



2021 BAHAMAS BOWL
Middle Tennessee Press Conference Quotes
Dec. 15, 2021



Head Coach Rick Stockstill

Opening statement...

"First of all I'd like to thank Lea [Miller-Tooley], Richard [Giannini], Chris Pika and everyone associated with the Bahamas Bowl. This is our second time here. Just the effort that everybody puts in to making this bowl a success is very much appreciated. I've been to a lot of bowls in my career, and I will say that the people here associated with this bowl sacrifice and go out of their way – Mallory [Shurtz] has been with us all week...the effort to make this a first-class bowl is truly appreciated. Our players enjoy it, obviously. Again, I'm so thankful of everybody here that had a hand in putting this bowl on.

"We are excited to be here. I'm proud of our team to fight with everything they put forth to get to a bowl game. Every team in the country starts out the year with a goal of going to a bowl game. Not every team makes it to one. We did, so I'm proud of these guys. Congratulations to Jason [Candle] and Toledo for the season they had. But we are very excited to be here and looking forward to Friday afternoon."

On how everyone has enjoyed the Bahamas...

"Everybody that got on that plane to come here – families, players, coaches, administrators, everybody that came here – is appreciative of the opportunity. As a coach, as a player, you understand the sacrifices – how hard it is to do this. Our families, everybody is appreciative of this opportunity. Not everybody gets to do this. Like CJ and Reed said, most of our team have never been out of their hometowns. Now, to be able to come out of the country, it's a very humbling experience. I hope they walk away from here and realize how lucky they are and how appreciative they should be with everybody associated with this bowl."

On the key to forcing turnovers Friday...

"Our defense has done a great job. Our coaches have done a great job in spending an enormous amount of time at each practice with our turnover emphasis. I talk about it constantly throughout the course of the week. As you guys know, it's the number one determining factor, most of the time, in who wins and who loses. When you play a team as talented as Toledo, as well as they protect the ball, when you get an opportunity, you can't be a 'hand clapper.' I say that all the time. You see someone drop an interception you see them clap their hands and get mad at themselves. You can't do that. If you get an opportunity to recover a ball or intercept a ball you have to take advantage of it because Toledo is really special, they're really good, at protecting the ball. Your opportunities are going to be limited and we've got to do a good job – if we get an opportunity – of capitalizing on it."

Redshirt Senior Wide Receiver CJ Windham

On the memories he'll take home from this week...

"For me, before we even got here, to be able to tell your loved ones and family that you get to go to another country to play ball is an eye-opener. We are able to do a lot of things that a lot of people don't get to do. To get here and actually see things that you only see on TV... for me, sight-seeing is a big thing. Being able to soak in all the different things the Bahamas has to offer is amazing."

On the importance of closing the season with a win...

"I think it's extremely important. For me, I'm a sixth-year guy and Reed is a five-year guy, so we've been here a while. We've been here with a lot of different teams that have come this far. I feel like what a way to go out senior year by doing everything right – making sure that from practice to walk-throughs to even game day – that you do every little thing right so that you can have the best outcome possible. The days are long, but the years are short. I've been here a while. So, if you get to this point there is no other reason not to go as hard as you can to do the best that you can."

Senior Safety Reed Blankenship

On the memories he'll take home from this week...

"I just think the experience of it, traveling to a different country. A lot of our guys don't get to do this often. Participating in all these activities, you have the beach out front – who doesn't want to come play down here? I have really enjoyed my stay. I really appreciate it."