



Head Coaches News Conference

Memphis Coach Ryan Silverfield

Penn State Coach James Franklin

Friday, December 27, 2019
Omni Dallas Hotel, Dallas, Texas

COACH SILVERFIELD: Like a lot of these, I want thank to everybody. Thank you to the Goodyear Cotton Bowl for the wonderful week of hospitality. It's been absolutely phenomenal, the City of Dallas, the surrounding areas. Every single person that we have been in touch with throughout this week from our players, our coaches, our entire staff, our families, everybody has been absolutely phenomenal. So I want to say thank you to everybody for the efforts put in this week and everything you guys have done.

Obviously, we're really excited for tomorrow. Almost 24 hours away from kickoff against a fantastic opponent. The job that Coach Franklin has done, his staff, Penn State, we couldn't ask for a better opponent in the Cotton Bowl. We are really excited for kickoff at 11:00 tomorrow.

COACH FRANKLIN: The first thing I would like to do, just briefly, is I forgot to do this earlier in the week at the press conference, just want to make a comment quickly about Ed Aschoff. Just kind of completely caught off guard and kind of surprised hearing that Ed passed away. Really caught off guard and shocked by it. So just want to take a moment on behalf of Penn State, our football program and the university, to let the people at ESPN and more importantly his family, let them know that they're in our thoughts and prayers. But just completely caught off guard by that. So I meant to say that the other day, and I apologize I missed that.

Kind of like Ryan, first of all, I'm a big fan of Ryan's and very, very happy for him. I think the University of Memphis made a great decision in keeping this thing in-house and continuing to build what they got going there because it's impressive.

I've been fortunate, obviously, with my time in the same state at Vanderbilt watching that program grow and what the university and the community and the coaches have done has been impressive. Watching it on film all year long. So very happy for Ryan and for Memphis. I think it was a great decision.

I also want to thank the Goodyear Cotton Bowl. We've had a fantastic experience. I've been pretty fortunate to coach in almost every single one of these bowl games, and I know everybody gets up at press conferences and thanks and says how appreciative they are. But I'm telling you, this has been first-class from the minute that we accepted this invitation and stepped off the plane. Every aspect, every detail has been first class. So I know that myself and the staff as well as our players truly appreciate this opportunity. It's been humbling, and I know how much hard work goes into it because we run major organizations and we know how much hard work goes into it. So I want to make sure that the Cotton Bowl and the hotel, the [Hilton] Anatole, everybody knows how much we appreciate all the hard work and the hospitality that we've received.



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And then last thing is, the trophy is pretty cool. And we sure would like to be able to take that back to Happy Valley.

Q. James [Franklin], I'm just curious, we didn't get to ask you yesterday about Kirk Ciarrocca and what his role is specifically now? Is he evaluating the roster? Is he here? How long do you kind of expect it will take him to evaluate the offense and get to know those guys a little bit?

COACH FRANKLIN: We've been kind of in this position a few times now where we've had coaching changes. It's kind of the nature of college football. And with us making the hire, we were able to get him out here. So I think there's tremendous value in that. We did this before and have the coach come and get around the staff and meet the players. Not a whole lot that he can do because the way we did it, we didn't promote somebody from within the staff so he's not really kind of involved, nor could he be at this point, understanding what we do and understanding what he does offensively.

So he's here more just to help in the transition so when spring ball comes and when spring practice comes, he's got a better familiarity with how our practices go, how they're organized. Start to build a relationship with our staff and the players. Kind of get first impressions. That was kind of interesting for me to be able to sit there with him last night and say: What are your impressions of our -- first impressions of our program and our organization? The thing that he said, which I think is a tremendous compliment, he said the first thing that jumps out to me is that it's very obvious that your players and coaches like each other and enjoy being at Penn State. It is obvious, just watching how everybody interacts, that you guys work really hard but everybody seems to have a whole lot of fun while they're doing it, which I think is a great compliment in today's college football, that you better create that type of environment.

