



VRBO Citrus Bowl

January 1, 2019

Postgame press conference

Penn State head coach James Franklin and quarterback Trace McSorley

MODERATOR: We're now joined by head coach James Franklin. We'll start with an opening statement and then take questions.

JAMES FRANKLIN: First of all, (you've) got to give Kentucky credit. They played really well for four quarters. We didn't play well for four quarters. We played a really good second half. And against good football teams, you can't do that. We didn't make plays in the first half. If you look at it statistically, our defense played extremely well in the first half. Our offense outgained them, but we didn't make plays. We had opportunities to make plays. Really, the same thing that troubled us throughout the season troubled us here again today — dropped balls, missed opportunities, you know, so that's really kind of the story of the game.

Obviously, we gave up a big play on special teams and we missed an execution opportunity on special teams. So that's where we're at. Give Kentucky all the credit in the world. All the credit in the world. We didn't play the way we're capable of playing and that's why the game ended up the way it ended.
Open up the questions.

Q. James, over here to your left. It's 27-21. You have 4th and 7 and you decide to kick the field goal. What went into your thinking and did you consider going for it?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah. It really was going to come down to how close we could get it to 4th and short. As well as our defense had been playing all day long and with us having three timeouts left, we were either going to have to score in that situation if we went for it, or we were going to have to kick a field goal, which still would have put it in a situation where we could have got a field goal on that last drive. So it really just came down to how long was the 4th down going to be and the fact that we we had managed the timeouts pretty good and we still had three available. If we were able to stop them on those first three plays, be able to go three and out, use our timeouts, we weren't able to do that. Obviously, when you don't stop them and they run four-minute offense and they're able to get a first down and burn timeouts, then obviously it looks like you should have went for it in the earlier situation, but it just really comes down to executing. We didn't execute. The first half, we didn't execute on offense. We didn't execute on special teams. But that's what played into that decision-making there.

Q. Coach, what is the nature of Trace McSorley's injury and how proud are you that he came back in the second half and was able to lead a comeback for this team?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Well, we don't typically get into the specifics. I know it got out there. Obviously, Trace was experiencing some discomfort. The doctors felt like he could go, but it really just came down to Trace, how Trace felt. We first went out there, he wasn't feeling real good and then felt good from that point on. And, obviously, we're going to confirm some things now, but it really just came down to what the doctors thought and what Trace thought. And didn't feel like he could go early.

Q. James, following on that, though, to see him come back and kind of lead you guys the way that he did in his final game, what does that say kind of about him as a player?

JAMES FRANKLIN: I could sit here and talk about Trace for hours. I think today was a really good example of the type of leader he is, the type of player he is, the type of person he is. You know, when we gave him time, he was able to make some big plays, able to make big plays with his arms, able to make big plays with his feet. We missed some opportunities in the first half in terms of drops. We missed some throws too, honestly. We just did not take



advantage of opportunities in the first half. When you're playing a good team, you can't just play a good half. You've got to play well for four quarters and we didn't do that.

But Trace is special. I can't put it into words the type of relationship that I have with him and his family. (He's a special guy for a lot of different reasons, and obviously, you look out in the field and you focus on his arm and his legs, but it's his heart. You know, it's his heart and his mind that really makes him special.

Q. James, you had said the special teams inconsistencies there, you mentioned it's been a problem all season. How do you know kind of handle that? I mean, did you see progress throughout the year from them or what's kind of the status of that position group moving forward?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah. I think it's a couple things. It's inconsistency. You know, we punt the ball 73 yards once and then we shank the next. And that's kind of happened kind of throughout the year. It's our execution. It's (a) responsibility for us as coaches to make sure they're confident and understand what their responsibilities are but we haven't done it. We haven't done it consistently all year long, so it's a concern coming into the season. We knew relying on two true freshmen from the specialist position, that was going to be a little bit of a concern. But we also have had some opportunities that we haven't made. Haven't made plays, haven't done consistently what we need to do. Like everything, we'll evaluate it. We'll take a deep dive in it. We'll ask tough questions to ourselves and we'll look at everything, A through Z. We'll look at everything. We'll have tough conversations. We'll do what we've got to do to get better, but it was not up to our standards today. Wasn't up to our standards all year long.

