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VS



Stanford - 41
USC - 22

An interview with:

**DAVID SHAW
CHRISTIAN McCaffrey
KEVIN HOGAN**

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with Stanford head coach David Shaw, Kevin Hogan, and Christian McCaffrey.

COACH SHAW: It was a heck of a football game. We knew it was going to be a battle. We knew it was going to be kind of a test of wills. We wanted to be physical up front and wanted to make big plays in the passing game. We missed a couple opportunities early, but came back and kept fighting and kept scrapping.

Defensively we knew we were going to have to make a game breaking play. At some point in the day, somebody was going to have to make a turnover, force a fumble, get an interception. Great job by Blake Martinez, great job by Solomon Thomas picking it up, really big play.

You've got to trust your senior leadership, and Kevin Hogan was great today. This game is not about stats. He understands that. This team is about making big time plays when you need to. And he makes plays with his legs, staying alive, hitting Christian on the check down. Just a critical end of game, fourth down, put the ball in his hands and trust him to make the play. He did just phenomenal.

Haven't said much about it, you guys know I haven't. But to my left here is the best player in the nation. I don't know if there is any question. There is nobody in the nation doing what he's doing. It's not even a debate. So we're excited about what we've done as a team. What Christian has done is phenomenal. 40-what yards today? Something ridiculous. I lost count. 461, something like that. He's still walking on his toes. He could still play another quarter if we had to. But he's a phenomenal football player.

The guys up front are setting the tone, and the guys are making plays. Just as a team though,

very proud of the guys for sticking together after the beginning of the year and a couple of the ups and downs. Our guys finding ourselves and then coming off and playing great football down the stretch as well as anybody in the nation.

Q. Coach, if you didn't know better and you swear it's the same game you guys played in California against USC, but what was the big difference between this game tonight and the last time you played USC?

COACH SHAW: It was very, very similar. Now they ran the ball a little bit more this game, and they ran it really physically. It was tough, it was tough to stop. They cracked a couple runs and they've got good players, they've got good backs. We needed to tackle better at times, but at the same time, you miss tackles because you're going against really good football players. Those guys are known to break tackles and we rallied around and made enough plays. We knew it was going to be tight, we knew it was going to be close. But at some point we're going to have to bow up and make a couple plays to separate, and that's what our guys did.

Q. McCaffrey, coach from USC said that you were one of the toughest players to play against. That's a great compliment to you. But in your mind tonight, what stood out the most to you about the way you played tonight?

CHRISTIAN McCaffrey: I think I was just able to -- I was put in a bunch of different situations to be successful, I think. I can't talk enough about the O-line and the holes, especially in the first half. We knew that if we wanted to win the game, we were going to have to run the ball efficiently, and those guys were unbelievable.

As far as in the pass game, my job was kind of easy. Hogan over here got us to the right check, and threw the ball on the money and I kind of had a straightaway run.

In the return game, our guys just keep working, keep straining, a great special teams unit. We did a pretty good job on them, but I think overall just an extremely fun game to play in.

Q. Christian, how do you feel about breaking Barry Sanders all-time record for all purpose yards?

CHRISTIAN McCaffrey: That's a huge

honor. It's a huge honor. I know he did it in a couple less games. I don't know if you take that into consideration or not, but that's a huge honor. That's a guy I have posters on my wall growing up. So to have my name mentioned even in the same category as him is definitely an honor.

Q. As a follow-up, could you describe the play when he threw the touchdown pass to Kevin?

CHRISTIAN McCaffrey: Yeah, we had been working in practice and it worked in practice, and it was a little bit of a reverse. We made it look like a toss to the left, and Barry did a great job selling it, and pitching it to me. My job was easy. Those are always the scariest ones though when he's that wide open. You're just praying that you get it to him, and obviously, Hogan can catch the ball and finished it.

Q. Kevin, when you took over as Stanford's quarterback, what did you hope your legacy would be?

KEVIN HOGAN: Oh, that's tough. I just wanted to do my best and put our offense in a position to be successful every time. It was following a great leader, a great player in Andrew. You know, I said out there on the field, you can't really fill the shoes. You've just got to do what you can. And I've been a part of four or five great teams out here at Stanford, and the guys we have up front in the back field, out wide, they make my job easy. So it's pretty crazy that my time here is coming to an end. But I can't say enough about the teams that I've been on.

