



**2019 Allstate Sugar Bowl
Texas
Post-Game Press Conference
January 1, 2019**



COACH HERMAN: Really proud of our team. I know that the phrase "team win" gets used quite a bit. But the way our offense, defense, and special teams complemented each other the entire night, I thought, was magnificent. It was what we needed to have happen in order to have a chance to win.

I have an unbelievable amount of respect for Kirby Smart and his crew and his program, so much so that we took a trip out there this spring just to pick brains and talk shop a little bit. And it's a really, really good football team that he has there and one that I'm sure he will continue to field throughout his tenure at Georgia. So our hats off to them. It was a heck of a football game.

Again, just really proud of the physical nature in which we played this game. At this point in our program's trajectory, that's what we're going to need to do to win, is we have got to out-hustle people, we've got to out-hit people. And we've got to play with a purpose and a passion greater than anybody in the country. And tonight I feel like we did that.

Q. Tom, I've asked you this in the spring and August and September and I'll ask it again: At the biggest moment of the season, first and goal at the 1, your guys finally lined up and slammed it in there to take the lead with this guy. What did it say about your team's toughness at that moment and this entire night about how tough Texas is now?

COACH HERMAN: I appreciate you noticing that, that we've developed, that we have continued to develop. I am sure we wouldn't have been able to do that at week 1 or week 2. But we did it tonight against an unbelievable defense.

And we're going to have to do that. When you get down there, you've got to be able to punch the ball in. And I think it certainly provided us a validation of our confidence heading into the game that we could do that.

Q. Coach, noticed you really focused on the run game and with Georgia being an incredible run defense, that seemed to be the M.O. tonight. You switched the offensive linemen kind of sneakily. We saw Calvin Anderson slide inside. Patrick Vahe popped to the left side. [Samuel] Cosmi slide inside a couple of times. Was that part of your game plan to try to throw off Georgia a little bit?

COACH HERMAN: It wasn't necessarily to throw off Georgia. It was to get the right people doing the right things on a certain play that actually we had to check out of it all three times that we had called the play.

So we wanted to make sure our game plan was two things. One, we wanted to run our plays but run them out of different formations and motions. You saw us in pistol quite a bit. You saw us motion in the back -- into the backfield. You saw us motion the tight end in and out. You saw us motion some receivers.

When you've got a month to prepare, as good as that defensive staff is, if you let them diagnose exactly what's going on, they're pretty dang good. So we wanted to disguise a lot of -- again, our base plays.



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And then we wanted to play with tempo. We felt we could wear them out a little bit, and they like to play a lot of guys on defense in the front seven. And we wanted to make sure we could keep them on the field, and I thought we executed that plan. Those two parts of the plan went pretty well.

Q. Tom, you talked a lot about how much the senior class has meant and how this might be the most important senior class that you might have in your Texas career. After having won the Sugar Bowl now, can you put in perspective the impact they've had and capping their careers off this way?

COACH HERMAN: Yeah, I mean any time I'm asked about them, I'm going to thank them publicly. We would not be here if it was not for their buy-in two years ago.

I told the senior class even in the locker room, despite an up-and-down year last year, they never wavered in their buy-in and their commitment, despite us laying an egg in the first game. That could have been a time when a less-bought-in group, a less mature group, would have -- rats jumping ship, if you will. They didn't. It brought them closer. It brought them more together. And they were the heart and soul of this season. And they are a huge part of -- or a huge reason why our trajectory is headed the way that it's headed.

Q. Sam, I wonder if you could tell us how the Drew Brees Westlake jersey came to be for tonight and just what overall what this night and this win meant for you and the program.

QB SAM EHLINGER: Yeah, coming into the Superdome, I had to respect Drew because of all the amazing things he's done in this building. And I wanted to play like him and have a little magic. I was just paying my respects to him.

And this win is a huge steppingstone for our program. It's going to carry a lot of momentum into the off-season, and I look forward to getting back in January.

Q. Sam, piggybacking on the last question, do you have a relationship with Drew? And how cool was it to come in here and produce that magic that he's produced so many times in this same building?

QB SAM EHLINGER: Yeah, we've connected a few times. He's always been incredible to me, reaching out, always letting me know that he's there if I need him. He, obviously, is a tremendous role model because of what he's done in the NFL, and I thank him for that.

Q. Coach, did your heart drop when Sam [Ehlinger] yelled that you guys are back as far as Texas is concerned?

COACH HERMAN: Yes! (laughter).

Q. From your perspective, now that the season is over, you don't have another opponent, what does this win mean? And is Texas back?



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COACH HERMAN: I'll never know what that means, "is Texas back." I'm never going to comment on that. It could mean a lot of different things. And so I'll never comment on that. I know we're headed in the right direction. I don't ever want to give any kind of finality to where we're at because we are always making progress.

And the win again just means we're headed in the right direction. We lost in Dallas a month ago, and it left a really bad taste in our mouth. So the good thing is there's still a lot for this program to achieve, mainly winning our conference title.

But to beat such a quality opponent like that the way that we did it and to do it on this kind of stage in the Sugar Bowl certainly leads me to believe that we're headed in the right direction.

Q. Charles, when Sam [Ehlinger] stepped up and did the Longhorn Nation "We're back" thing, what was your reaction when you heard that? And as a senior, what does this game and this season, what you guys accomplished, what do you think that does mean?

DE CHARLES OMENIHU: When he said that, I was like keep saying it. That's the confidence this man exudes to the offense and to the whole team, and I've commended him so many times. And I'll commend him again for just being the guy he is and the way he is because it's really been transcending and inspiring to everybody on this whole team and the whole university.