Q. James, I was wondering if you could discuss the fake punt early, what effect that had on momentum. Why did you decide to do that?

JAMES FRANKLIN: We have been working that. You know, we dropped the ball. We don't drop the ball, I think we get the first down. You know, it's hard to fumble the ball on a 4th and short situation and pick it up. Winning this game, wanting to be aggressive, we knew we were going to call that. We had another one that we were going to call if the situation presented itself, but we wanted to play the game aggressively. You know, you go for it on 4th and short, you don't get it, you get criticized for it. You don't go for it on 4th and short and you punt the ball, you get — I get it. It comes down to us doing a better job as coaches and players of executing.

The reality is the punt late in the game, it was pretty obvious that our defense was playing well. The reason they were able to play well early in the game is because of field position, you know. We took that risk right there, wanting to be aggressive and keep the ball in our hands and give ourselves the best chance to go down and score. We didn't execute. We gave them great field position and gave them momentum. There's no doubt about it. (If) you pick up that first down, you don't fumble the snap, you go down and score, it's a different story obviously in the first half.

Q. James, Kentucky quarterback Terry Wilson had been playing really, really well and yet you guys contained him pretty well today. Did you see something that resulted in how effective you were in containing him?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, you know, we've pretty much been able to do that. For the second half of the year, defensively, we've done some pretty good things. I think the biggest issue is the running back. We contained him for a little bit, but he made just enough plays consistently kind of throughout the game and that's the style that they wanted to play. They wanted to play really good defense, you know, play some on special teams and run the football. That's kind of who they are. I think you look at their running back who played in the game, you look at their outside linebacker defensive end who played in the game — I do think it's a real positive thing for Kentucky's program. I think it's a really positive thing for college football that guys like that decide to play in the game when you see kind of across the country that not happening.



And I know you can make arguments both ways, and I'm not pounding the table in either direction, but I do think that was a great sign for college football and, obviously, those guys factored in today. The quarterback, we felt like we had an opportunity to kind of limit some of the things that they were doing, but it really came down to our game plan, trying to stop the running back, and he was able to make too many plays.

Q. Can you address Rob Windsor's status, why he did not play?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah, Rob was suspended for a violation of team rules.

Q. James, you mentioned Benny Snell and Josh Allen or alluded to him. Having competed and seen them on the field, what makes them so good?

JAMES FRANKLIN: The three guys that we knew we had to stop were Bowden, Snell and Allen. We knew that. You know, and I think, really, all three of them showed up today. We knew Bowden was going to be a problem. We knew Allen was going to be a problem. We knew Snell was going to be a problem. They built their program around those guys. They built their season around those guys. There are guys that can hurt you a lot of different ways. They're tough, athletic, smart, physical, and they played well, and they made plays at timely situations, like great players do.

Q. James, you talked before about trying to get the 10 wins here for the third straight year. Hadn't been done by Penn State in Big Ten era. How do you view this team and this program after falling short of that, going forward, and it's kind of an end of an era with a bunch of guys, with McSorley, but with younger guys, how do you just kind of view this team moving forward after this?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Obviously, we're disappointed. The losses that we had this year, they're hard. They're hard for us to swallow. They're hard for the fan base to swallow. I get it. I get it. I watch college football like everybody else does. It's hard. It's hard to win at the highest level. We've had three really good years. You look at our last three years compared to most programs in the country, we're up there with the best of them. But, you know, obviously, we played a lot of young players this year. I think it's a lot of excitement, a lot of hope for our future.

We've got some guys that have some decisions to make, but, you know, obviously today hurts. But I know that locker room — and we just got done talking about it — is excited about the future. We got some things that we've got to get cleaned up. We've got some things that we've got to get corrected and we've got to take ownership of all those things.

MODERATOR: We're also joined by quarterback Trace McSorley.

Q. James, as you look back on this season, you've had two separate instances where you've had situations on 4th down, including the Ohio State game where you take the ball out of Trace's hands. As you look back on this year as a whole, how will that sit with you?

JAMES FRANKLIN: You know, I get it. Our biggest issue, offensively this year, we rushed for more yards this year after losing Saquon Barkley. We rushed for more yards per carry. We led the Big Ten in passing the last two years and we weren't able to consistently throw the ball this year. We had too many drops. That showed up again today. To me, that's the biggest issue with our offense this year. That showed up in this game as well.

