

Franklin American Mortgage Music City Bowl: Nebraska vs Tennessee

Friday, December 30, 2016

Mike Riley
Ryker Fyfe
Ross Dzuris
Brandon Reilly
Nebraska Cornhuskers

COACH RILEY: Okay. You know, we're obviously very disappointed in losing the game. We congratulate Tennessee. They did what we couldn't allow them to do.

Kind of two major factors: We had a hard time blocking defensive front, and of course, No. 9 in particular, and then we gave up big plays. You know, I think that that was -- you know, when we crawled back in it and gave up that big pass, that's kind of indicative of what that game was like for us defensively. We just gave up too many big plays.

Q. What would you attribute the struggle today to?

COACH RILEY: Well, I think that the athleticism of the quarterback was a factor. I think that he, you know, he did a nice job of throwing a lot of balls right on time, but it looked like to me, too, that when it wasn't there, when it wasn't right on time, he moved around, bought time where he moved around and ran. Those plays were hard on us. You know, they had a big impact on that. I think he went for two touchdowns off of scramble plays.

You know, his athleticism gave them a lot of extra opportunities. But the other thing is, too, we gave up I think probably the biggest thing on defense besides that was probably giving up good -- the kind of leveraged coverage position you need to have on a receiver in certain coverages, you know.

And so there are some coverages where you will play a guy outside position, and you'll have help inside, or some coverages where you'll have -- where you won't have any inside help, so you need to stay inside. And if you're going to give up anything, it's going to be something short and out. We gave up big plays against, you know, in parts of the coverage where we shouldn't have been able to do that.



This guy played a heck of a game. He made all the plays he could have despite a bunch of pressure, and kind of crawled our team back into a chance to win it late.

Q. What positives did you take from this game to go back for the next season?

COACH RILEY: You know, this game was for us, part of our process now in going forward with of course the players that played the game will have gained great experience in playing against guys that are -- they have some good players on that team and good athletes.

So I think the experience of playing in this game for us will be good for our team. And it's kind of the end of one team and the beginning of another, as leadership emerges right after the results of this game are in and we get back to campus. It should be a great motivator for the guys that were playing in this game that are coming back for next year's team.

Q. Can you take more about Ryker's performance, what he was up against stepping in against a guy like Barnett?

COACH RILEY: I think that atmosphere-wise, it was great. We are really thankful for being in this Bowl game. It was a big-time deal. You don't see many games in a situation like this. It's not maybe a playoff game, sold-out Bowl game, lots of enthusiasm for the game. The group of people here are just awesome. The Music City Bowl people, Scott Ramsey and his crew, it was great for us to be a part of it.

But as far as offensive performance, the biggest factor going in was going to be could we block the Tennessee defensive front and could we block Barnett. You know, when we did get a little bit of time, we made plays. And that's why I said, he just about made all the plays that he could have made that had any semblance of just giving him enough time to do it.

We knew he was well prepared and that he's a big player and that given the chance, he would make plays.

RYKER FYFE: Barnett is a good player obviously. I hate to say it, but he is. He talked a lot of trash out there, but yeah, he's a good player.

Q. Do you feel like he tried to get in your head, do

you think?

RYKER FYFE: Yeah, he hit a lot of -- obviously had a bunch of sacks and a lot of hurry-ups on me. He was getting in the backfield pretty quick. You know, it's a combination of things. It's maybe not blocking him right. It's me holding on to the ball too long or good coverage. It's a combination of things with him getting in the backfield.

Q. How difficult is it when their defensive line is putting so much pressure on you all day?

RYKER FYFE: Especially when they get the ball out quick obviously. Kind of disrupts your time with your receivers and stuff. It was a big factor I think in our offense was Barnett.

Q. One sack --

RYKER FYFE: His only sack -- seems like he's back there all the time. But yeah, felt like I had a lot of hurry-ups and I always had to kind of know where he's at on the field and which side he's on. Yeah, I thought he was a good player.

Q. Was there a big difference, did you feel like, between what you saw with Tennessee's front and what you guys have seen in the Big Ten?

RYKER FYFE: I only played in one start against -- so it wasn't as good as Barnett, obviously. I think Illinois had good D-ends, but nothing like what we saw today.

Q. What was it to have someone like Bradley to help you out?

RYKER FYFE: I told him before the game, if you get one-on-one, I'm going to get you the ball and hopefully get one touchdown. He had two today, so good for him.

Q. Brandon, you got the offense going, you had three or four possessions in a row, why did it take so long deep into the second quarter to get something moving?

BRANDON REILLY: I don't think it's one certain thing that held us back, but you know, with Ryker back there, we know he's going to put the ball where we can catch it. Kind of look a little longer than we wanted, but once he got in a rhythm and rolling, got some time, it shows we could be pretty explosive at times.

Q. Do you think the running game could maybe do a little more damage against that defense?

RYKER FYFE: We're hoping obviously on first downs to be able to get more yardage because when you get to second and long, it forces you to -- second and third-and-long, you have to throw obviously, so it gets you in predictable situations. So first down, we needed to be able to run the ball better I thought in this game.

Q. Ryker, as the game progressed, how aware are you of where he's at, and what's the process, because he was after you all game?

RYKER FYFE: At the start of the game obviously you know he's coming but late in the fourth quarter when they know you're going to throw, and he's just ready to tee off on you and you're like, which side is he on; make sure you block him.

Late in the game, I think I got hit, sacked by him. My head, I was seeing stars and I thought I was concussed. I think I might have a mild concussion, I'm not sure. Yeah, it was in the backfield a lot.

Q. Ross what sort of challenges did Josh present to you guys today?

ROSS DZURIS: Obviously he can do it all. He can throw pretty well and when it breaks down, he's really good at finding the open lanes and if your rush lanes aren't good, he'll make you pay for it.

Q. Brandon, what were your thoughts that you take away?

BRANDON REILLY: I'd say probably just the bond the senior class has. We've been through a lot. A lot of us walked on together. It's those friendships that last a lifetime, and that's what I'm going to hold onto most about this journey.

Q. All you guys are leaving. Has anybody said anything in the locker room to the young guys about next year?

BRANDON REILLY: I just said, it's your show know, be accountable and hold the other guys to that high standard. Don't let your opportunities slip away.

Q. How do you feel about where you guys leave the program as it goes forward?

BRANDON REILLY: Obviously coming off last year and the disappointing season we had, our senior class got together in the off-season. We don't want to go out that way. We were pushing for that ten-win, but nine wins is kind of where we've been at. But definitely a step in the right direction after last season.

Q. What do you think about the calibre of athletes that Tennessee has and now that the game is over, how much of a challenge was it to keep up with them?

ROSS DZURIS: I think the real challenge is when you have athletes like that and you go up-tempo, they are able to -- their second and third string receivers are just as good as their starters.

You know, I think a couple times when we just kind of tightened up and they had those quick plays and they just hurried it up, you know, good athletes are pretty

good in the hurry-up. It was a big challenge, early on, especially.