So, yeah, we were able to get him here for a couple of days. And I do think there will be value that shows up for us during the spring as well as in the summer and going into next year. It gets us a few days' head start.

Q. Coach [Ryan] Silverfield, I know you like to keep the focus on your players and the team, but for you sitting here 24 hours out from your first game as a head coach and it happens to be the Cotton Bowl, what does tomorrow mean to you?

COACH SILVERFIELD: I mean, obviously I think Coach [James] Franklin used the word earlier, it's "humbling." Honored to be in this position. Like you said, it's all about the players and the team, the guys that have put in the work all season to get us to this point. We certainly wouldn't be in this position if it weren't for the staff, the work they've put in, and all the efforts of the young



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men, the student-athletes.

But for me to be my very first game as a head coach at the collegiate level, I couldn't have asked for a better way to start my career this way. Obviously I've got a lot of respect for Coach Franklin, he's a guy I admire in this profession, a guy that has done it the right way, that's built the type of culture and standards at his place and his stops, and I would like to continue to do the same at Memphis.

And so for me, look, we're going to treat this game no different than we have any other games this season. Obviously it's an important one. Like we always say every year, the next one is the most important game. But this one is obviously pretty darn special. This is a game I will never forget for many reasons. We're going to go out there and give everything we have. And I think our guys have prepared the right way the last few weeks in order to, you know, have our chance on Saturday, tomorrow, and give everything we got, and we're excited for that opportunity.

***Q.** You had said last week that you wanted to talk to your players about Wally Triplett in the 1948 Cotton Bowl. Have you had a chance to talk to them about it yet, and if so, what do you feel the reaction, the impact was of what you told them?*

COACH FRANKLIN: So maybe for some of the people in the room that don't know our history specific with the Cotton Bowl at Penn State, pretty amazing history. So being able to have the first black players that play in the game. Obviously Wally Triplett came and spoke to our team a few years back. Some of the older players on our team kind of understand the significance. We put out a video. Wally Triplett not only being the first black player to play in the game but also the first black college football player drafted into the NFL from Penn State. So there's really some pretty cool history. Not being able to stay in town in Dallas and the team having to stay on an Air Force base. It was just some great history to talk to our players about.

Our social media people put out a great video about it. So if you haven't had a chance to check out that video, it's a pretty cool video to understand the history. So for us as college football coaches but more importantly as educators, it's a great opportunity to spend some time talking about that.

The other thing that I think we're going to do is we're going to do something during the game to try to honor our history with that as well on our uniforms. But it's pretty cool. I think it's a great opportunity to obviously make sure our focus is on the Cotton Bowl and the great opponent that we have in Memphis but also to be able to take some time and talk about history, history of our game of football, history of our specific universities, history of the Cotton Bowl, and more importantly history of our country and how far we've come in a short period of time.



Head Coaches News Conference

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Friday, December 27, 2019
Omni Dallas Hotel, Dallas, Texas

But there is also probably still some work that needs to be done that everybody recognizes.

So I think all of us that coach college football or that coach college athletics are in it for more than just the wins or losses, although we all recognize how important that is. We are also, number one, educators and looking for opportunities to make an impact on our young people.

Q. Coach [Ryan] Silverfield, looking over the last few weeks, you are named the interim for the Cotton Bowl. You go through the interview process. You get the head job, get over here to Dallas and everything that comes with the Cotton Bowl and on top of that, you have to get your team ready to play a football game. Just kind of talk about the whirlwind that it's been for you over the last few weeks.

COACH SILVERFIELD: "Whirlwind" is the right word, for sure. A lot of lack of -- sleepless nights. Just with the transition, obviously very fortunate to play a great Cincinnati team in our championship game. It was really that Saturday night that I was named the interim head coach. I knew that was going to be what was happening moving forward.