Obviously I want to talk about Kentucky. We can go back and talk about a lot of plays throughout the season. But to me, overall, that was our issue with our offense this year. We weren't consistent enough in the passing game.



Q. James, again, what would it have taken you to keep Trace out of the game after his injury. And Trace, if I could ask Trace, what would it have taken you not to return to the game?

JAMES FRANKLIN: Well, I think the first thing is it always starts and ends with the doctors. They're going to make that call. And then after that, it's a conversation with Trace. And I think at first, we weren't sure. That was my conversation with Trace, and he didn't necessarily tell me that he couldn't go, but I know Trace and I could see his eyes and I could tell his movement. I wasn't going to put him back in there. And then some time went by and he ran around a little bit and he felt better and felt confident. So once the doctors left it up to Trace, then that's my conversations with Trace and that's me knowing Trace and that's me watching Trace. And obviously you saw how he was able to play after that first series.

TRACE McSORLEY: Yeah. I kind of echo what he said. The doctor was saying it's just a matter of how it felt and pain management. I mean, for me, my personality, I wasn't going to go out — they would have take off my badge for me (not to). I was going to be playing. So it was just a matter of being able to deal with it and then being able to go out there. I've been through too much. This team's been through too much for it to be a little pain deal or whatever. They told me (it was) just a matter of dealing with the discomfort, and if I could do that, I was going to do it.

Q. Trace, we were told it was a broken foot. True or not true? I just want to know what we're dealing with here.

TRACE McSORLEY: Unclear right now.

Q. You don't know?

TRACE McSORLEY: We haven't had any definitive decisions or information.

JAMES FRANKLIN: Yeah. We're going to find that out. We're going to find that out here in a little bit. There's a lot of discussion whether Trace was going to come in here or not because of that. We were going to find out for sure.

Q. What was the pain like when it was hurting the most and what did you think?

TRACE McSORLEY: I mean, it was just a lot of pain putting pressure on it. I guess that's the biggest thing. It was just a lot of pain, local pain in the spot where it was. I don't really know what to, like, equate it to or anything like that. It was just a lot of pain. When I came out, I felt like I couldn't really run regularly. I could push off to throw, but me being me, I wanted to be able to be 100 percent for the team. And knowing what the team needs me to do is be able to be mobile, and I think that is something that I didn't, at first, think I could do. And then things started kicking in, kind of whether it was adrenaline or whatever it was, me wanting to get back out there, adrenaline kicked in, and the pain became manageable and I was able to get back out there.

Q. Trace, for you, those final couple drives, a lot of the guys you're looking towards are freshman, guys are going to be on campus for several more years. You look around, walk off the field, what do you think you leave Penn State in terms of what's next. And, additionally, I just want to know your thoughts on Sean Clifford. Obviously, he was ready to get in the game. He seemed to be like trailing you the entire time. If he needed to get back in there. And, Coach Franklin, your thoughts on Clifford, how he performed with his surprise call to action today?

TRACE McSORLEY: (To) the first part of your question about what's to come with a lot of these young guys, I think the talent out of the young guys right now — I don't want to put a ceiling on them because I really think they can go as far as they want to. It's going to be a matter of work ethic and buying into Coach Franklin and his program and those guys putting team before self and doing everything that they can to make this program, this team better.



The amount of talent out there — I mean, the month Justin Shorter had, in my mind, was the best months I've seen this last month out of any of those kids. I mean, he grew leaps and bounds in that last month. And that can be said for all those guys. They just continue to get better and better. And I sit back and I look at guys like — guys like Rasheed Walker, Jayson Oweh, a couple of those guys that, as now an alumni — which is weird to — I'm excited to watch what those guys are going to do, and I'm excited to see where the leaders of those young guys are going to be able to carry this team.

And a guy like Cliff, he's a guy that can lead. And like you said, he's always going to be ready. He's always going to be prepared. He came in today when his number was called, he went in and operated and did what he had to do, but then the rest of the time, he was trailing my hip, asking questions. I'm excited to see what his career is going to look like because he's got everything that you need in a quarterback to be successful and I think he's going to be able to just continue to make those strives leaps and bounds, and take control, and then, whether it's next year, or two years, three years from now, whenever his time is, he's going to be ready.

