

Poinsettia Bowl: BYU vs Wyoming

Wednesday, December 21, 2016

Kalani Sitake

Harvey Langi

Kai Nacua

Jamaal Williams

COACH SITAKE: I don't need to make a statement. Any questions?

Q. How big was that botched field goal by Wyoming in the first quarter for your momentum and you won by 3 so what did that do for you guys?

COACH SITAKE: That was huge. I think if you look at so many different moments where you -- where the elements had an affect on the game, but worked in our favor on that one and also the punt, so we will take it and both teams had to play in the weather, so it caused problems for both teams. But I think that we were more fortunate with the weather and all that. These guys are drinking all these caffeinated drinks now, graduated.

Q. Talk about watching Kai make that final play coming down there to the end of the wire and you needed somebody to step up.

COACH SITAKE: We were hoping one of these guys would make a play and Kai has done that throughout his career he's made big plays for his program. I was just really thankful that he was able to do that in his last play as a cougar and get a pick. I think people have been avoiding him because he's got great presence as a safety and he's just a great ballplayer.

If you look at what he was doing in high school he was a quarterback and I remember recruiting him and seeing him here now as a senior and graduated I'm just really proud of him. Happy he was able to make that play. He made plays all night.

KAI NACUA: Thanks, Coach.

COACH SITAKE: I was yelling at him to get down, because I didn't know what was going with the ball, we could run more clock off, but the good move was to get down, but I think he wanted to run over and celebrate?

KAI NACUA: I was trying to slide and then just --

COACH SITAKE: Yeah.



Q. What did you see from their quarterback and the receiver that you were able to make that play on the ball?

KAI NACUA: I believe I was in a deep half. Josh is used to -- that his name, Josh? Every time he breaks the pocket the receivers tend to break toward the end zone and right when I saw him break for the pocket I looked back towards the tight end and saw him start working my way and I always overran the ball because I was so excited and I knew it was coming, because that's what he's used to and ended up picking it.

Q. Coach, yesterday I asked you what it means to you personally and to the program to play in the Poinsettia Bowl. What's it mean to win the Poinsettia Bowl?

COACH SITAKE: Oh, I mean, it's to compete in the Poinsettia Bowl is an accomplishment in itself and the win is for the players and the fans so for me as a coach just being able to help these young men achieve their goals on the football field and help facilitate the goals off the field is my job, happy to be a part of it. The win is all them they're the ones that are dirty. I'm only dirty because they hugged me and they dumped Powerade on me. That was about it.

Q. Jamaal, it was special for you to come back and have a night like this in this bowl game? I know you were here in 2012.

JAMAAL WILLIAMS: It felt like almost the same, because I scored in both of them, because it brings back a whole bunch of memories -- and in the same end zone -- so it brought back a bunch of memories from my freshman year and I was still in the game and it was just great offensive blocking and my line and my tight ends and Jonah, Jonah is the man. That man had the best block in the world, I wanted to celebrate before I scored. I was like, wow, that man! I'm just grateful to be here and it's God's plan for me to come back and have my last bowl game where I had my first bowl game. Take his blessings and follow his path and he does great things for you.

Q. Coach in a season where you have had so many close games how fitting was it to end the season with a 3-point win?

COACH SITAKE: I hope we win games -- I'll take wins no matter how they come but, it would be nice to not

keep 'em so close. Obviously we would like to end the game and had some opportunities to maybe make plays to end the game and put it out of reach, but you have to give credit to our opponents and in this one. Wyoming did a great job getting back into the game where we thought we had a good lead. We kind of felt it toward the end there, they were pushing and getting momentum and we needed someone to make a big play and it happened to be Kai's turn. It was an entertaining game and our guys just fight to the end. Regardless of what the momentum is going your way or not or what the score says these guys have played every down their hardest and I can't ask for anything more as a coach.

Q. Harvey you've played multiple positions. How big was the performance today, 16 tackles, defensive M.V.P., but to be able to do that at linebacker?

HARVEY LANGI: First and foremost I want to give a shout out to the "D" line. The other linebackers that got me up to speed these past couple of weeks trying to come back to linebacker. Coach, the way he coaches the linebackers and the defense really got me back up to speed in that short of amount of time that I had. But it was cool! It was so fun just being out there. Everyone always comes up and asks me the different positions, blah, blah, blah and I tell them, hey, I get to play football and that's what I love doing and if I'm going to play football as the place holder, the kicker, the D end, line backer or running back, I'm happy because I get to play football, so it was fun playing linebacker today.

Q. From your perspective what allowed Wyoming to get on that roll in the second half?

COACH SITAKE: They made some plays. I think they got those two really long drives and that's kind of their identity, you know, just to pound the ball a little bit. They actually took some risks going for it on fourth down and they threw the ball, you know, and great play-action play. They just do what they normally do and we -- they extended the drives and we couldn't get out of them. I think they had more manageable third downs on those two drives. I think the first one was a 16-play, 8-minute drive, which was a grind.

Our guys got a little tired and it's a game so those guys were physical and we knew that we would see that and if we wanted to do anything about it gotta get out of the drives and we had our opportunities. They obviously converted and we didn't get out of 'em in those two drives and that hurt us. That's kind of a good identity for what Wyoming football is about and give them credit.

Q. Looked like Tanner settled down in the second

half, any particular reason?

