



Kansas
Postgame Press Conference
December 26, 2023



QUOTES FOR COACH LANCE LEIPOLD, JASON BEAN, LAWRENCE ARNOLD, LUKE GRIMM

COACH LEIPOLD: First of all, I once again would like to thank the Guaranteed Rate Bowl, the Fiesta Bowl Yellow Jacket Committee people and everything for, first of all, a great experience for our student-athletes. Really was first class all the way and something (the team will) always remember.

I'm really proud of this football team for a lot of reasons. They overcame a lot tonight and persevered. It wasn't our prettiest performance, but we found a way to make plays and stops when we needed to.

This gentleman (Jason Bean) next to me played lights out. The receivers and the plays that we made when we needed them was a big part of things. For us to win nine football games is something that's special, that hasn't happened in our program very often, and it's something we want to continue to build on.

Q. Lance, you mentioned the nine wins, but first bowl win in more than a decade also. I guess, has that hit you, what that means for this program?

COACH LEIPOLD: Well, it means a lot. It means a lot to these young men. It means a lot for the program going forward, where we've come from. All those things that you guys know that have been around us for 30 months. Kind of think where this started and where these guys have put this program means a lot. It means a lot for our staff. All those different things moving forward.

So a bowl win. We battled hard a year ago, came up short. And for us to find a way in this one is really a big step. And you could see, it's great to see these guys celebrate and have fun and do the things, especially with all the things we ask them to do.

Q. Coach, when you first got here, went 2-10, progressed last year making a bowl game. Now, for only the sixth time in the history of the program, Kansas has won nine games. When you take a look at the progression to this point, the bar keeps getting higher. What's the next step for Kansas?

COACH LEIPOLD: Well, again, two of these three will be back. So again, we've talked about putting ourselves in a position with the amount of players that we have returning that we can be now -- and I kind of said it to them one time, and I kind of chuckled that we can be in a conversation to compete for a conference championship. And I don't think I ever would have thought I would be saying that this quick into this time here at Kansas.

It's because of them and what they've done, and their belief in one another, belief in what we do, and continually striving to get better each and every day. And hopefully this is just the beginning of having these types of opportunities.



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Q. Jason, obviously your last college game. Reflecting on your time at KU, what do you want your legacy to be here?

JASON BEAN: Yeah, these past three years, it's been a journey. There's been ups and downs, and I've learned plenty of lessons, good and bad lessons. I think the credit goes to my teammates, though. The coaching staff, the support staff, and everybody that's in the building each and every day. Because of them, they're the reasons I was able to be great, and I can't thank them enough.

Q. Lance, obviously Jason [Bean] decided to come back for this year. For you and the program and for him, what do you feel like his legacy that he's left here is?

COACH LEIPOLD: Wow. Like I said to you guys during the season, it's been unique. Because with Jalon [Daniels] not being able to play, that in and of itself was a blow. And you feel bad for the individual and everything that Jalon has gone through.

But you've heard me say it many times, probably one of the most improved football players on our team the last two fall camps, it was Jason Bean. So to see it come together and him have that opportunity, and never once -- and I've said this before -- never once did he ever have bad body language and mope around that he didn't get an opportunity or come in my office and talk about why he doesn't get a chance or something like that.

And there's all that special place in your heart for someone that you're pulling for. And for him to have this opportunity in this bowl game, to be up on that stage and be one of the players of the game and everything else, you could see the joy that his teammates had again.

So his legacy is not only going to be as a player, but what a great teammate he was as well.

Q. Jason, that stretch in the third quarter where things kind of went south for you on offense, and UNLV was picking up speed, how did you as an individual and you guys as a team bounce back from that?

JASON BEAN: Yeah, I think that's kind of an example of this whole season. We've had our ups and downs, and I think it's just a credit to our attitude and how we stay even keeled and not let the bad things really get to us and the good things either. I think the team handled the negativity very well, and I'm proud of them for doing that. I'm just glad we came out with a W.



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Q. It was a theme all year. Jason, you weren't afraid to throw the ball up to these guys and other guys too. I wonder -- it was even more tonight, though. These guys, phenomenal show they put on. Were there extra words? I would like you two to answer. Did you give him a little extra nod tonight and say, hey, give us an extra chance or throw it up or anything like that? He did a lot of that and you guys came down with it. Three touchdowns a piece.

LAWRENCE ARNOLD: No, it wasn't any extra words. It was just having that chemistry, that bond off the field. And the quarterback (Jason Bean) having trust in us; the OC (Jeff Grimes) having trust and believing that if he throws us the ball we'll make a play.

LUKE GRIMM: Yeah, we've been practicing for the past month, keeping that chemistry going. We're not losing our stride, not losing our rhythm. Maybe a look here and there right before the play starts. Right before the play is called. You hear it and you're like, all right, come on. I'm one-on-one over here, throw it. I ain't going to say it, but I'll look it. (laughter).

Q. And you see it, Jason?

JASON BEAN: Yeah, definitely.

Q. I want to ask all three of you too. You watched what Jalon [Daniels] did in the (AutoZone) Liberty Bowl last year, setting all those records that he did. You didn't let it last very long. He's got to go get seven now to top you. Would you have believed that, any of the three of you, that you would be talking about more records like that just one year later for a completely different guy and with this team in a different way?

JASON BEAN: Yeah, definitely. On the way back to the locker room, I was talking to Rich [Miller] on the walk back, just to have the season that we did last year, and for it to end the way that it did, it just makes this season that much better. It makes this ending that much more sweet.