JAMES FRANKLIN: I think we created a lot of competition in that room. I think the thing that probably Trace didn't mention, though, is he's left a legacy not only on our team but in that quarterback room — how he practices, how he prepares, how he watches film, how he takes notes, how he asks questions, the buy-in, the summer workouts, the spring ball, all of it. So when you have a player like Trace that's done it the right way both on and off the field, academically, athletically, socially, the whole package, it sets the tone for the young guys and they have so much respect for him. Cliff, Tommy, Levis, all those guys, Shuster, they've all learned. They've all learned from Trace, you know — what he's done well, what he's done to give himself the best chance to be successful, what he's done well to give the team the chance to be successful.

So Trace will be remembered for a long time, not only with our fan base but also with the people in the our locker room and the people on our team.

MODERATOR: Coach, Trace, thank you for your time.

JAMES FRANKLIN: I do want to take a moment and thank the media that followed us all year long, all year long, and covered our program and covered our players. We appreciate the work you do. We really do so I wanted to make that comment.



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Postgame press conference

Kentucky head coach Mark Stoops, running back Benny Snell, Jr. and linebacker Josh Allen

MODERATOR: We are joined Kentucky Coach Mark Stoops and running back and game MVP Benny Snell, Jr. We'll start with an opening statement from coach and then we'll take questions.

MARK STOOPS: Sure. Just as I mentioned on the podium accepting the trophy, it was extremely important to this team, to all of us, to come home with some hardware, to come home with a trophy. This team, these seniors and, of course, Benny — you look at him as a senior because he's been so steady for the three years he's been here, and he's been a big piece of it with those seniors. They've just done so much. It meant so much to this team and to this program that it was very important to finish and to collect the trophy and to win ten games and win a game on New Year's Day and all those things.

Believe me, we had a great belief in our locker room. We didn't have to do anything special, just be us. I was so proud of this team. We had so much fun, it ought to be illegal how much fun we had this week. We had a blast just being with each other and just spending time and enjoying it and taking it in. But then when it was time to go to meeting, time to go to practice, these guys were locked in, they were competitive. And you could do that with a mature group of guys that have been around for a while and we really went out and had energized practices and we were determined to get this victory, made it close there at the end.

Give Penn State credit. You knew they would fight. It's a quality football team and well coached and you knew they would fight back.

I'm just proud of our team for doing the things necessary to close it out, and if you don't have a physicality about you like that and you don't have a guy like Benny, it's hard to do because the whole stadium knew he was going to run the ball and grind out a first down or two to ice the game was critical. So very proud of the group and appreciate their effort.

Q. Mark, in Benny's career, so many times he's closed out games the way you did on that last drive. What was your confidence level going in at the end there and just how fitting was it to end there?

MARK STOOPS: Our confidence level was very high to run out that clock. I thought our offensive coaches did a great job — Coach Schlarman and Coach Gran — and got on the same page and gave Benny an opportunity to get started. So we had some unique sets there and make sure we were cutting off the edges because we knew they were crashing and pinching everybody down and, really, I didn't see it. It was on the far side. The cutback you had might have popped out. We thought we were going to split one or two. Obviously, he got one for 7 or 8 yards or 9 yards, or whatever it was, but we had an opportunity to crease them there and we knew we could get Benny going give him a shot. So I credit the coaches and I credit Benny and the offensive line.

Q. What changed from the first half to the second half in your ability to really get going on the ground?

BENNY SNELL: Coming back and fixing from the plays — the three and outs that we didn't get progress on. So, like, it was big for me going over to the O line and figuring out what the problem was, you know. I know towards the end of the second half, we knew that the ends, they were crushing down hard, especially when we were running the ball. And then when it was like 1st and 2nd down, they were sending blitzes to stop the run. So as long as we were figuring out where the blitzes were at and I was in communication with my line, in the second half we had everything down pat. Coach Gran knew what to run, and me and the line were on the same page, so that was big right there.



MARK STOOPS: I think it was the first run of the second half there when we got it to the second level, made him miss, hurdle the guy, and that kind of got some juice going. That really helped us.

