

College Football Playoff

Media Conference

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Rob Mullens

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THE MODERATOR: Hi, everyone. Welcome to this evening's College Football Playoff Selection Committee teleconference. Joining us tonight is Bill Hancock, Executive Director of the College Football Playoff, and Rob Mullens, College Football Playoff Selection Committee chair.

ROB MULLENS: Good evening. We finished our fourth week of rankings. The committee ranked Ohio State as the No. 1 team in the nation, LSU is No. 2, Clemson is No. 3, and Georgia is No. 4.

Here's what the committee was thinking: Ohio State has been a complete team all year, and their win against Penn State impressed the committee. They are ranked No. 1. 11-0 LSU with three wins against top 25 teams is ranked No. 2. 11-0 Clemson has been solid with an impressive series of convincing wins. Georgia also is strong with three wins against top-25 teams. They are ranked No. 4.

We spent considerable time talking about all the teams and all the rankings, but it's fair to say there are a lot of two-loss teams, and we talked long and hard about how they should be ranked. We considered their play on the field, head-to-head results, strength of schedule, and we compared common opponents.

I'm proud of this committee and how seriously everyone takes his or her work in ranking 1 through 25. I'm happy to take your questions.

Q. You mentioned a couple times now about the idea of the complete team that the committee sees Ohio State being. In what way is the committee sort of quantifying that? What is telling this committee that Ohio State is a more complete team than anyone else?

ROB MULLENS: Competing consistently and really highly ranked on offense and defense, performing at a high level in both.

Q. Do you guys correct that for strength of schedule, too? Is it relative to who they played? How are you guys measuring that?

ROB MULLENS: Sure, we see it all. We see the full



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resume, and there are relative statistics, as well.

Q. Just to follow up on that, what was the difference, though, this week about Ohio State that put them over LSU because you have said that they've been a complete team all season.

ROB MULLENS: They have, but they added their third win against a ranked opponent over Penn State, who we have ranked No. 10.

Q. I also wanted to ask what the difference in the debate and the conversation surrounding Utah and Oklahoma. What did you guys talk about those two teams in particular?

ROB MULLENS: You know, obviously two very good teams. When you look at Utah, the strength of their defense, and then the experience at quarterback and running back, only loss being on the road to a 22nd ranked USC, where Zack Moss missed the majority of the game with an injury.

And then Oklahoma obviously beat No. 9 Baylor on the road without CeeDee Lamb. They also have a win over ranked Iowa State, only loss to a close quality K-State team.

Q. You've had Memphis, Cincinnati and Boise State kind of all in a row three of the last four weeks. What are kind of the metrics that you guys have been discussing with those three, and what's gone into their ranking?

ROB MULLENS: Well, Memphis had beaten Navy and SMU, both of whom we've had ranked at some points during this year, only loss to Temple by two. And obviously we're aware of Memphis's explosive offense.

Cincinnati still remains undefeated in conference. Only loss is to No. 1 Ohio State. And they've had some close ones here in the last few weeks.

And then Boise State, their only loss is to BYU, a 7-4 BYU team in which they did not have their quarterback.

Q. You've got a few comparisons throughout the poll of teams that clearly don't have as many good wins, top-25 wins as somebody that's fairly comparable, but they've been much more dominant than the teams that do have those quality wins.

How do you gauge and judge that dichotomy, where you've got a team that's played maybe a better schedule but has not been as dominant to the team that maybe didn't?

ROB MULLENS: Well, it's never just one factor. That's the beauty of having 13 football experts in the room who watch the games, who study it. That's exactly the kind of conversation that you would have. Who are the wins against, who are the losses against, and then what do you see when you watch the games.

Q. I was curious just how big a gap the Selection Committee believes there is between Alabama, Utah and Oklahoma, like just how close are those teams? Or is there a discernible gap between any series of two of them?

ROB MULLENS: Well, we spent considerable time talking about four through six, four through nine. And again, we're comparing full resumes. There's not a metric for closeness. I mean, clearly the committee looks at Georgia with their three wins over top-16 teams, one of them on the road at Auburn, the strength of their defense consistently every week.

Alabama has been dominant with the exception of the loss to LSU. We're aware of the injuries, as I've mentioned.

And Utah, I think I've already mentioned on this call, only loss on the road to a ranked opponent when their running back missed the majority of the game.

Q. You were just speaking about complete teams and using offensive and defensive statistics as a way to measure that. I was just wondering, does the committee look at offensive statistics and defensive statistics any differently? Do they favor one or the other? Do they view if a team has a weaker defense more favorably than a weaker offense, if you follow what I'm saying?