COACH SHAW: I've got to interject something here. I was asked a question this past week. Everybody's on this thing about Mount Rushmore. And a guy asked me about Mount Rushmore, the quarterbacks of Stanford history, if Kevin Hogan deserves to be on it. And I said, absolutely. We've got Elway, Plunkett, Luck, and Kevin. I know Kevin will never say that, but I don't think it's even a question. What he's been able to do here with his arm, with his legs and to be honest with his heart and his toughness, taking us to three Pac-12 Championship games in four years is unbelievable. It's unmatched. He's been a phenomenal player for us, so thank you, Kevin.

Q. David, at any point were you aware of the Clemson score? How much did you allow yourself to follow that?

COACH SHAW: Had no idea. I didn't know until about five minutes ago walking up here. Since the beginning of the year, it's so funny too, since spring, I spent spring with Dabo Swinney

back at Clemson, and we had some great conversations. Our families got together. He kind of started it and I kind of capped it off, but we talked about the mode of the season is (indiscernible). The two of us kind of put that thing together, and we concentrated on where we are. Not where we've been, not where we're going, but where we are and what we can do today.

That was our guys today. Our guys didn't worry about anything else. All that matters is what happens on our field. What happens after that is up to other people. But for us, we tried to play our best football game and come out with a win tonight.

Q. What would you say was the biggest area of improvement for Christian from last year to this year?

COACH SHAW: First and foremost, he got the ball more. Second of all, really, and Christian knows this, the biggest difference, the two biggest differences, one was just the knowledge of all the blocking schemes, of all the plays and knowing who he is reading.

We put him in spots last year to make him successful and use his natural ability to make a couple plays. We talked about him in the spring that he's going to have to handle it all, and he has.

Second thing, for a guy that's so quick, so explosive and so fast, was patience. Patience and reading those polars, and being half speed behind the line, and reading it, and cutting full speed. He surpassed our expectations there.

We've talked a lot about (indiscernible) and how he runs, and Christian has been able to adopt that same running style. And you see that flash of lightning and the kid explodes through the hole, it's just phenomenal. It's been fun to watch.

Q. You see Christian get man coverage, how much do you (Indiscernible)?

KEVIN HOGAN: He has no idea. One-on-one, I'll take him against anyone. A linebacker, DB, you can split him out wide, have him come out of the back field and he's going to make a play for you. It's third down, and you made the right decision to cross the linebacker's space, and I just have to put it somewhere where he can catch it, and he does the rest.

Q. Do you know for a fact that you're going to the Rose Bowl --

COACH SHAW: If the worst thing we do is go to the Rose Bowl, I think that's pretty cool. I think that's pretty cool. Once again, we're not in

charge of that. We'll go where they tell us to go.

The question is should there be an eight-team playoff? Absolutely. If you win one of the big five conferences, should you be in the playoffs? Absolutely. Eventually I think we're going to get there. We're not there now, but it's the only thing that makes sense. We've made all these strides to become Power Five conferences but score four spots for a playoff. It doesn't make any sense. I think eventually we'll get there.

Once again, if they invite us, great. If they don't, great. We'll go down to Pasadena and have a great time.

The bottom line for us, we capped off a phenomenal year. These seniors deserve all the accolades that they get because they helped what we talked to them earlier in the year about about not sustaining, but continuing to build. That's hard. That's hard to never be satisfied. That's hard to never accept less than your best. It's hard to go to a bowl game last year and say that's not good enough. We can do so much better, and put the work in to make it happen. That is the real legacy these guys will leave. Yes, Pac-12 Championships and those things are awesome. But the legacy these guys are leaving is work. You can't talk about it. You have to work through it. And that's what our guys have done.

Q. USC came out more aggressive in the second half. What were some of the adjustments you had to make to continue to play your game?

COACH SHAW: The biggest thing for us was corralling those receivers. You know, JuJu, we know he's not a hundred percent. He's a special, special football player. He can make guys miss. And Alijah Holder did a really good job in the second half just getting him on the ground. Once he catches the ball, we are able to play, just getting him on the ground and rallying him to the running game.