Q. Mark, you're sitting in between two great players right there. Tell us which one you're going to miss more.

MARK STOOPS: They know I can't say that. I'm going to miss them both. And, you know, really, all those guys — this morning, in the hotel pregame speech, I had to be really intentional with myself of not getting emotional because I didn't want these guys to make fun of me if I cracked and started crying. I really mean that, because they mean that much to me and I just greatly appreciate them. We've had a lot of fun and we've worked extremely hard and come through a lot of things and persevered together and they mean the world to me.

Q. You're talking about the players you're going to miss, but there were players, young guys today that showed out — DeAndre Square, obviously, in linebacker spot for most of the game and then you've got AJ Rose behind Benny. What can you say about those players and kind of how they've transitioned?

MARK STOOPS: These guys set a great example and that's the big thing. Just to set the tone for the program and what it takes and the hard work and these guys did a great example. We have very good, young kids and we're excited to get to work with them.

Q. This is for the two players. Kind of speak to what you feel you've improved on the most this season.

MARK STOOPS: Just persevering through the tough times. I think we've always done that. It's not easy. You just stay the course, constantly try to get better, and then, again, with great leadership, I think that makes it much easier for myself because we had good leadership on this team.

Q. Mark, it looked like there was a little altercation on the sideline and then E.J. Price wasn't dressed at the end of the game. Can you just elaborate on what happened there?

MARK STOOPS: I have no idea what you're talking about. I didn't see it. I mean, I'm pretty darned happy.

Q. How much is a game changer is Lynn (Bowden)?

MARK STOOPS: Well, Lynn is a game changer. He really does a great job. He made some very creative plays today. He's good with the ball in his hands. We need to do a better job of making sure we find ways to get him the ball. And he's definitely got some big play ability. (We're) very proud of him and the punt return was huge. The play that he made on the screen (was a) very good individual play by him.

Q. Josh, what happened on that field goal block that you were able to get a fingertip on it?

JOSH ALLEN: That was the first time I felt like all season that we ran that play. We practiced it all week. Me and Q talked about it the play before. We knew it was going to work. We knew he sat real soft, that he was sitting outside, so if I got skinny enough, I was going to get through and I got pretty skinny in there.

Q. Mark, you've made a big, big point of referring to the team as family this year. You've got two guys beside you that you probably love like sons. You've got your family sitting down here in front of you. How intentional have you been in making that a part of the culture of the program?



MARK STOOPS: Very intentional. These guys will tell you they're always welcome in my house, and they are. And they are like sons to me and they know that. They know how I feel about them and that's the way I've always done as a coach. You know, I'm in this position to help these guys get theirs and do what they're doing. And, again, they're extremely special to me and my family and they're always welcome and we have been very intentional and these guys could probably talk to that.

But going back to the summer, we got together every Wednesday. We put coaches on the grill and just wanted to be intentional about spending time with each other and really uniting the group because that's a big deal. It's a big operation. You know, there's 150, 160, 170 people in our building and you have to have everybody pulling the rope in the same direction.

Q. For Benny, you had a pretty cool moment situation in the third quarter where the entire UK side is chanting "Benny, Benny," and then the next play you run it up the middle and score that touchdown. Could you just describe what that moment was like for you?

MARK STOOPS: That was the record, if I'm not mistaken. He broke the record. That's why I was trying to get that official to give me that football for him. He broke the record on that run.

BENNY SNELL: Man, I (was) so excited. I (was) in the moment. I don't even have words for, like, how I was feeling. I was speechless.

I know that when we ran out there, you know, I knew I was like 5 or 4 yards away, and I looked at Coach Gran and he gave me that look, like yeah. I was like, 'Oh, yeah, let's get it.'

MARK STOOPS: Yeah. Matter of fact, we had two plays called. We were going to run it to him two plays in a row. We had thought about some other things. We were, like, nah. Benny two in a row here so it only took one.

BENNY SNELL: It was the best feeling ever when I crossed the pod line. From my past three years being here, my offensive line has been phenomenal — every single one of those guys. And the glory goes to them. I'm just blessed and very happy.

Q. For Benny and Josh, individually, what do you guys think your legacy will be? How do you think you guys will be remembered and then what do you think the legacy will be for this team?

JOSH ALLEN: I feel like we're going to go down as the best team to come out of Kentucky. That's how I feel.

