



December 2, 2011 – Eugene, Oregon

2011 Pac-12 Football Championship Game

UCLA Head Coach Chip Rick Neuheisel Conference
Thursday, Dec. 1, 2011

Opening Statement

We're very excited to be here in the inaugural Pac-12 Championship Game. Obviously we're here under some unique circumstances but we're here nonetheless. We look forward to playing our best and we'll take that to be competitive against a highly, highly talented and highly explosive operation in the University of Oregon. Chip Kelly is to be congratulated for the juggernaut he has created here. It's a great opportunity for us to be in this inaugural game and we look forward to putting our best foot forward. Hopefully we won't disappoint.

On UCLA players carrying him off the field after practice on Wednesday night:

That was something I'll have forever. This is a business where you don't necessarily get to work for instant gratification. You have to work for delayed gratification and create relationships with players. It's always about trying to push and prod to get them to be not just the best players they can be but the best people they can be. So to be thought of the way, I was thought of, at least in that moment, was very rewarding.

On the number of coaching changes this year:

I think coaching changes are cyclical. It just happens that the wheels stopped in a couple of places in this Conference. This is a tough occupation because, not only do you have to avoid the pitfalls that have fallen on some other programs that have fallen outside the lines, but also you have to be very successful inside the lines. Unfortunately, I wasn't successful enough. The other thing that's happening in college football today that wasn't happening years ago is the perception of programs becomes so important. If you have a bad night in a nationally-televised game, the perception can get going down a slippery slope and is sometimes hard to stop. I understand the predicament that those who make these decisions find themselves in because of the need for outside revenue to support programs. Football can sustain itself, but the rest of the programs cannot and they're equally as important. To keep this going, you have to have the support of the generous donors. Generous donors also have perceptions and those have to be weighed in these decisions. There is going to be more volatility with respect to the hiring and firing of guys in my position.

On coming off the USC loss and coming to play in this game:

I made a point to the team at the conclusion of, as you said, the difficult and embarrassing loss to USC, that we didn't have time to wallow in self-pity. We didn't have time to go through the carnage that was that evening. We had to get about the next chore which was getting ready for this game. There will be time to analyze what exactly took place. There were certainly opportunities to keep that game competitive and we squandered them. The point is, we didn't have time to worry about that. We do have experience in getting up off the mat. We've done it before. We had a very difficult loss in Tucson on a Thursday night and came back the next outing and defeated a talented Cal team, and then followed that with a victory over a very talented Arizona State team. We have experience under our belt to lend itself to getting up, finding yourself and playing much better football. Hopefully that will be the case again tomorrow night.

On how to keep a game from getting out of hand:

That's a predicament that we have to find our way out. There's no question. We are not going to contain Oregon for 60 minutes. They are too explosive of a team. They're going to make their share of plays. But we have to be able to respond, whether it be with our offense going out there and matching or our defense has to go out there and get a stop the next time. Someone's got to rise up and make those plays if we expect to be competitive tomorrow. Everyone better look forward to being that one that gets the tide stemmed. Ultimately, that's what we're talking about - finding the resolve to get this done. We knew this was going to be a tough road with respect with getting all the way back. Yet, despite all the difficulty and all the adversity on the field or off with injuries or the like, we're a game from playing in the Rose Bowl, which is the amazing thing about all of this. We're going to take our swings.

On coaching in this game and finishing his tenure at UCLA:

It's all about commitment. Ultimately commitment is just that - finishing what you start. I was excited that I got to stay in my role as head coach for this particular game and just do that. See if we can find lightning in a bottle and make this a game.

On the surrealism of coaching this week:

Being that UCLA is my alma mater, it's a definite hard pill to swallow, wanting so desperately to have provided the leadership to take us back to the throne and falling short. That's been tough, but almost as a silver lining, I've gotten this other stuff to concentrate on. It's been welcome. I can focus on game plans and normal preparations. When it's all said and done, regardless of the outcome, it's going to be a little more "wow" about what just took place.

On trying to contain Oregon's offense:

Offensively, they are a juggernaut because of the pace at which they play and the athletes with which they play. It's about pace and the frenetic speed that defenses are required to play with. When you're a defense, not only are you trying to get your call, you have to trust that everybody else, the other 10 guys on the field, are doing the same. That's a very difficult thing to do. When you watch Oregon's offense perform, especially when they get going, they look like a slot machine. When they get going like that, the defenses' eyes aren't right and their cleats aren't in the ground when the play starts. Then you add the great athletes that are getting the ball - LaMichael James, Kenjon Barner or De'Anthony Thomas and the list goes on and on - whoever has got the rock, they are around the corner. It's a tall order. It's not something that people practice year round except for Oregon. They practice it year round. It's a tremendous challenge and yet, if it were easy, everybody would do it. One thing that's true on both sides of the ball for Oregon is speed. They've had the fortune over the course of the last decade to be really aggressive because their offense plays normally ahead. They can come at you and come at you. It's our job tomorrow night to try to hold serve and punch.

On his relationship with Chip Kelly and his preparation for Oregon:

I'm a big fan of Chip Kelly's. I don't know of a finer job that's been done in college football over the last couple of years than the job Chip's done. He went to the Rose Bowl in year one and the national championship in year two. He's on the verge of another Rose Bowl in year three. I don't know how many times ESPN College GameDay has been in Eugene but it's been a lot. He's done a magnificent job.