

Vanderbilt University Football Media Conference

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Derek Mason

Post Game

Vanderbilt - 21, Missouri - 14

DEREK MASON: We talked about the grind all week. We understand exactly where we were. Like I said, sometimes it's just about drowning out the noise, and these guys did as good a job as I could have asked for. I thought we kept Missouri without points on several drives. You look up, they were inside the 20 a couple of times. We had some miscues, ran into the kicker, gave him a second opportunity. But that was the one thing about these dudes, we talked about it, we talked about being resilient. We talked about being relentless. I thought you saw relentless play tonight. I thought you guys straining to get off blocks, you saw guys straining late in the down. Man, these guys played tough. When it got hard, they played tough. And then for the most part I thought we played smart, truly smart. Ke'Shawn at the end of the ballgame getting down after the 1st down, that's smart football. That's what it's supposed to look like in those situations. I mean, I've got to give credit to those guys, man, defensively for just staying in the fight. Andre Mintze, critical sacks in critical situations, Allan George, I told these guys all week, sometimes if you do your job, the ball just hits you in the face, and he just winds up being outside, man, just sitting as a quarters corner, end zone, and the ball just flies up and the ball hits him in the face. I told these guys, man, there ain't no secret sauce to this. Just make sure we just do our job. Probably for the first time all year, you saw this team play a 60-minute ballgame because guys were just doing their jobs.

You know, so I look, Ke'Shawn, he ran hard. It's who Ke'Shawn is. He's going to line up and he's going to be a warrior, but I thought the line blocked. Mo Hasan, Mo Hasan did exactly what I thought he'd do. He brought energy to practice. You could see the energy in practice just rise a little bit because that dude competed, and it made our team different. So when I talk to people this week about our team, I tried to contain it, but it was hard to contain myself later in the week because I knew these guys had it. They had finally figured it out.

So now what we've got to do is be thankful for the day. We took advantage of this opportunity. We got others coming down the road, and we've just got to make sure that we do our jobs. We played Vanderbilt football,



continue to be Commodore men and let's anchor down.

Any questions?

Q. On defense specifically a lot of twists, a lot of stunts worked on the pass rush. Did you sense schematically there wasn't much different between this game and the first six games?

DEREK MASON: Same calls. Same calls. I put Jason Tarver -- we talked about he went to the box, and I think a lot of times it's just easier to call it from there. Less chaos. You can see the game differently. You're not waiting on people to tell you this or that. You can just see the game develop, and he called one heck of a game. He called probably his best game here in terms of our guys being able to line up, play football, understand how to execute. So hats off to J.T. and the defensive staff because I know our defensive staff has been much maligned, but let me tell you something, same Xs and Os we started with week one. It ain't changed. It's about the Jimmies and Joes. So again, those guys stepped up, but it was a great job by the coaches prepping them.

Q. You talked about Mo during practice, but how do you just feel like the energy to start the game was with him out on the field? It seemed like the team rallied around him.

DEREK MASON: It felt like practice. Here's what I'll tell you. If you work hard enough in practice, if you can muster that energy in practice, games are just fun. That's what it looked like for our guys today. Our guys were just having fun from the beginning. It was fun. Even when they scored a touchdown, it was still fun. You know, people try to poke holes, but you know what, for young men 18 to 22, it's still a fun game. We just had to take them there, and Mo really provided that spark this week. So that's where we sit. That's what transpired, and the end result is a Commodore win.

Q. Did you like the 3rd down call and the pass to Cam that got you the winning score?

DEREK MASON: I talked to Jerry on Wednesday. We had talked about bunch concepts because we thought like there was an opportunity to -- because this team is playing so much man, we thought that we could possibly get this group and get them in man coverage, and if they got in zone we knew we'd have an

opportunity for it. I had mentioned to Jerry, talked about what we call trail or snag a little bit, but Jerry said, man, their linebacker had picked one off earlier in the year for a touchdown, so they opted for almost like a fan concept where you had quick flat out, okay, and corner. Cam came out of the break, Riley made a great throw. Cam beats the guy one-on-one, hops over one defender and then finds himself in the end zone. That's just two guys making a play. Great throw, great catch, great finish.