BENNY SNELL: Easily.

JOSH ALLEN: I feel like we've got a lot of great players on this team. You know, we haven't won ten games in a very long time. We haven't beat Florida in a very long time. We haven't broken this many records in a very long time. Just a lot of accomplishments around this team.

BENNY SNELL: For me, I just want BBN and the fans to know that this group, especially with myself, we give our all — we gave our all through practice. Even when when, you know, teams are smack talking and we're the underdogs coming into the game, such as Mississippi State or Florida. We set the record straight that this is Kentucky football, we're not just about to lay down. Just as a group, as a team, I feel like there's no other team, no other legacy that is like this, what we left, so I'm very happy. I'm very happy with my team.



MARK STOOPS: I could say this on their behalf: You know, I'm not one to pat myself on the back, but for them, it's very hard in this day and age now. There's a lot of pressure and the things like the Florida game and all those things, they have so much information at their fingertips. You're probably reading Twitter right now. They have a lot on their plate and they have a lot of pressure. They have to take a lot on their shoulders and you have to be man enough to accept that, look at it, go through the adversity and bounce back, and that's why it takes seniors and that's what it takes special guys to be able to handle that.

BENNY SNELL: Also, I want to say one more thing: With the brotherhood that we created through this team and the adversity that we faced, as well as to overcome, you know, the negative things that happened with the team — we were able to make that a positive and it gave us drive. (Challenges) such as Josh Paschal, for example, Coach Schlarman, the Maxwell family, little Marco, just things like that, those gave us the extra fight, you know, throughout the season, like, we got something to play for. And we set the record straight.

MARK STOOPS: That's right. Shemwell, he meant, but yes. That's very well said. That's so true.

Q. Josh, as Penn State was sort of cutting into the lead and you guys were having to fight off that comeback, what was going on in those defensive huddles? And then, was a game like today, a week like this week, one of the main reasons that you came back, for this feeling?

JOSH ALLEN: To answer your first part, we were deciding who's going to make a play. It's about that time where great players step up and great players make plays, and in situations like that, somebody had to step up. So I just thought it would be me, you know. And I told everybody I was going to get that first, competing with everybody else, and we had a lot of guys step up and make big plays. That's what we were talking about.

And on the second question, this is the reason why guys come back. If you're projected to be one of the top players coming back, I advise to come back because you could have a season like I did, become the national defensive player of the year, projected top five pick, win bowl games. I have no better feeling than right now. I feel great. Great team win. Offense did a heck of a job. Defense did a heck of a job. Special teams did a heck of a job. And I'm just living it right now.

MARK STOOPS: I have to finish that comment that John, you asked me earlier, about intentionality and all that. I do have to give credit to my wife that she was the one that put that into my ear about that team and to do that and it really was. So Chantel was a big piece of that and she always reminds me of that when I forget to mention that and I see her sitting there. So yeah.

Q. You've talked so much since you've been here about changing the culture of this football team. When you get down to the last five minutes of the ball game, the last few minutes, five minutes, I guess, with a lead, I've seen so many times down through the years where you bow your neck and win the football game. You run it down their throat. Do you think that's another leap in your program in terms of change of the culture?

MARK STOOPS: Well, there's no question that these guys change the culture. As I mentioned many times, it's really easy to change the climate of a program. Culture is deep, deep, deep rooted for a long, long period of time. And, you know, it takes a lot to overcome and change that. And these guys did that.

And, yes, by finishing games with a physicality and finding a way to win rather than finding a way to lose is changing the culture, and it comes with being physical. There's no getting around it. It is what it is. You look at the top programs and you look around the country and, you know, it's built on physicality.

And I had a great example. And, you know, he'll get mad at me, but my brother Bob is sitting right over here right now. And I had a chance to watch him for 20 years and watch him win a national championship in his second year. And with my father and Bob and my brother, and just so many people, I've had great people to follow. I've been



blessed to be around quality people and good to have him here. And just need to try to win a couple championships to catch up to him, but at least we'll bring home a bowl championship.

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to thank Coach Stoops, Benny and Josh for their time.

JOSH ALLEN: I've got something to say. I'm leaving with this. You all record this. If I don't go number one, I don't know who is, and I stand true to that.

BENNY SNELL: Tell them what it is, boy.