



Team Selection Teleconference

California vs. TCU



December 2, 2018

SCOTT LEIGHTMAN: Good afternoon. Welcome, everybody, to the head coaches' media teleconference for the 2018 Cheez-It Bowl. This is our first time with Cheez-It as our title sponsor and we're very excited. Everyone knows the brand and has a favorite flavor of Cheez-It so we're really excited to have them on board.

Equally excited to have this great matchup with Cal and TCU, two programs that are really doing some good things.

Coach Justin Wilcox will join us here first, the away team. Cal had a 7-5 record this year in the Pac-12 conference and will be coming to the Cheez-It Bowl. Last time they were here, a gentleman by the name of Aaron Rodgers was their quarterback. So we'll start off with the Cal Golden Bears. Coach Wilcox, take it away.

COACH WILCOX: First and foremost, just really humbled and appreciate the invitation. We've been down there a couple of times to be a part of the bowl games down there, and I know our team's really excited. And to get a chance to play TCU and Coach [Gary] Patterson is great for our program, and we have respect for them and looking forward to a great week.

SCOTT LEIGHTMAN: TCU had a 6-6 season, finished the year strong with a couple of wins to get them into the bowl picture and here coming to Phoenix at Chase Field. Coach Patterson has coached in both the Fiesta Bowl and the previous iteration of the Cheez-It Bowl. Coach Patterson, welcome back.

COACH PATTERSON: Thank you. And just like Coach Wilcox said, we're very humbled and excited about being able to come west. We haven't been there for a couple of years. We've been to the Buffalo Wild Wings before and we were at the Fiesta Bowl. And now to be at the Cheez-It Bowl, we're excited.

I've been following this season the Cal Bears, and I understand how they've been playing and the kind of defense. They beat the champs -- that ended up being the champs of the Pac-12, the Washington Huskies, during the season. So we understand what kind of opponent we're getting into.

SCOTT LEIGHTMAN: Great. Thank you. Kickoff will be 7:00 Mountain Time on December 26th. The game will be played at Chase Field, which normally serves as the home park for the Arizona Diamondbacks. This will be a baseball stadium turned football field. The roof will be closed. It will be a fun night on ESPN.

Q. Coach, I wonder if you -- that Washington victory really seemed to spark you guys. Wonder if you could talk about that game and then the stretch when you beat SC and beat Colorado and that seemed to really make your season, almost.

COACH WILCOX: We've had some ups and downs this season. We started fast, and we went through a three-game stretch there where we didn't play very well. And I thought our guys really battled through it, to be honest, and the character of the team really showed. And I think once we -- went to Oregon State and then came back and played Washington, who we all know is a great team, our kids just kept fighting and kept



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believing in each other. And I think that generated -- I don't think. I know it generated some confidence amongst them. And just really pleased with how they came together and hung in there and kept fighting throughout the season.

I thought we got better as the season wore on. We didn't always play as well as we would have liked, but really proud of how hard the guys play and how hard they compete, and we won some games, you know, with the intangibles, I think. So really proud of them for that.

We know what kind of opponent we're facing with Coach Patterson and TCU, so we'll be excited for the game.

Q. Defense, I think, has been your calling card, am I right, this season? And what do you like about the way you've played on that side of the ball?

COACH WILCOX: I think in the last couple of years since we've been here, we've definitely made some strides there. We have got some big football players on that side of the ball that are really, really coachable. The guys are really learning how to play the game, and, you know, we've got excellent coaches, and I'm obviously biased. But I think the guys on our team are extremely coachable, and you see the improvements week to week in how we play. But most importantly, they play extremely hard and play together, and that always gives you a chance.

Q. Coach Patterson, obviously injuries have been a big part. You said you would have some tough decisions. Can you share any decisions you guys might have had to make on some players and kind of how that might affect you all going to the bowl game?

COACH PATTERSON: Not right at this point. We'll see how everybody gets healthy. Obviously there's a lot of them that won't make it back so -- I think we'll have 20, 26, and then we'll decide on the rest of them by the time we get to the end of the week.

Q. You guys faced Coach Wilcox when he was defense coordinator at Boise State. What do you remember about that defense, and what sort of challenges will they pose December 26th?

COACH PATTERSON: I haven't really had a chance to watch them yet. I've watched a little late at night because I'm a voter. I look at what they've allowed, and they've only allowed barely over 300 yards a ball game.

So they've played hard. They've got after people on defense. And what I remember, Justin and his staff, when they were at Boise, they came down and visited us. We've known each other -- Boise and TCU know a lot about each other, all the way back when Chris Petersen was the head coach. That's the head coach now at the Washington Huskies, was at Boise State.

