



2009 Division I Football Championship
Villanova 23, Montana 21
Villanova Postgame Press Conference
Finley Stadium Davenport Field – Chattanooga, Tenn.
Friday, Dec. 18



Head Coach Andy Talley

Opening Statement:

"You saw one of the better games played – two really good football teams playing flat out. I have so much respect for Montana. They played exactly like I thought they would play. They did a great job in first half. We had trouble catching up to them. I was hoping their quarterback would come back to earth in the second half. We didn't really change anything at halftime – our locker room was calm. Matt Szczur made some big plays and our defense came up with some stops that gave us a chance to take a little more control of the football. We've been playing the playoffs flat out, and we knew we have to ride that crest and that's what we did. Our tackling improved in the second half. Mariani had a bit of a field day in the first half, but in the second half we tackled better."

On this team and the meaning of this win:

"We were able to beat Temple in the beginning of the season, and I knew we had a good team. For someone at the end of his career, you don't get a chance to do this very often. I knew that if I died here, I'd have a pretty good death."

On starting the season with a victory vs. Temple:

I knew Temple had a very special team, we thought they would be the best team we saw all year. In hindsight they were. To beat them and come back the way we did told me we had the goods to get it done. After winning that game, you look at the CAA and know you won't get through it without one loss. I felt getting that win was critical for us. After that, you have to deal with all of the good teams in our league. We played Richmond at Richmond, New Hampshire at New Hampshire, James Madison at James Madison. We had some of the tougher teams on the road but were able to handle two of the three. As we progressed, I felt our pedigree was very good. Montana has been through this before, winning championships, but we had been through some very rough games – that gives you a good seasoning to be ready for this. Your players don't break. There's a strong will there that's been forged in a very difficult league."

On how does winning a championship help your credibility with the basketball program:

"I expect no more Final Fours – we need the national championship. Jay Wright has been great. He sent me three texts before the game. We're really great with our basketball program. We catapult off our basketball – it gives us national exposure to recruit nationally."

On being back next year:

I have a long term contract at Villanova. Every year, they ask me, 'Do you want to come back?' And I say, 'Yeah, I want to come back.' It's never been a deal where there was pressure one way or the other. I want to come back, and I think they feel good with what we've done here. I'm like JoePa, Bowden, all of those guys. I have no hobbies, I'm boring. I have nothing to add to the world – I'm better off right where I am."

On Mark Mariani's strong play in the first half and second half adjustments:

"We started running the ball more and taking time off the clock. And then, we doubled him up at various times in the game. Because, he was one of those guys who looked like he could beat you single-handedly. Montana tried to go to the run more in the second half which really surprised me."

On Chattanooga as a host site:

"We've been treated absolutely first class. Everyone has been so great to us – stadium, hotel, town, the committee. Chattanooga is really a mainstay now. Our players as little kids growing up wanted to come to Villanova and take the team to Chattanooga. I can't imagine it being anywhere else and really hope that it stays here. It's a great place to be – a really classic old town in the South."

On trailing by 10+ against Temple, William & Mary, Montana, but showed resiliency:

"We have talent – you can really do a lot of things with talent. Matt Szczur, Chris Whitney, Terence Thomas, at halftime in the locker room they give you confidence because they are confident, competitive athletes that don't feel like 10 or 15 points is insurmountable. We have a good coaching staff. I've been fortunate to keep some guys there a long time so nobody gets crazy."

On taking the program a step further:

"I don't know, frankly, other than maybe a little more respect around the country. Probably, it will enhance the university a little bit more – it helps in admissions. For the football program, we recruit heavily in California. Hopefully, this will give us more exposure in areas further away. In the Tri-state area, it just reinforces the fact that we have a really solid program and are serious about our football program."

Junior Wide Receiver Matt Szczur

On possible gaps in Montana's defense:

"To be honest, I didn't think I was going to break as much as I did. The offensive line came out, and I had a great second half. They gave me an opportunity to make the big plays as well as Coach [Andy] Talley and Coach [Sam] Venuto giving me the opportunity to run the ball."

On plans after your junior year:

"That's a hard question to answer. You put me in a bind right now. We're going to see how my baseball season turns out. After baseball season, I'll probably end up entering the draft, but I love these guys. [Chris] Whitney, Terry [Thomas], all these guys are my best friends. We started as freshman, and we wanted to do something. We accomplished it, so I don't want to leave those guys. It's a hard decision to make, but it's a good decision to make."

On expectations of his performance and putting up such big numbers:

"To be honest, no, we have so many threats on offense that I didn't think I was going to make this big of an impact on Montana's defense. Chris Whitney is an awesome quarterback. Brandyn Harvey and all of our running backs are awesome. All of the credit goes to the offensive line."

Junior Quarterback Chris Whitney

On running the option in the second half:

"You have to give the credit all to the o-line. They were able to get the push back to run the option. Once we got outside of that defensive end, we knew how they were playing from watching film. I wasn't going to be able to hand it off and go block the defensive end, so I was going to have to ride it as long as I could and get into the alley. Once we did, one guy can't play both, that's why it works so well. Once we got in the alley, it was just one person, two on one."

On the open field block for Matt Szczur's run:

"Usually when I'm in, and I'm out at wide receiver, I'm not trying to block anybody because I'm away from the run. If he cuts it back, I'm not going to just sit there and let him run. I saw No. 2 coming across, and I saw Matt and I knew he saw me, so as long as I got that block I knew he had more room to run."

On the execution of the play on third and long when you hit Matt Szczur:

"It was just a post. I just had to get the linebackers to bite down. I think they were color five. I had two safeties up top, and I knew if I got the linebackers to bite up enough that we'd be able to keep the safety one-on-one, and I try to worry about where I put it on the backside safety. Once I got it over the linebacker's helmet, I knew it would be a big play."

Junior Linebacker Terence Thomas

On the difference in second half to neutralize Marc Mariani:

"I think our DBs, they're playing more man-to-man schemes. I think we had two people spotting on Mariani. From our front six, seven people, we try to apply as much pressure as possible. We figured that if we kept on applying pressure pretty soon we would be able to wear down their big offensive line. I think we started to see that in the second half."