



2021 BAHAMAS BOWL
Middle Tennessee Press Conference Quotes
Dec. 17, 2021



Head Coach Rick Stockstill

Opening statement...

"First of all I'd like to congratulate Toledo on the season they had. It was a great fight out there today. I'm really proud of our team. The toughness, the guts, the competitiveness, the resilience, the mental toughness they showed today, was fun to watch. I told them at halftime that I believed in them and I believed they were made of the right stuff. They were made of the right stuff. We had some opportunities that got away from us in the first half and the score could have been a little bit different. To lose three starters offensively, you practice for two weeks and you've got a gameplan, then all of a sudden you have to take your three starters out. Especially Jimmy [Marshall], as vital as he is in our offense, then your starting right tackle [Lance Robinson], then DJ [England-Chisolm] on special teams and at wide receiver. Same thing we've done all year -- next man up mentality. I'm really proud of this team because that was a heck of a fight and the defense, man, made stop after stop...I'm just so happy for our seniors. DQ [Thomas], Reed [Blankenship], Cody Smith, Jarrin Pierce, CJ [Windham], Marcus Greer, guys that don't get to play college football anymore. They're going out as champions and winners. When they get to be my age, they'll realize how special this is because they'll realize how hard it is to get to this point. When you go to a bowl game, that's the objective: stay on the field and hold that trophy up."

On earning his university president, who is Bahamian, extra pride...

"I was happy for him. Dr. McPhee can come home this Christmas or summer and stick his chest out. He's a bowl champion too. But I'm more proud of these guys here. The blood and guts that they put into this season, and the never give up, never quit attitude. A lot of times people want to give up on you but they never gave up. I keep repeating myself, but they're made of the right stuff. They're great men, they're going to be successful in life. What they put out on the field, especially these last two weeks; the offense did enough to win, but that defense is relentless.

On his happiness level for the team...

"I'm not happy for myself, I'm happy for these players. I've watched how much they sacrificed, how much they put into this season. The toughness part didn't start in August, it didn't start this week. It started when we came back in January. I couldn't care less about me; it's never about me. It's about these guys up here and the guys out on that field and in the locker room, because they bust their tail, they sacrifice...They keep answering the bell every time. The respect I have for this team, the respect that I have for them as players, as men, the appreciation and love I have for them, that's what it's all about. When they get that ring, it says Bahamas Bowl Champions. They'll have that the rest of their life. I don't need a ring. I let them have it, because they deserve it, and I'm happy for them."

On the secondary's effort...

"I thought our DBs did a nice job, except for one play when we had the backed up and threw the ball over the top of us. As good as I thought our secondary was in coverage, I thought our linebackers and defensive line was really, really special. We may not have gotten a bunch of sacks, but we made him uncomfortable. As quickly as teams get the ball out of their hands now, it's hard to get sacks. But, if you can affect him -- if you can make him move, make him uncomfortable -- that helps on the back-end also. So, I thought our secondary was really outstanding."



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Redshirt Senior Wide Receiver Jarrin Pierce

On his long touchdown catch...

"I didn't know [the corner fell on my touchdown] until I came back to the sideline and they showed me his reaction. It was just great execution. The concept is, we have a motion-over. The defense has to bump, so when I saw pre-snap it was man coverage and my boy Jaylin [Lane] in motion. I had the corner one-on-one. Usually when I have all that space on the outside, he thinks I'm going out so I faked like I was going out and one step and then took it up and my boy Nick delivered the pass."

On the seniors closing their careers with a win...

"For me and DQ, Reed [Blankenship], Cody [Smith], there's a lot of us. We didn't know what it meant to win this game and to go out on top. Like DQ said before, we know how to mix business with pleasure. We had a curfew, we always had to follow the rules. I feel like that paid off when you see: now we're champions."

Freshman Quarterback Nick Vattaito

On splitting reps with Mike DiLiello at quarterback...

"It was something that we planned going in. Me and Mike both knew the game plan and we felt comfortable with it going in. We had practiced it the last two weeks. We understood that our job was our job to do. I think that we both did a great job and it did become more comfortable running in and out throughout the entire game and that benefited our team."

Senior Linebacker DQ Thomas

On the defensive effort...

"Playing hard really starts way before the game. We practice hard, we do everything our way, so coming into the game is a lot easier. I don't expect anything less from our defense. That's all I got to say: we're dogs."

On his week in the Bahamas...

"It's been a lot of fun. We knew how to mix business with pleasure. We enjoyed the Bahamas. But as the game got closer, full stop, we made sure we were ready and locked in, and that played a big part."

On the hard play by the seniors and underclassmen...

"For me personally, it's fun for the seniors, but the young guys, it was more young guys than seniors. For them to come and for this game to mean so much to them, for them to fight so hard, I appreciate them more than the seniors."