So a lot of respect for what they do, how they do it, and he's also got some coaches on his staff that I've known



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very well. Coach [Tim] DeRuyter, that's his defensive coordinator, is a guy who's always done a great job, who was also down here at A&M, and was the head coach of Fresno.

So they have a lot of experience, and they've done a really good job of slowing people down and stopping people and winning ball games.

Kind of like us, I think we both went through some struggles in the middle of the season, both probably for different reasons, and both have teams that have fought back. Ours, I've been really proud of the way they've fought back with the things that have happened to them. And so you get ready to go.

That's why you play a bowl game because it's a positive for your players. It's a reward to be able to do what you want to do. I would probably be able to speak for both teams. Both teams want to be able to end the season playing their best football and put on a great ball game and get ready to go. As we always do once we get down to finals here, we'll try to prepare give the Cal Bears the best opponent they can possibly have. That's what Boise and TCU have always done when we were both there, always great ball games. I wouldn't expect anything less.

Q. You guys have hit on some of it, but in a lot of ways this game will be a preview of you guys seeing each other in the regular season in 2020 and 2021. Just wondered if there are things about the other's program that you like, that you respect, that made you guys want to schedule each other down the road.

COACH WILCOX: Like Coach [Gary] Patterson said, I got that chance to compete against them when I was at Boise State and have always had a ton of respect. Early in my career I went down there and spent a little time, and just always have watched from afar, and the things they've done defensively, obviously, and then the things they've done offensively. And Coach Patterson's won a ton of games for a long, long time.

So obviously it's an exciting matchup. I know our guys, when I told them today in the team meeting, they were fired up. And we're going to get a chance to see them again in a couple of years but, you know, just from being a football guy and especially a defensive guy, I've always had a lot of respect and enjoyed watching his teams play.

COACH PATTERSON: The biggest thing, number one, you're always excited when you watch young talented coaches get a chance to be head coaches. And in Coach Wilcox's case, he's traveled and done well everywhere he's been. I just want to congratulate him.

I think one of the things about being in this profession -- and I've been in it for 36 years -- is you always like watching guys that do it the right way and work hard at it and do what they need to do to be successful. And you want them to be successful. He's a guy that's been able to do that. I just congratulate him on that part, being where he's at.



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For three hours when you play each other, you gotta get after it, but one of the things about our profession is good friendships and respectability within the job that people do. So, you know, when you see a young guy get an opportunity to go, like Coach Wilcox has, to Cal and get a chance to be a head coach and then be successful, you know, it really pays off because I'm sure it is not only for myself watching it but also for Chris [Petersen] up at Washington and all of the other guys, Dan Hawkins, anybody else that he's been a part of there. It's a lot of fun seeing guys be able to do that.

There's not going to be any surprise that they're playing great defense, and there's not any surprise that they play hard. It's fun watching guys that do it the right way and become successful, like I said before. So cheers to him and cheers to the Cal Bears for getting to this point. We're looking forward to a great ball game. That's what I would add.

Q. Your defenses both have been top-notch this season. What kind of excites you about the prospect of a grind-it-out, gritty game?

COACH PATTERSON: Well, I don't know if any of us -- at least when you get to my age, you have got to take a lot of baby aspirin when do you that. But I think the key is, you know, you get another month with your team and you get a chance to put everything back together in the weight room and guys get a little healthier and get a chance to play one more game.

I think the best thing about bowl games is your seniors get an opportunity -- we've got a couple of guys going to the Senior Bowl that are good players, and to give them opportunity to play one more game. You always try to give your seniors the best present going out of being able to play another great ball game.

I think any time you get into a ball game where it's going to be hard-hitting and it is going to be a close ball game, you know, everybody gets excited about it.

Whether it's high scoring or low scoring, it makes no difference. What both sides are going to try to do is win by one point.

I think even in other ball games, that's what we've had to do. Even in the Big 12, we've had to win three ball games that were less than 20 points, which is just like the Pac-12. It's hard to do that. So that says a lot about both programs to be able to get that accomplished.

COACH WILCOX: Yeah, I would echo what Coach Patterson said. Just, you know, I think we're always just trying to -- all of us are trying to find a way to win, and however that happens. And some years your team is set up a certain way, maybe differently than other years, and you find a way to play to your strengths.

And, again, we'll both spend our bowl practices working on our teams. It is a great reward for our -- the kids on our team and the seniors. And, also, it is an exciting time for the younger players who didn't play much or who



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were redshirting that we'll get a chance to work with them and continue to develop them in our program.