COACH SITAKE: Yeah, I think he just didn't throw stupid passes, you know? That one pick he knew was wrong. He's a great player and takes risks. I don't know how many times the ball was tipped on that one touchdown, it was like, oh no, oh man, okay, I guess we caught it, you know, and the Mangum magic happened, again but we would like for him to be more under control and make better throws and show more composure and he has that, he can do all of it.

The thing that I was happy about with him and he was able to manage the plays and get the checks and the audibles at the line of scrimmage, he did a great job with that part. He can throw the ball really well. That's something that is natural for him. I think once he was able to -- I guess this is his one game to get it out of the way and iron out the kinks, but just happy with how he was able to settle things down and hand the ball off to Jamaal and let him do some work.

Q. You've talked about allowing the players to have ownership, particularly the captains and the seniors right here. Tonight seemed to be a game where they really took over in their respective ways and carried the team.

COACH SITAKE: Well, I think it's a huge compliment to these young men. They've been leading this team all -- the entire time. I think I get way too much credit for doing things as a head coach when these guys have made it so much easier for me. They just bought into everything I have asked them to do and that our coaches have. These guys are the leaders and the reason why we were able to make the change from 1-3 and go off a string of wins and the guys played their butts off and they lead and they're great young men. I sat there and watched them take the team and they did it. Made me look good.

Q. For all three of you guys, what do you see as the identity of the program moving forward for the younger guys?

JAMAAL WILLIAMS: Start there and then go there.

COACH SITAKE: See, leadership! (Chuckles.)

HARVEY LANGI: Just the way that he embraces the team and how he treats us and allows us to control the team. I felt like my voice could be -- you know, was a big influence. I felt the way that Coach would care for us and love for us and he would do it through his actions, but he would verbally say that, constantly every day. When you have someone like that, you know, on and off the football field you have his back and you want to do the best. I don't ever want to disappoint Coach Kalani or any of the staff members because of that. All the younger guys that get to play

under their coaching, they're lucky and very blessed. That's probably what I think.

KAI NACUA: Well done, Harvey.

JAMAAL WILLIAMS: I think Kalani, I think he got me when he first came in. He was totally like, I ain't your bishop, I ain't none of that, I'm your football coach. I low-key wanted to stand up and clap, you know what I mean? I think I already like this dude already, you know what I mean? He came in and he said what he was going to do. He walked the walk and talked the talk and he put in so many things at BYU that we never knew could happen and he's always fighting for us to get new things and he always wanted nothing but the best for us. He strives to get us new things and he always is working for us. He wants the best for us on and off the field and, you know, you can always go to Coach and go to his room, his office and ask him questions. No matter what it is and he will never judge you for it. He will always have your best interest at heart. I'm just grateful to have him and the coaching staff for my last year and to come back and have them here is a blessing.

I knew from my trials and everything and working hard that one day God would give me a blessing and Coach Sitake and all the coaches, they are the blessing. I'm just grateful to be able to play under them for this year and to give them 100% of whatever I got and for us as seniors. For him to put it on our shoulders to talk to the team and get the team ready for games and everything, is just him, you know -- he sets it for us and he let us lead. It's just something that you're just grateful to have in a coach, to let his players lead the team and just do what's best. Grateful to have him and the coaching staff.

Q. Jamaal, you called the offensive linemen up at the podium when you got the award. Why did you decide to that and what did it mean?

JAMAAL WILLIAMS: I'm nothing without the line. You can't run the ball without the line, you can't do a lot of things without the line.

You can't pass without the line. They really need more credit than what we do. We just run behind them and find the holes and stuff but they the ones that open the holes, they the ones moving the people in the ground every down, you know, going against dudes, like, every down, hand-to-hand every time. I don't think they get enough credit.

I love my linemen I tell them I'm with y'all, whatever y'all need I got y'all. You help me and I help you, it's a team effort. I think running the ball is a team effort I think it's a lineman/running back relationship. They know I will do anything for them. They know I -- and I know they

will do the same for me. I think it's just respect. You just gotta have respect for your teammates and for what they do for you and for you to be the leader that you are and get all the stats that you want. You can't do anything without the line and I'm just grateful for them, tight ends, wide receivers, anybody who block.

Q. Kalani, you said at the luncheon, you talked about the respect you had for Wyoming's football program. Talk about meeting with them after the game, the effort they put in and being able to be there with your boys and how things went for the two teams.

COACH SITAKE: Yeah, I think we talked about it as a team, that it's important for us to respect our opponents because, the truth is, we do something that a lot of people don't think makes sense. We work 350-something days for 12 guaranteed opportunities and when you can extend that by one game there is not a lot of people who would say you basically work all year for seconds in a football game and minutes when you add it all up. These were three guys that played the bulk of the season, but there are guys on the team that don't see the field at all that sacrifice a lot on scout team and give us a look and they have as much ownership and place in this game as this win. I think it's impressive when you listen to Harvey and Kai and Jamaal talk about their teammates and how much they love their teammates and how much they appreciate it and they give a lot of credit to their teammates.

The guys that don't get a lot of attention for it, I think it's important for us to respect the other team because they do what we do. You just have a little bit more appreciation for the game.

These guys understand what we represent here at BYU and that we want to play the game with sportsmanship and class and we want to show people that we care about football, we definitely do but we also respect the game and respect each other. That's basically what it comes down to and these guys love their teammates and love each other and I think you can play the game that way.