For me it was just moving this program and keeping this program afloat the right way, regardless of what was going to happen with that title or not. So had the press conference, talked to Coach [James] Franklin on the phone, and then hit the ground running trying to sustain this recruiting class. And to me that's important, not just for this game, but to maintain the future of the Tiger program. So I was able to secure our commitments that week. And then had to interview for this job. And was very fortunate and blessed to be named the head coach of Memphis. But throughout that time I wasn't going to act or treat it any differently, right? I still had the responsibility as the offensive line coach. So there's a few more hats to wear. But it's been great.

Like I said, I wouldn't have asked for it to happen any other way. With all the things that occurred the way they did, I wouldn't be sitting here if it weren't for that. But it's been a whirlwind, but it's been exciting. And the nice thing is I think we have got a wonderful support staff and wonderful leadership from our athletic director and the president. They have been so supportive and have an understanding of the way things have occurred. And the biggest thing is the buy-in by the players, right? They haven't skipped a beat. We haven't lost a single player to transfer. We kept our commitments. The kids are excited. And this opportunity to play this Saturday I think obviously helps all that.

And then preparation for Penn State, obviously it's something that has occurred for the last few weeks. Fantastic opponent. But like I've said all along, it comes back to ourselves. We're not going



Head Coaches News Conference

Memphis Coach Ryan Silverfield

Penn State Coach James Franklin

Friday, December 27, 2019
Omni Dallas Hotel, Dallas, Texas

to change significantly one way or the other. Our preparation, every single day, just like it's been since August, is going to be about ourselves and make sure we are executing and being detailed and disciplined in what we want to accomplish. But it has been a whirlwind, but it's been a fun one.

Q. Coach (Ryan Silverfield), you talked about the players haven't skipped a beat. They have been doing a lot of skipping this week. You got a very loose bunch. They've put out some videos as well as practicing hard. They've been dancing hard as well. Talk about striking that balance between letting them enjoy themselves and actually getting the work in?

COACH SILVERFIELD: You are exactly right. I want them to come out and I think Coach [James] Franklin just hit on that a little bit ago. We're going to work hard. I want them to enjoy the work. I want them to be appreciative of the opportunity to be here at the Cotton Bowl and all the wonderful things that have occurred this week. So I want them to enjoy that, right? But what a wonderful opportunity it is for our program, for the university, and for us to represent our city the right way. I think our players realize that.

There also comes a time when we're on the field, we need to be focused at our meetings every morning, taking notes, making sure that we have an understanding of what we need to accomplish tomorrow.

But at the end of the day, I want our guys to, in essence, whistle while we work. Have a little fun while we're doing it. Be able to put a smile on your face out there with the common goal that this is a business trip, and I think they're dialed in as we get closer and closer to game time and kickoff. They have that firm understanding that we need to be dialed in and handle the task at hand tomorrow.

Q. James [Franklin], I just wanted to ask what specifically are you doing on the uniforms to honor the 1948 Cotton Bowl team? Is it a patch or a sticker on the helmet?

COACH FRANKLIN: I get that you had to ask, but I didn't answer that because we haven't announced it yet. Our people have a way that they want to announce that publicly, and that's kind of why I skipped over it. I get you got to ask. But I don't want to steal that moment from our university and our social media people that want to put that out when it's appropriate.

I started to say it and I thought, maybe I'm not supposed to say this yet. So I'm going to hold off on that. But I understand you got to ask.



Head Coaches News Conference

Memphis Coach Ryan Silverfield

Penn State Coach James Franklin

Friday, December 27, 2019
Omni Dallas Hotel, Dallas, Texas

I do want to mention something real quick. I was just kind of sitting here thinking when Coach [Ryan Silverfield] was talking. I think one of the more impressive things that I have watched this year of going back and watching their tape, what I typically try to do is I watch all the coach's copy film but I watch the TV copies as well because a lot of times you can just pick up on the flow of the game in the TV copy a little bit better than the cut-ups and what the announcers are talking about and all those types of things.