Q. You said you could barely contain yourself late in the week. What were you seeing from your team then?

DEREK MASON: Just a different type of energy. Mo brought a different type of energy. Here's what happens, and no offense against Riley or Deuce. It just hadn't happened, okay. You insert a guy, and dudes were like -- I remember Ke'Shawn Vaughn on Tuesday, first day of practice, Mo pulled the ball, okay, and it was the wrong read, but Mo pulled it and it went like nine yards, and Jerry said, Mo, listen, you've got to hand it, and key was like, no, no, no, let him run. It was that type of energy. Generally a running back ain't going to tell you, hey, let him run, like give me the rock. That's what good running backs tell you. But again, as we competed, we went through one-on-ones and 7-on-7. You just saw him competing. I mean, dropping dimes and just getting after dudes, talking a little trash. That's what creates chemistry. It creates energy in practice.

Again, they're 18 to 22. What do 18- to 22-year-olds do nowadays? Just talk trash. That's all they do. You just want to have a little fun. These guys have had some fun. Today seemed fun. I don't know what you're going to write about our sideline today, but hopefully what you say is that it was fun. It looked energetic. Guys were having a good time. It was a party over on west end. That's what it should look like. That's what it felt like. And I was right in the middle of it having a good time with them. So that's it.

Q. Just to be clear, did Mo earn this opportunity through how he practiced during the week or did you tell him before practice started we may go with you this weekend, that's why he provided that spark in practice?

DEREK MASON: I knew on Sunday. Coming off that game, we needed something different. You continue to do what you've always done, you always have what you always got. Put a little pressure on Riley. But at the end of the day, I knew Mo was going to be the dude. So that's what we went with, and you know, it worked. So kudos to Jerry, kudos to myself. Maybe we'll share a Dasani water later on this evening.

Q. Is Mo okay?

DEREK MASON: Oh, yeah, man. He came up to me, Coach, I'm good. I said, man, I hope you are. And you know what, with a bye week, we've got time anyway. I'm not going to listen to what mo tells me; I'm going to talk to our trainers and figure it out for myself.

Q. Do you feel like there's a formula then that can win from here on, that you've found a formula, that your players found a formula that can win games down the stretch?

DEREK MASON: Yes, I do believe we've found a formula, but I think it's bigger than just a formula. I think we found some chemistry. The reality is, for us, it's been something missing. Just a little something missing. And what guys realized tonight, if you just do your job, okay, you play for each other and just do your job, maybe you can play good football, and that's exactly what they did.

Q. You said in here on Tuesday that schemes are good, coaches are good, we just need to execute. That's what happened today. How validating is that for you, given what you've said all week?

DEREK MASON: I think sometimes, man, you've got to continue to believe what you believe. Again, the voices get loud. Like when the voices get loud, everybody jumps on because that's all we know how to do in today's society. We don't necessarily raise people up, man. It feels a little more comfortable to kick people and jump on their backs. So with that being said, we're just going to stick to our process, because like I told these guys, it's not outcome driven, it's process driven, and what you saw today was a pretty good process.

Q. Riley's interception, at that point that's the kind of play that can change a game and take potentially a win and turn it into a loss. What did you say to him and the team at that point to keep him on track and focused on the rest of the game?

DEREK MASON: I told Riley he was going to get other opportunities, just take care of the ball. And with the team, hey, man, go get a stop. That's all you can do. Let's not make this thing harder than what it is. I mean, we go out there, they score, okay, man, let's line up, okay, game is tied. It's still a good ballgame.

Last thing I'll say, because I think I need to say this, and I said it to the media outside so I'll say it to you. Everybody thinks they want this job. Everybody thinks they want this job. But I can tell you for sure that I'm one of maybe a few men in this country that's built for this job the way it sits today. Man, I love this team, I love Vanderbilt. I'm a Commodore through and through. You can question me about decision making man, but don't question me about being a Commodore. Anchor down.