretty bad. But, again, if we stop rowing, it's going to get a lot worse and we'll never get out of it.

Some of you row, some of you don't, we're going to go in a circle. But if we continue to row, we're going to get out of it. And we came out of it.

There's highs and lows throughout the entire football game. Whether it's high, whether it's low, our team is trained to just continue to row and continue to do it for each other.

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We knew that even at the coin toss, when we defer, it was like pick your poison. Do you want to be able to get the ball in the second half after when you make adjustments? That's our philosophy. We want to be able to have that in the second half. And they came out and scored.

And then we went -- we had one first down with Corey [Davis] and then we went three and out. Then they scored again, and we had a big hole.

But when you dig a 14-0 hole against the sixth, seventh, eighth ranked team in the country, it's tough to climb out of it. You saw that. We struggled to get out of that all night long or all day long.

But I'm very proud of our kids' resolve and the resiliency. They showed what Western Michigan football is all about and they showed the entire country why we were 13-0. For all of "they" who thought we didn't belong, we do belong. We'll continue to grow higher, continue to change our best, and keep rowing the boat.

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