One of the things I thought was more impressive is this Memphis group, you know, having to play Cincinnati the last game of the regular season, if that's correct, and then have to play them the very next week in the championship game and find a way to beat a very good Cincinnati team two weeks in a row, which is really hard to do, which is really hard to do. Not only to beat the same opponent twice in the same season but in back-to-back weeks.

Obviously after beating Cincinnati the first time, they are extremely motivated to make sure that doesn't happen again. And this is a group that over the last -- not only this past season but over the last four years, they understand how to overcome adversity and have stepped up to every challenge. I think that was something that kind of really jumped out to me, is something that was really impressive that they did this season.

Q. Ryan [Silverfield], you heard Coach [James] Franklin mention it earlier, that trophy sitting to the left of you, what's your take on that one? And for a program that has lifted some trophies over the past few years -- while he's trying to pull it his way, by the way, (laughter). You're missing that. What is your take on that trophy and what it would mean to bring that one back to Memphis?

COACH SILVERFIELD: Obviously it's a beautiful trophy. I think it would mean everything. We haven't had a bowl win since 2014 at Memphis. Bringing that trophy home to the 901, I think it represents not only just our university, our program, but anybody that understands Memphis understands we are a prideful group. We have that "Memphis-first, everybody approach." I mentioned that yesterday.

To me, looking at that trophy, it's for the people of Memphis. It's for the 901. It's for our program. It's for our community. And to me it would be an honor to be able to bring that back for our entire city.

Look, the kids have poured in. I know they are going to play their tails off. But I would like to have that thing sitting next to me on the flight home tomorrow as well.



Head Coaches News Conference

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Omni Dallas Hotel, Dallas, Texas

Q. Ryan [Silverfield], now that you've had a chance to take a closer look at Penn State's defense, what sticks out about them and how well do you think your offense matches up with them?

COACH SILVERFIELD: Let me be clear, we have faced a lot of great defenses this year. This Penn State defense is the best we've seen, all right? Their front seven is phenomenal. Their back-end guys play well. They've got first-rounders up front. They have got All-American linebacker, all their linebackers are great players. Their back-end can run, they can cover. It's going to be a challenge. There's a reason why they've only allowed 2.6 yards a carry. There's a reason why they're only allowing 14 points a game. The Penn State defense is phenomenal. We have a challenge ahead of us tomorrow. Our guys understand that and hopefully we put together a game plan and then we can execute at a high level in order to act accordingly.

But they propose a lot of challenges, for sure. And they're well-coached. They do things the right way, and they're very talented. We understand that's going to be a challenge, but I think our offense is one that's accepted a lot of those challenges. Over the years, we've faced many of the great defenses. This is will be one of the best we have ever seen. But we are excited about the challenge and the opportunity to face them tomorrow.

Q. Coach [James] Franklin, last season at the Citrus Bowl you faced an explosive offense in Kentucky with Benny Snell and Terry Wilson and Lynn Bowden. Memphis has the same similar style of offense. How do you prepare for that and what do you see the similarities out of those two teams in both these bowl games?

COACH FRANKLIN: I don't know if I necessarily would characterize it the way you characterized it. We have a lot of respect. Ryan [Silverfield] is sitting here talking about our defense. We can say the same thing about their offense. Obviously a quarterback that understands how to operate their system and plays with tremendous confidence, has put up big numbers all year long. You look at how many points that they have been able to score all season against really good defenses, how explosive they are at the wide receiver position, how explosive and productive they've been at the running back position with a really nice one-two punch that they have back there as well.

So all the wonderful things he said about our defense I appreciate. But we also know we have a tremendous challenge with their offense and what they've been able to do, not only this year but over the last four years. A lot of confidence in that group.

Q. James [Franklin], I was wondering, the overall mind-set from your experience in the bowls and watching the ones that have taken place so far, how important is that to the end result and



Head Coaches News Conference

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Friday, December 27, 2019
Omni Dallas Hotel, Dallas, Texas

what have you learned from the past concerning the things you're talking about, culture and having fun and tomorrow's game?

