



## POSTGAME QUOTES | COLORADO

USC vs. Colorado

United Airlines Field at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum | Los Angeles, Calif.

Friday, November 11, 2022

### HEAD COACH MIKE SANFORD

#### *Opening statement:*

"Starting out, I thought it was a good start, particularly on defense. I was really pleased with how we prepared. We came out and gave some different looks. Caleb Williams is one of those guys, if you give him a chance to pick you apart, he's gonna pick you apart. I think some of the drop aid stuff that we did helped us be able to present different looks. But I think we started slowly offensively. I was pleased with how we did run the football against a top 10 team in the country. But ultimately, the turnovers and the sack where the intentional grounding safety was called, were too much to overcome against a team with the firepower that they have. We're gonna keep on fighting. We're gonna keep on finding a way to put ourselves in position to win games. I thought we did that and it got away from us today."

#### *On the adjustments USC made:*

"I thought outside of the fourth quarter and some of the screen game, it was a lot of those second plays that we talked about. I think play design-wise, there wasn't a lot that was really open. I thought they did a nice job of running the football. We had some stops here and there and then all of a sudden Caleb, on third down, moves around and finds some type of a small crease and checks the ball down and it's enough to get a first down. In the third quarter in particular, those plays stood out and that was really Caleb Williams and the receivers making plays when the play broke down."

#### *On the mistakes:*

"I think the thing that's frustrating is our defense was playing as well as they were, particularly in the first half, and then we gave USC a short field. The combination of what ends up being the safety and then you're kicking the ball at the 20 yard line and you just immediately give up field position. I think the fumble was a huge piece of the game. That was a self-inflicted wound and obviously it's frustrating, but there's nothing else we can do besides just continue to go back to work."

#### *On RB Alex Fontenot:*

"Alex ran really hard. You kind of saw it last week, with a couple of the runs that he had, and Deion (Smith) was a bit of a game-time decision. I feel like we want to have basically everybody ready to go these last two games and Deion wasn't quite 100%. He went through the warm ups and we made the decision during warm ups. I thought Alex competed at a high level and ran really hard. I also thought our offensive line did some good things. Tuli Tuipulotu is as advertised. I think he's probably the best pass rusher that we've seen all year. But I do think that overall, outside from two individual performanc-es, we matched up fairly well both in the run game and in the pass protection game, offensive line-wise. We have some guys banged up and quarterback-wise I thought we did some good things at times, but we just weren't consistent enough, particularly on third down in the first half."

#### *On their performance in the redzone:*

"I think we didn't run the ball well in the red zone as the game progressed. You gotta try to get seven at that point (first half). We had some decent runs, but when you're in that position, and our defense is playing the way it is, you want points on the board. I think seven there obviously makes all the difference."

#### *On the defense being more active:*

"I think if you look at the last two weeks in particular, going into this game, there's all the reason in the world probably to hang your head and not start fast offensively. I think you're starting to see some great individual efforts. Some of this young talent is starting to emerge and then some of those fifth and sixth year seniors that probably haven't had the success, they're starting to believe in themselves."

### JALEN SAMI, DL

#### *On how they started the game defensively:*

"We definitely try to come out with something different and give them a different look. That's something that we thought was beneficial for us on the back end and in the run game. So just having those stops and getting them off the field and giving our offense the ball, that was what we were trying to do with our game plan. They made some adjustments and they

figured out when to attack us, so we have to make adjustments on top of that. We definitely had the mindset to come out here and just have nothing to lose, just give it our all."

*On what keeps the team going week after week:*

"Overall it's team heart. It's not what we wanted, but we're out here working every day. We're trying to compete, but for me personally, I just see these as opportunities for me to get better and to elevate my game, and hopefully reach my dreams and grow professionally. The performances we put on tape are our true identity. So we are just trying to work to get better."

*On his impression of Caleb Williams:*

"He's a quick guy. Our game plan was to drop eight and just rush three, and so that's a heavy burden on us D-lineman, when you're rushing three against five. He had a lot of time and he made some good throws."

*On the defense getting more TFL's and turnovers:*

"We're trying to emphasize turnovers and takeaways that give us energy and change the whole game. One pick six could change the whole game. So we're just waiting for those opportunities and it really comes down to us doing our job, and if we're doing our job every time, and all 11 guys are doing that, those turnovers will come to us. Seeing that we're making more TFL's, we're getting them in long third down situations and getting them off the field."

## **ALEX FONTENOT, RB**

*On how tough it was to get things going offensively:*

"It always just comes down to the little things, those little mistakes. 10 people could be doing the best thing they've ever done and all it takes is one. I think we're a good team. I think we've just got to figure it out."

*On coming back from injury:*

"It just felt really good. I felt really fresh, fast and just stronger. It felt good taking that time off to just really work on my skills."

*On if he felt he was running harder today:*

"I felt like I was flying all over the place. I felt really good just getting back to what I do. Being off for all those games, I kind of felt like I had to prove something."

*On how he approaches these last games:*

"At this point I can't get down on myself every game. I would just drive myself into a wall doing that. I'm out here just enjoying the time that I have, to do what I love with all my brothers, because I know I probably won't ever get that time back."