ROB MULLENS: No, we look at them all equally. And again, that's just one piece of what we look at. We do watch the games. We see the full resume. We understand who they've played, the results. That's just one piece of it. But no, we don't favor one or the other.

Q. How does the committee view rivalry games? Do you look at them through the same contest that you would just a regular game or do you take that into account when you're grading a team based on performance in one of those?

ROB MULLENS: No, we look at it as a regular game. Obviously we understand where it's played, whether it's home or on the road.

Q. When it comes to Clemson and you're looking at top four in total offense, top four in total defense,

how much does the schedule hurt them? You know, they've got everything else. They've been dominant. The numbers are all there. How much does kind of that schedule ding them as far as putting them in that 3 spot behind those top two teams?

ROB MULLENS: That's certainly a piece of it. When you look at them, they have been dominant. They're a very balanced team on offense and defense. But the other teams at 1 and 2 have three wins over highly ranked opponents, and that is a separator.

Q. I'm just wondering how much impact do the couple-point losses for Iowa State, how much do those keep Iowa State in the top 25 overall? Does that matter at all?

ROB MULLENS: Yeah, obviously we watch the games and know that their four losses are by a combined 11 points. So the committee is fully aware of how competitive they've been.

Q. Can you speak at all to maybe the margin of error a team like Ohio State would have going into the last week or two of the regular season, kind of the gap they have between some of the other teams below them, if they were to lose at some point like to Michigan?

ROB MULLENS: No, we don't project ahead. Our job is to rank the teams each week, again, with a clean sheet based on the performance of that week. We do not look ahead.

Q. Specific to Baylor, you just mentioned the committee starts with a clean sheet based on the week at hand. The Bears jumped five spots in your rankings this week after beating what's now a 6-5 team at home. I was curious a little bit about that decision. I expected they might get a bump, I'm surprised they got that big of one is what I'm saying.

ROB MULLENS: Right, understand. That's one piece of it. They had a dominant win over Texas from beginning to end. But in addition, the wins over Iowa State and Oklahoma State continue to improve, as well, as those teams continue to win, and their only loss close to Oklahoma, who moves up to 7. So all that adds in to the clean sheet.

Q. I understand that you can't project out, but if you are a team like a Clemson that the schedule hasn't been great, does it make them more secure now that a Virginia Tech team is in the top 24, that hey, if you can beat them, it makes you a little more secure? Not projecting where they are, but yes, that would help the resume down the road?

ROB MULLENS: Again, we don't project. Obviously there's so many things that can happen. Our job is to

focus on the results that we have on the week that we do the rankings.

Q. One more question about Baylor. I'm curious how much of the move this week was, like you mentioned, that some of their wins kind of got valued more, or if it was almost like a correction, that maybe they should have been a little bit higher in previous weeks?

ROB MULLENS: Well, the other thing I failed to mention earlier, too, is two teams ahead of them lost, so you have to factor that in. But it was a reflection of their dominant win over Texas, coming off of a close loss to a highly-ranked Oklahoma team, and Iowa State and Oklahoma State continuing to be in the rankings.

Q. I'm just wondering when you look at the two-loss teams, what's separating Penn State from Florida?

ROB MULLENS: You know, their wins over Michigan and on the road at Iowa. And they also have a quality non-conference win over Pitt. Both teams have good losses, quality losses, with Penn State's being our No. 1 and our No. 8 teams this week.

Q. LSU has beaten your No. 5, 11, and 15 teams, No. 5 on the road. Ohio State beat 10, 12 and 19 in your ranking at home. LSU has got a strength of schedule 10 points higher than Ohio State's. In the end does the committee see those differences as negligible in terms of ranking the teams?

ROB MULLENS: Yeah, those are -- we would obviously value LSU's three wins over top-15 teams and Ohio State's wins over three top-19 teams.

Q. So they're pretty much fairly even?

ROB MULLENS: Yeah, those are all really impressive wins to the committee, and they each have three.

Q. LSU played a team that's now 6-5 and had a home game against Northwestern State, while Ohio State's non-conference opponents are all in the FBS. Does that almost count as a non-game for LSU, having played Northwestern State?

ROB MULLENS: No, I mean, we recognize that it's an FCS game. It's highlighted as an FCS game, and we understand what that is.

Q. When it comes to LSU and Ohio State, I'm wondering how much of a decider is Ohio State's defense in raising Ohio State to No. 1?

ROB MULLENS: That's a key piece. I mean, they're a balanced team, strong on offense and defense. Obviously LSU has a very strong offense. But to date their defense isn't quite as strong as Ohio State's.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, everyone, for your participation tonight. Again, we will post the transcript and audio recording of tonight's call shortly on collegepressbox.com.