So those guys who break tackles and make people miss. Our safeties took good angles. Our linebackers kept fighting. Up front defensive line had a couple stops and a couple of tackles for loss.

Solomon Thomas played an outstanding football game and made some plays. Brennan Scarlett made some plays. Those guys just kept fighting the whole game. It was going to be one of those games. We knew they were going to shake free a couple times because they're that good. We trust our defense, we trust our guys. Anderson making sure we mixed it up on them coverage

wise, blitz wise and dropping those guys out. They did a really good job mixing it up against USC.

Q. Considering the opposition, would you consider that the best defense of the year for you guys?

COACH SHAW: It feels like it right now. I'll let you know once we watch the film. But it feels like it because we needed it. That's the biggest thing. It's not just the numbers. It's not just the stats. We needed those guys to come up big in the second half, especially when I screwed it up going for it on fourth down there without taking the points, going for a pass. It was completely my fault.

The defense came out ask bailed us out and made some plays, which put the game back in our hands. And then offensively up front with the offensive linemen and Christian running, and then some big plays from Rector to get a couple first downs and Cajuste, and Kevin throwing the ball was huge.

Q. How is Ronnie Harris doing?

COACH SHAW: He made it as long as he could. The adrenaline kicked in. He wasn't in danger of really reinjuring himself. That ankle stiffened up a little bit, and he couldn't go in the second half. And Ronnie knows this, I told this to Ronnie, Ronnie's in charge of our juice, we felt that early in the game. When Ronnie's back on the field, it's just that energy, that fire, that passion. He made some great plays. He doesn't back down from anybody. The rest of our guys felt that. We needed a charge in the beginning of the game, so really happy with what Ronnie did today making that play.

Q. (Indiscernible) can you talk about that play on fourth down? (Indiscernible).

COACH SHAW: Well, what I love about our guys is we don't scoreboard watch. We're up three, we're down three, we're up ten, we're down ten.

First time we played USC, we were down two scores early in the game. We just keep battling. We keep playing. We know if we play our game, we'll fight back into it, if we're down. If we're up, we play our game, we know we're going to extend the lead. There's a confidence that our guys have earned by how well they've played in the last few years. So no matter what the score is, no matter if we're up or down, we don't change what we do or change how we play. We trust the scheme, we trust the guys doing the scheme.

Q. How healthy was Blake, and what was his impact on today's game?

COACH SHAW: Blake was great. Blake was great. Pre-practice we're talking about a middle linebacker here, right? I asked him how he is, and he said, coach, it's one game. You know, he says, I'm fine. Are you kidding me? He's all over the place. He's phenomenal. He's a great football player, and we needed him to play today. We taped him up, and he went out there, and made sure he can run around and he can do everything. Full speed, planting, cutting, he was ready to go.

Q. How did you get called from behind on that touchdown?

COACH SHAW: That question might be better answered by his teammates. But go ahead.

CHRISTIAN McCaffrey: I don't know how to answer that, really. Me and you are wondering the same thing right now. But, no, I had to make a couple cuts. I wish I would have cut to the right, because I think it was Michael Rector there who was running and busting his butt for a nice touchdown block, and I saw Cajuste come in there and throw a block. As soon as I turned to the left, saw someone. So, yeah, that's --

COACH SHAW: We'll work on top speed for next year.

Q. My real question was when this game gets close, what is the quarterback like? What did you get from him when it was time to regain control of the game?

CHRISTIAN McCaffrey: Oh, it's so fun when we get put in situations where we have to go through adversity because Kevin's ice man. He's got ice in his veins. He doesn't let anything bug him. Any time something bad happens, you can expect a lot of people to hang their heads. But when he's back there taking snaps, our team has full confidence. When I'm sitting there knowing that he's our quarterback, I know we've got nothing to worry about, because that's one of the greatest leaders and one of the greatest competitors I've ever seen in my life.

COACH SHAW: I have a question for you guys: Has anybody ever seen a game where two different players rush for touchdown, throw for a touchdown, and receive a touchdown? Has that ever happened in college football at or any level of football?

Q. (Indiscernible) intercepted for a touchdown?

COACH SHAW: That was a long time ago. But two players in the same game on the same team. I don't think that's ever happened before.

Q. Stanford hasn't had one guy do it in 20 years.

COACH SHAW: It's about time then, right?

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