As far as the win, I mean just like Coach [Tom] Herman said, it's up arrow for this program. These guys are led by amazing men and amazing coaches. And to have a leader like Sam that is going to continue to lead these guys in the off-season, to make them not as satisfied for this, because this ain't the end goal for this university.

Obviously, like Coach Herman said, the Big 12 championship is still something that this university needs to accomplish. And I know that this football team and this program is in the greatest of hands.

Q. You made a big decision in the off-season to come back, Charles. And you had an incredible year. Defensive lineman of the year in the Big 12. What went into that decision to come back? And just talk about the feelings of winning the Sugar Bowl and accomplishing what you have, laying the foundation for the future of this program.

DE CHARLES OMENIHU: A lot of that was being able to feel this. Winning this game with these guys with this class that I came in with was a big reason why, to be honest with you.

I knew in the off-season what we were going to come in as far as freshmen and what was already here, that this team was going to be an amazing squad. And that was a personal dream of mine to play on a stage like this and to win a game. This was a huge part of why I decided to come back to school. That's the best decision I've ever made in my 21 years of living, for real.



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Q. Tom, if you can talk about the defensive performance today, just how suffocating it was. And, Sam, how sore are you going to be? I mean, the go-ahead touchdown, the game-winning touchdown drive. You carried it nine times, six in a row at the end. Four getting slammed around in the goal line. But your mindset down there?

QB SAM EHLINGER: I think that mindset and the physicality and the whatever it takes and the fourth and inches is the mindset that our offense needs to have, our team needs to have every single play. And I'm going to do everything that I can for my team to put them in the best situation to win. So I knew that -- I mean, thank you for giving me the ball. I wouldn't want it any other way. And I'm just so proud of the way our defense stepped up and how the offensive line did in the running game.

COACH HERMAN: And then, to your point about our defense, great game plan by Coach [Todd] Orlando on our staff, unbelievably well-executed. We knew we had to stop the run, had to. And we were committed to pressuring on first and second down and trusting our guys on the perimeter if they were to pass and trusting that that pressure would also at least make the ball come out quick. I thought the game plan was well-designed. And even more proud of how fiercely it was executed by the players on the field.

Q. Defensively, the next-to-last drive for Georgia, you just kind of -- the guys kind of rolled the dice. The blitz on that first down literally got the ball out of his hands super fast like you were talking about. Was that an all-or-nothing-type situation for you guys at that point? Do you feel like that was the biggest thing in the game?

COACH HERMAN: Which drive? The one where we sacked them on first drive. Is that what you're referring to? And we forced them to punt at the end?

Yeah, I think we learned our lesson on the drive before, that they're so good, their quarterback, receiver, O-line, if we sit back and play too passive with that much time left on the clock, that's probably not the smartest thing to do. So we wanted to pressure them on that drive, and it worked out well. And I think we all want to think that offense and defense is mutually exclusive. They go hand in hand, and they're very complementary.

I'm looking at this stat. The one that sticks out to me, which is amazing -- and I know it's an archaic stat at times, but it really mattered in this game. We had the ball for 12 minutes in the fourth quarter, 12 of the 15 minutes. And I thought our offense did a great job of getting first downs and milking the clock down with a lead. And our offense played a part in playing great defense as well.

Q. Sam, specifically about the goal-line plays, were those all you? And was there any talk about field goal on fourth down, or was it going to be all you all the way on that?

QB SAM EHLINGER: Well, we didn't really talk about it because we got stuffed three plays in a row, which we have to fix. But I don't know what was being said on the headset. But I'm just glad that they trusted me and gave me the opportunity to punch the ball in.



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Q. Any doubts, Tom?

COACH HERMAN: No, not with that guy carrying it.

Q. You had a moment on the trophy stand where you got to see your mom and family. Tell us how special that was for you.

QB SAM EHLINGER: It was incredible to see my family and all the trauma that we've been through to get this opportunity, Texas football. And the University of Texas has meant so much to me and my family. And to be able to do this with my family here, I can't think of anything better.

Q. Tom, you've been part of a championship team at Ohio State. You talked about you went to see Georgia. You've got to be familiar with Alabama and Clemson. When you talk about we're getting there, what's it going to take for Texas or anyone else right now to get to that level to dislodge what Alabama and Clemson are able to do right now?

COACH HERMAN: They've got a pretty good headstart on everybody, I can tell you that. It's going to take multiple years of recruiting classes like they've had in the last half decade or so. And then it's going to take the development of those great players.

And we feel like we're on track, having been at this program for a couple years. We've recruited really well. We've developed really well. I think we've got the best strength coach and strength program in America. So I think we're going to need to continue to recruit at that elite level. And once we get them here, we've got to develop them at an elite level like those programs.

Q. Tom, talk about the end of the second half -- or the end of the first half and start of the second half. It was almost the complete opposite of Big 12 championship game where they don't score. [Ryan] Bujcewski gets the 50-something-yard punt to get you to halftime and the defense comes out and forces the turnover. How huge was that swing right there, to not give up points or have a special teams gaff and for defense to come and get the offensive ball right back?

COACH HERMAN: Yeah, it was huge. You want to start both halves really well on both sides of the ball, all three phases of the ball, and you want to end both halves the same way. And I feel like that sequence was really important for us to maintain our confidence -- especially there in the second half, to maintain our confidence that we were going to be able to finish in the second half.