

December 26, 2013



Utah State: 21
Northern Illinois: 14

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

THE MODERATOR: Introductions from left to right, first senior linebacker Jake Doughty, senior linebacker Joey DeMartino, Head Coach Matt Wells, freshman quarterback, Darell Garretson. Coach Wells if you could make an opening statement we can get started.

COACH WELLS: Well, first of all, this is the first class bowl that we have been afforded and hats off to Bruce and Mark and the whole crew with the red coats. It was a big-time experience for our players all week. We talked about all week, walk that fine line of grinding and working really hard in the morning and enjoying the afternoon and finding a way to win the game at the end of the week. Because that makes the whole bowl experience worthwhile. My hats off to these players because one more time they found another way to grind out a win against a tremendous program that they have over there.

That's a great team that Rod Carey has but it's a program, too, and we got a lot of respect for them can and what they've done. It's another ceiling Utah State just broke. So to beat a team like that on a national stage is big-time for these kids and the way they did it with typical fashion, blue collar and toughness and tremendous defense the whole game and found a way to run the ball at the end of the game.

I'm proud of these guys and proud to be their coach.

COACH WELLS: This is Ronald Butler wide receiver No. 18.

Q. On the second pick, momentum seemed to be shifting, first the defense stops and how does the offense regroup to any of you guys talking about handling the sudden

change of that moment. How do you handle that defensively and make that stop.

JAKE DOUGHTY: It's all about mentality, we wanted to move prove to everybody in the nation, we've got one of the top defenses and it's times like that where true defenses, you know, come to play and come to produce and it's that mentality is what we have tried to cement into our players and everybody else so it showed right there.

Q. Joey, how do you back as an offense and regroup and get that long drive together?

JOEY DeMARTINO: We knew our defense was going to do it, we have done it all year. We haven't had a good drive like that in a while where we drove the ball down that field and we took it to heart to come back after that loss at Fresno and we wanted to come back and show ourselves. We knew what we had to do.

Q. Joey, what does it mean for you to cap it with a touchdown at the end of the game in your hometown?

JOEY DeMARTINO: Words can't describe that feeling at the end, but as long as our team was winning and our seniors are going out like this is the best feeling in the world and putting our program on the map and showing that we can win in big-time environments it means everything. Watch it go grow from four years it's crazy going from four wins to three bowl games to two bowl wins. It means everything, just shows how much we've grown as a program.

I'm just happy to be part of Utah State.

Q. Jake, going up against Jordan statistically you know what he's done this year. Already how pleased were you to do what you did, holding him to his lowest totals of the season and you held the offense to 28 points below their season average. Talk about that.

JAKE DOUGHTY: I couldn't be prouder of everybody. Everyone worked their tails off. Ever

since the Fresno loss we worked our tails off and we wanted to come back and prove to ourselves and the offense and our coaches and the whole nation that we are one of the top defenses. With a challenge like Jordan Lynch, he's a great player.

It comes back to we needed to do assignment football and play rat-tat-tat defense. You know, one guy gets a lick on, we need four or five other guys right there. I couldn't be prouder, top to bottom. It means a lot how everyone played and I love all of 'em.

Q. Coach, what stamp do you think this puts on not just your program but the senior class going out with 31 wins over the last four years?

COACH WELLS: Well, I think the "stamp" is that they're the winningest senior class in Utah State history.

I think the characteristics are toughness, high character kids, work ethic, grinders and you know what? It's that group that when all those guys went down on offense, another guy went down on defense since the Fresno game. It was next man up! We are not playing the same guys we started with, we're not playing the same guys as the middle of the season but that is a stamp of the program. It's those 22 seniors, too, and the way that they held it together and the way that he they just willed it upon really themselves to find a way, to keep finding a way to win. They did it each and every week since the beginning of the season.

Q. Offensively you guys when Chuckie went down you had doubters for Darell and Joey how does it feel to come into this game and prove everybody wrong?

JAKE DOUGHTY: Its just a good feeling, we got behind the offensive line, honestly, and they carried us the rest the way. The defense is outstanding and they played lights out, game-in and game-out and kept us in ballgames all the time. We stuck behind the line and ran the ball well and did a lot of things well. We kept going, kept moving along and kept winning ballgames.

JOEY DeMARTINO: Going off what Darell said, we depended on the line. And like Coach said we're not playing with the same people we started this season off with and we didn't dream that we would end up with this many people out but it shows the resiliency and the next man up and players stepping up on our team. When

somebody goes down you're expected to step up and replace them.

Q. Darell what's it like to lead your team in a win against a team that could have been a BCS bowl team?

JAKE DOUGHTY: It's like cloud 9 right now but I trusted the guys in the "O" line and Joey D. Carrying the rock and they put me in manageable situations, third and short and that type of stuff. It was a great feeling those guys being able to go out with that type of win as well.

Q. For the offensive guys, what does it mean to you to have that type of defense behind you? Does it help your mentality to know if you do make a mistake or don't score over possession that you have that defense backing you up?

RONALD BUTLER: Definitely, with that type of defense, if we mess up we're going to fix that drive and go back out there. We're not thinkin' that the other team is gonna score because of the type of defense we have. So a lot of times we're look for the defense to bail us out.