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### HEAD COACH LINCOLN RILEY

#### *Opening Statement:*

"Ninth win. That's some really cool times of the team surging on all three sides, which we said was going to be a big deal. I thought our guys responded and did. Played pretty well defensively from the jump — pressure, just sound play across the board. It took a little bit to get going offensively, but we were able to settle in there and get rolling pretty good. I'm proud of the way that everybody stepped up. Our guys were awesome. Obviously really proud of the win and to get another one here at home. Some exciting opportunities are coming up that we look forward to."

#### *On Travis Dye getting injured:*

"That's tough. It shook us all a little bit. He's such an emotional leader, and a senior. That sucks. There's really no other way to put it. It's one of the tough parts of this game. This game, it's given Travis a lot. He's put a lot into it and he's had an awesome career. He's had an awesome run here for us this year, and there's no way we would be sitting here where we're at as a football team without him. His role will probably be a little bit different going forward here for this team, but he'll still be a huge leader and a huge part of it. He's got a lot of great ball and a lot of other great things ahead of him right now. He's married way over his head, so he's definitely got that going for him. We love him, and it's an unfortunate part of this game."

"Don't expect that he'll play again this year, but don't expect it to be anything long-term in terms of his future. He's gonna be playing on an NFL team next year, and probably playing really well. It breaks your heart, it does. But again, it's part of the game and that's why you have to appreciate every opportunity that you get to coach it, especially to play it. His time here on the field should be with no regrets. He certainly left it all out there and did everything he could for this team, and I know he'll continue to do so."

#### *On Dye's importance to the culture in the locker room:*

"Tremendously important. I'd say, important for the culture, but really important to the competitive nature, the way we practice, the energy, the competitiveness, the physicality and the toughness. He was one of the key cogs in this team making some real progress here. I think we all know that was something that had to happen here, and he was a central figure in that. His presence on the field, his presence on the practice field, all of that, it got everybody going. He is an infectious leader and an infectious personality."

#### *On Brenden Rice's touchdown and Austin Jones' performance:*

"Rice's (touchdown) was a really good play. Caleb made a really nice throw. It was just aggressive play through the ball by Brendan. It was good to see him make that play. It kind of got us going. That along with the two turnovers defensively really got us going. Austin Jones was tremendous. He's been right there the whole way and he's had some big games, especially early in the year, and then Travis kind of kind of separated himself a little bit and took over. What a great guy we have to turn to in Austin. I was really excited to see the way Raleek (Brown) and Darwin (Barlow) both played tonight. They both made some really fantastic runs and the depth of that room will be tested, and we have three guys in there that'll be ready to go."

#### *On the performance Tuli Tuipulotu:*

"He's been so important to what we've been doing. He affects the passer in a really unique way, and I think he's really bought into what we're doing schematically, and I think he's really improved as a player. His versatility has really shown itself and he's been consistent for us. We've talked to our guys about not just playing the game to be a placeholder, not just to do your job and be there, but actually when you get to that point where you've done your job and you're in your gap or you made your blocker are you doing it with intent to really make a play every single time? And are you going to make it every time? No, but if you have that mentality, then when opportunity shows up, you're ready to make it. And Tuli really embodies that for us. He's just been steady, he's been explosive. I know he doesn't like to think of himself like this but everybody else in that locker looks to him as a leader by example, and he's been a really strong leader for this football team and our defense."

#### *On the defense's performance tonight:*

"Our defense played well. We affected the passer, which was huge. We did a really nice job on third down. We got a couple of turnovers. We played really well early in the football game. So I was proud of the defensive effort. We played like we expected we would play. Each game is its own journey. Now we get the chance to reset. We've got a little bit of a long week to adjust and reset and get ready to go play those guys across town."

**CALEB WILLIAMS, QB**

*On exchange with Travis Dye after his injury:*

"I just told him I love him. I looked him in the eye and I told him I love him and we're going to get this win. I was just there for him. Like Coach said, he's been a key part of everything for us as a team, for me and for me as a QB. I have been able to hand the ball off to him, and he is able to do some special things in pass pro and even the scramble drill. He's a special player and a special human. We're going to miss him on the field, but he's still going to be there, and he'll have a different role for this team.

*On winning by a big margin:*

"No. We go through practice, and we work on these plays, and they just so happen to work out. We put in a lot of work as a group, along with myself. My goal every single week is to help the Trojans go 1-0. Early in the year there were games where I had one touchdown. There were games where I had maybe two or three. There have been games recently that I've had five or whatever it is. We've been 1-0 mainly in those games and so that's really all I care about every week. I just care about competing and winning. If I come out with five, then I come out with five, but if I come out with one, then I come out with one."

*On frustrations early on but the breakthrough at the end:*

"I'm going to relay it back to practice again. Everything always goes back to practice in the sense of there were times during practice this week we weren't consistent. We weren't communicating. We weren't doing small things that help you win games. They help you not have penalties or get behind the sticks. If you're not on target with your receiver or you hand the ball off when you're not supposed to. Things like that. Just consistent communication and making sure that we're always focused and locked in throughout the week. I promise that I will not allow what happened this week in practice to happen again."

**TULI TUIPULOTU, DL**

*On preparing for UCLA:*

"I mean it is the rivalry game, but we have to treat every game the same. We can't go harder because it's UCLA. How we treat Colorado is how we should treat UCLA. We just work, practice and prepare; just like every week."

*On the defensive performance*

"This is how we should play every week. We know we can do it, we just need to execute."