Like I said, I'm thankful for this team and everything they've done for me. They made me a better person, and I'll forever be thankful for that.

Q. To build on that, you guys, second year in a row that the offense has been setting records in the bowl games. What is it about this group that allows you guys to be able to be that effective, especially when the lights are the brightest?

JASON BEAN: I think it first starts with the coaching staff and how they lead us every day. I think there's a big thing with this program being player-led also. We have a lot of belief in each other. I think it just kind of goes to show in games like this.



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COACH LEIPOLD: If I could, I'll jump in on that one a little bit too. We've got three guys here and we've talked about other players. And you look at the play of Devin Neal. We got a spark from Dylan McDuffie late a little bit on some runs. Mason Fairchild makes a big third-down catch.

You look at Jared Casey with a big first-down catch, in getting the first down and staying inbounds to keep the clock running. Just things like that is the nice thing we've been able to do is get the ball at different times to playmakers.

It's hard because they all -- you can see what they can do when they make -- and we haven't talked about Quentin Skinner's players either yet.

So when you have this many guys, and the nice thing is the multiple part of our offense gives these guys an opportunity, and we just don't know sometimes which night which guy is going to get the opportunity, but they all have the capability.

Q. And then with both of you guys, Lawrence and Luke, both tying the record for the number of reception touchdowns. First of all, did you guys know that that was the record when you guys got to it? And second of all, when you got your third one, Luke, to pull into the lead with Lawrence there, what was the reaction there?

LAWRENCE ARNOLD: I had a feeling that what we did hadn't been done in a long time if it had been done. It's always a competition between us to see who could get the most touchdowns, who would get the most yards, but it's a friendly competition.

So whenever Luke [Grimm] had two touchdowns and I had one, I came up to him and was like, you're not going to be able to beat two touchdowns, and I end up getting a touchdown. Then I scored. Then Luke came back and he came up to me like, you're not going to be able to beat three touchdowns. It's a friendly competition, but it's just to make each other better and keep us pushing and going.

That's how we knew that we was going to be able to set records and break records. I feel like this is just an ongoing process with us.

LUKE GRIMM: Yeah, same as LJ (Lawrence Arnold). Me and him, whether it's practice, game, we're trying to make the best catch that we can, trying to one-up each other. Whether it's five-yard route, five-yard route, going into the block, going into the crack and getting 50-, 60-yard touchdowns. But like at the end of the day, we're on the same team. So we're just having fun competing with each other. But at the end of the day, we're scoring touchdowns for KU.



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Q. Jason, after throwing three interceptions in the first three quarters of the game, what was the thought process going into the fourth quarter? How are you able to keep that short-term memory and throw three touchdowns in the fourth quarter there?

JASON BEAN: Yeah, I think I've had games like that before where there's been some bad plays. I think there's -- I learned my lesson before in not letting that try to get to me. I think I did a good job of that tonight. I was able to bounce back and get this team going and finish out the game strong.

Q. Jason, looking back at your Kansas career and the ups downs and everything you had to overcome, and just pressure as a player, do you feel like this, setting touchdown record, tying with Todd Reesing, ending it was almost like a perfect ending for everything that's happened?

JASON BEAN: Yeah, it's a lot better ending than last year. I'm just thankful for the way that this team played tonight. They played their guts off. Like I said, I'm just thankful.

Q. Preparing for UNLV, was this the type of game you guys were expecting?

LAWRENCE ARNOLD: I never come out and just say we expecting this from an opponent. But we are going to play to our best potential. If we start a little slow, we're going to pick up that slack. I never say -- we never underestimate our opponent, no matter if it's UNLV or if we're playing Alabama. We're going to come out and play our game.

We focus on ourselves, and that's one of our biggest things. We're going to focus on ourselves and get each other better collectively as a group. We're just going to go out and play. However the results end, it's just how it ends. But we know how we're going to practice and how we're going to play at the end of the day.

Q. Lance, you mentioned Devin [Neal]. You said Luke [Grimm] is coming back. Is Devin also coming back?

COACH LEIPOLD: I think that question is for Devin. I'll defer those to him.

Q. This is for Luke and LJ (Lawrence Arnold). After the last touchdown, the Spider-Man meme, whose idea was that? And were you guys thinking of that all month? Or how did that go down there?

LAWRENCE ARNOLD: We've been thinking about that probably since the first or second game of the season. And we was like, we going to get a picture with all three of us doing the Spider-Man thing at least one time. That was really Quentin Skinner's idea. He came up with the idea. We was like, all right, that sound good, we're going to go with it. We all can catch. We all got sticky hands. So we're just going to do it to everybody.



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LUKE GRIMM: We were really waiting for him to score, but he gets on the 1. So we were just waiting for that. So we just decided after the 6-1 between us two, we decided we should just do it.

Q. For the guys that stuck around, when you took the job, the first guy that came to mind is Mason Fairchild. Had other options, stayed here, kind of saw it through. How much do those guys mean for the program and kind of seeing it through and carrying that program into the future?

COACH LEIPOLD: It means the world. Kenny Logan, Mason Fairchild, Kwint Lassiter was part. I'm trying to remember how many were all there for the whole thing. In today's college football world, it's very easy to hit the eject button. And the guy to my right (Jason Bean) could have done that as well.

And I hope some of these stories are maybe the good story about what this can be if you just stay with it. Okay? Good things will happen. So to see those guys have a chance to go to two consecutive bowl games, come up with a win, nine wins, all the different things they've been able to experience really in the last two years is pretty special.