JOEY DeMARTINO: I hate to put our defense back on the field especially as an offense and I know Coach hates it when we go 3 and out and we like to kill some time and play, too, but having them as a staple to our team this whole year it's been tremendous, you can see that, you can flip on the film every game they're swarming every time! I'm just glad to be a part of this team with this defense because they really helped us get this far.

JAKE DOUGHTY: I can't tell you how many times our defense has baled us out, going back to Hawaii, even, I threw a pick on a screen and the next play Kyle takes it 99 yards to the house. Having that behind you makes you comfortable but at the same time you don't want to put them in those bad situations but they come out every time and every single time they go out they come out on top and do a great job every down.

Q. Coach, on Monday we talked about two things. The first question I want to ask you, what does it mean to your program to win the Poinsettia Bowl and the second part it you said on Monday you wouldn't change anything that you've been doing all year to prepare for the bowl game or your plays specifically, did

you change anything to win the game?

COACH WELLS: Of course we did. I wasn't going to tell you on Monday, though. You know, we did some things different on offense because shoot at the end of the year we're practicing with four wide-outs and we've got two running backs and two tight ends and that's it. We were so thin, just to be able to manufacture points in any way possible was our job, to score one more than them.

We knew we would have a stellar defensive performance, I knew that, and I knew we would play well. You look back on the Fresno game and we're one possession from winning the whole thing outright. Even with all the injuries. That wasn't going to be our excuse then and it wasn't going to be it this week. We had to find enough ways to score points and then to answer your first question, I think it's a signature win. I don't think there is any question about it. On this stage in this bowl game, national television against that program that's one game from being in back-to-back BCS games it's a big-time win and our kids stepped up and knocked it out of the park.

Q. Tell us about that last offensive drive, 16 plays, 9 points. Did you tell them anything specifically before they went out there?

COACH WELLS: Joey alluded to it. We pulled it up and talked and we said we're going to ride you tight ends and I said "saddle up, Joey", and I said, "It's going to be like the fourth quarter in the potato bowl last year." Honestly we imposed our will and tougher team won that's the bottom line. We imposed our will and we had to. Anytime you go 16 plays and slam that thing in to take a two touchdown lead that's imposing your will and that's, to me, all character, it's all internal and these kids had it in them. They've always got it in 'em. And for our defense to play that way I'm proud of them on both sides of the ball.

Q. Coach how does it feel? You have a team mentality. These guys have come together so close. How does that feel to see that after the win, getting to this point?

COACH WELLS: I don't know. I don't know if words can describe it. I don't know if I know right now but it's the ultimate team sport and I would have to say it's probably the ultimate team victory tonight. It was both sides of the ball. It was kicking game it was field goals early. All those

kinds of things, field possession, the punts. I could go on and on. It's the ultimate team sport played by a bunch of blue collar kids in this program that are tough, and they just got so much fight and heart and you know what? Right here, these four guys you see a small section of it but it's throughout that locker room.

To send the seniors out the way they're getting sent out, you couldn't have written a better script.

Q. Once the 2-point conversion was capitalized, you had a big smile on your face and you grab some of the guys and you went into a huddle. What did you say to those three?

COACH WELLS: That's for me and those three. Good question, though.

Q. Coach, can you talk about Brian Suite tonight and how important he was?

COACH WELLS: B. Suite, again, like these guys up here, he's aware your. He's been playing injured since second week of training camp, freshman year. The kid is -- he gets taped up and strapped down and he's the quarterback of the back end of that defense and he's probably the glue that holds it together on the back end. Between him, Vig and Jake we're strong up the middle. Again, another big pick two weeks in a row at a time where it flipped momentum right out of the gate.

What a warrior mentality he has.

Q. We heard earlier in the box that on 16 turnovers, opponents have only scored 13 points against you guys. What do you think that says about how this defense handles sudden changes?

COACH WELLS: First of all, I think it's the mentality that's been created at this place for the last few years in red zone defense. It's just -- our backs are against the wall and they know that they got to take 'em in those cases three and out and force a field goal or a missed field goal as in that case.

These guys are doing that all the time. Sudden change goes all the way back to the, shoot, probably the airport op Sunday when I heard we had to go through the security televisé and I heard all the defenders saying "sudden change" and they didn't flip. We got in here way

late and it's just a mentality. It's created and it's enforced by the seniors. My hats off to the defense in that scenario.

JAKE DOUGHTY: It is mentality. It's when your back is up against the wall it's fight or flight. It shows that as a defense we're going to step up to the plate and take everything you got, and we want to prove to the offense no matter what happens we got your back. It's a team game and they're going to bail us out at times and we're going to do our best to bail them out at times. I wish that number was 0 instead of 13.

COACH WELLS: That's pretty cool.

Q. You guys had an offensive lineup switch, it seemed, in the game. How did that decision come down and how did you feel like those guys played with an adjusted offensive line.

COACH WELLS: Next man up, it's mentality. Those guys played together. We actually rotated a couple of different linemen in in some personnel groups down in the red zone so we probably played seven or eight "O" linemen in different scenarios and Jake Simonich played well and he played well because Tyler and Kevin and others willed it upon him and played well as a union.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, guys.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.