But you're going to take it how you can get it, and who knows how this game will go. We know it's going to be a tough physical game anytime you play against them. And our guys will be excited for it. We've still got a lot of work to do. As you said before, we're look to both play our best game at the end of the year.

Q. Your two defensive ends were All-Conference. Can you talk about them, describe them a little bit and how they play.

COACH PATTERSON: We've been fortunate the last two years -- really the last three years. Going into the season we had had 85 total sacks. So we had been able to generate a lot of pressure. This year we only had 30.

But really both players -- a lot of that had to do with me and who we played and the kind of defense we had to play. I kind of stymied that a little bit. They both are guys that play with high motors and really are probably a little bit different players than -- one is more of a speed guy; one is more of a power guy. But really they're guys that like to play the game.

And really came -- L.J. [Collier] came from a small IA school and really nobody recruited him, has turned into being a good player.

And then Ben [Banogu] is a guy that transferred here that nobody really recruited out of high school, really, and has turned into a really good player also.

So, you know, it's one of those things. Really kind of a typical TCU guy, that sometimes people don't know very much about, and both of them like to play the game. They're always excited because they like to be coached and they play hard. Any time you do that, coaches are happy.

Q. You mentioned having been here for the Fiesta Bowl and the predecessor to the Cheez-It Bowl. What's it like playing in maybe the lower of those bowls in terms of trying to inspire your kids to get to a New Year's Six bowl?

COACH PATTERSON: We've never thought about it being a lower bowl, to be honest with you. A bowl game is a bowl game. You're playing against a team that's won. Number one, we love our staff, everybody who's ever been a part of our program -- and we've been around here a long time. This is our 21st year, and everybody remembers going west and coming to Phoenix and being a part of this.

So I can tell you that, we don't look at it that way. We played -- these kids have played in -- in Memphis, they played in the New Year's Six bowl. They played in all of them. And the bottom line to it is every bowl game is a great game. You're always going to play against a great opponent. And Cal is no different from anybody else we've ever played.



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We definitely don't think of it as a lower bowl. I think -- you're looking at some of other teams that have never been to bowl games. As I was watching the selection today, like Eastern Michigan hadn't been in a while and how did they look at it.

So I think it's always in the eyes of the beholder. And for our kids, especially our younger kids, kids coming up, to me it is a springboard like Justin [Wilcox] talked about. Being excited about getting 10, 11, 12 more practices to get better, to push yourself into your spring and the next season.

And I think that's what we've always done. We've always looked at you have an opponent but you're looking at how do you put your bodies back together and then get ready to play and give your seniors a great send-off.

But, also, you start formulating your next team. I think anybody that's not doing that is going to fall behind. That's how we've stayed here for 21 years, is to make sure we do that.

Just know we're excited about coming that direction. We don't think about it as a lower bowl at all. We look at it as an opportunity and a place that people have always been taken very well of. The hospitality has been unbelievable. And what we're going to try to do is pay them back by trying to give them as good a football team as we can here at TCU to play in the game.

Q. Gary, what's it been like -- you've had such a tough situation with your quarterbacks, and I know Grayson [Muehlstein] has played pretty well the last two games. Can you just talk about that a little bit?

COACH PATTERSON: It's been a whole season. We've had 26 or 27 season-ending injuries. We had close to 40 guys that have played -- they've lost -- they've missed probably up to four ball games, at least. So -- out of 85 scholarships. So it's been an interesting ride.

But that's why I've been so proud of this group, because the way they fought, winning three out of the last four, having to get ready to go and fight back. That's the key, I think. Just like Coach Wilcox talked about his team and how excited they were about how they did. He was so excited about how they fought through everything. I think that's what I felt about this team.

And, you know, as a football coach, you know, I'm looking forward to watching them on film. I'll get started on them tonight and then get out -- we'll be out recruiting, and then in between starting to watch film. And the biggest thing is that you appreciate people that play great football and the way they play it. So I think that's the whole thing that's come down with us.

Our quarterback is really -- kind of accentuates it. We lost our starter, then we lost our back-up, and now we're on our number three. He's a five-year guy. Grayson Muehlstein is a guy that waited five years here, started on his master's. And we'd be in a lot of trouble if he wouldn't have stayed and been in this situation. Really, he's



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done what he needed to do to win the last two ball games. So we're fighting through it and we're glad to be in this position, because probably three or four weeks ago we weren't sure that we'd be in a bowl game.

So to be in this opportunity for us is great for our seniors and great for our staff.