COACH FRANKLIN: I think the mentality is critical in bowl games. And it definitely factors in. It's probably more sophisticated than it has ever been. You got Memphis in a situation where I think first New Year's Six bowl game in program history. Obviously an unbelievable season when it comes to their record.

You also look at what we have to balance in terms of what Ryan [Silverfield] talked about a little bit about, the early signing period factors into that. Coaching turnover and changes. You got players deciding to skip bowl games. There's just so many factors that go into it now. And then you look all over college football and you look at games. You look at games like this. You think all the way back to Boise State, I think it was the Fiesta Bowl. You look at all these different types of games.

So for us, again, it's making sure that we have a plan to account for all these different circumstances, that we address it with our team and our coaching staff. And I think at the end of the day, the most important thing is we got to handle our business the way we go about our preparation. But obviously there better be a healthy respect for your opponent. And that's every week.

I know Memphis, Coach [Ryan Silverfield] is hammering them on having a healthy respect for our team. And they have a very confident program and team as well. And we're doing the same thing, making sure our guys are going into this with the right approach and the right mentality at a time where these young people and our players, have so many voices in their ear more than ever. So it's just making sure that you balance all those types of things and have a great bowl experience.

But then we talk all the time about being present. When they have an opportunity to go to a bowl event or go out and enjoy Dallas, we want them to do that. But when we're in meetings, we better be locked in and focused on that meeting and being present. And the same thing when we're at practice.

For us it's one of the reasons why practicing, I think, in Jerry's World (AT&T Stadium), in Cowboys Stadium, I think was helpful this week because that little bitty Jumbotron they got over the field can be somewhat distracting if you don't go in there until game time.

I know Ryan [Silverfield] has probably got a flat screen in his basement similar size as that. (laughter).



Head Coaches News Conference

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Friday, December 27, 2019

Omni Dallas Hotel, Dallas, Texas

Being able to practice in there with the Jumbotron going, all those different things to get used to and adjusted so come game time we can just go out and compete and not be in awe of the stadium or of the environment or the situation.

Q. Coach [Ryan Silverfield], yesterday I had a nice little conversation with Patrick Taylor. What can you say about him and how important is a guy like that to your team or would be to any team?

COACH SILVERFIELD: Patrick Taylor is not only just a fantastic player but a fantastic young man. I think anybody that's ever engaged with him, he has one of those smiles that lights up an entire room. Fantastic student, off the field, does well in the community, tons of community service since he's been at Memphis. He's a young man that injured his foot versus Ole Miss and could have very easily said "hey, I'm done" and called it a collegiate career because -- as he prepares for the NFL draft, but he is a guy that gets it. He wants to be around his teammates and he wants to see us win as badly as anybody.

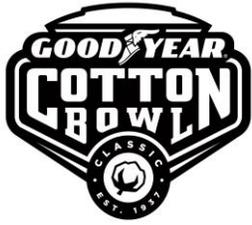
He did it for the right reasons. Comes back and works hard every single day. Could have hung up those cleats as a Memphis Tiger but decided to continue to push. He's a wonderful leader. Just a fantastic football player, great running back, and does it the right way at all times. Couldn't say enough great things about P.T. and what he's meant to our program, what he's meant to our university and our community.

So he's a guy obviously I wish I had him for one more year. But he's been phenomenal for us and excited to watch him go out there and play and do work tomorrow.

Q. Ryan [Silverfield], how much, if at all, have you spoken with Mike Norvell about this game, preparing for this game? And then in addition to that, how involved will you be in terms of the play-calling operation? How is that going to work with a different setup for this game?

COACH SILVERFIELD: Yeah, sure. Like I've said before, I give a lot of credit to Mike Norvell. Fully understand that I wouldn't be in this position if it weren't for him. So I give him full credit, a lot of credit for everything that's occurred at the university over the last four years for our success and for me being in this position right now.

Him and I have had some conversations but not really about this game. He has got his own job to do moving forward and so do I. But at the end of the day, with the task at hand, I'll be heavily involved with what we want to accomplish offensively.



Head Coaches News Conference

Memphis Coach Ryan Silverfield

Penn State Coach James Franklin

Friday, December 27, 2019
Omni Dallas Hotel, Dallas, Texas

As Coach [James] Franklin mentioned, now it's my responsibility also to make sure that we're doing what we need to offensively, defensively, and special teams, which is a role that I've embraced and been excited to be able to do and make sure I have an understanding of our game plan in all three phases.

Been heavily involved in the run game and our pass protections in the past, and I don't think that will change moving forward. I have got great confidence in our staff and our players that will execute the game plan. And they have done a phenomenal job, like I said, the last few weeks preparing for what we've got to do.

Q. Coach [James] Franklin, thank you for saying the words you said about Ed [Aschoff] earlier. Meant a lot for somebody who knew him. Wanted to ask you about particularly coming off the two losses that you guys had, those next weeks, you just mentioned mentality, what kind of mentality did you see out of those guys that kind of allowed the bounceback to happen, so to speak?

COACH FRANKLIN: At our place, at Penn State? Yeah. I think that's something that we've tried to be very strategic about, about how to handle losses when they do come. Hopefully, we don't have them, but when they do come how we handle them. It starts with me, making sure that my mentality is the right way and the approach is the right way so that one loss doesn't fall into two.

We had a pretty tough stretch there. I think we played five ranked opponents in six weeks. I think I saw a stat somewhere, it was the toughest stretch in college football since 1936. I thought overall we handled it pretty well. Obviously would have liked to have handled it better, but we handled it pretty well.

I think my temperament and my approach with the staff as well as the players coming in after those losses and making sure that we learn from them, that we grow from them and are able to bounce back physically and emotionally because there's a physical impact. Those games take a lot out of you, and there's the emotional impact that's probably even more significant.

So I think we've done a good job of that and have been able to kind of be in this position where we're playing a New Year's Six bowl game, being able to find a way to beat some really tough opponents.

But that's something -- I've spent some time kind of talking to people in the off-season, a bunch



Head Coaches News Conference

Memphis Coach Ryan Silverfield

Penn State Coach James Franklin

Friday, December 27, 2019
Omni Dallas Hotel, Dallas, Texas

of different coaches, guys that we know as well in the NFL as well as in college football, guys that have been doing it a long time. It's interesting because one of my conversations with somebody is, hey, I need to be better after losses. Do you have any advice for me? They say, "Don't get too good at it. Don't get too good at being good after losses." So there's that fine line. There's that fine line of it.

I think every day what I try to do is set the example for my organization that I'm trying to grow and get better every single day. We want to be lifelong learners in every aspect. I want our players to feel that way.

One of the things that's really cool for me that kind of aligns with that is this week we've had some people in my past that have been able to come and come out to practice and visit with our team this week. Donald Driver who lives here in Dallas, who I coached in Green Bay, came and visited with our team this week and just had a tremendous message about our history together and how our relationship is to this day and his message with our team. The guy has got an unbelievable story: 14 years in the NFL, four pro bowls, only missed four games in 14 years in his career. Just a total pro in every aspect and got some personal things that he's able to overcome. Just so proud of him. His message was great.

Jordan Rodgers who played for us at Vanderbilt came and visited with our team as well, and his message was great.

So I think it's a combination of all those things. But these bowls create opportunities like that, of players that we've had relationships with. And being in different parts of the country and being in Dallas hopefully opens up some opportunities.

Connor McGovern who plays for the Dallas Cowboys. We are hoping to get Sean Lee out as well. Gary Brown, the running backs coach for the Cowboys, we want to take advantage of all the resources and the opportunities that the Cotton Bowl provides as well as Dallas.