



2011 Discover Orange Bowl Stanford Offensive Press Conference Quotes – Dec. 31 Marriott Harbor Beach; Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

Assistant Head Coach -- Offense Greg Roman and sophomore QB Andrew Luck

JASON ALPERT: Coach, if you want to start just by talking about the couple days you've been here and what sort of preparations have been going on for the Discover Orange Bowl.

COACH ROMAN: Sure. First off I'd like to thank the Orange Bowl host committee for just the amazing hospitality that's been shown to us. We got here the 27th and really wanted to take that first night to acclimate, and once we hit the ground the next morning we really tried to get back into football mode.

I think our preparations are moving forward right on schedule. The guys are really locked in. Watching all the film of Virginia Tech, it's easy to see why we need to be locked in, very good team, very well coached. They play tough, and it's pretty obvious why they've won 11 straight games.

JASON ALPERT: And then Andrew, you've been in Miami a few days, in south Florida. What have you had a chance to do and what are you looking forward to while you're here?

ANDREW LUCK: I haven't had a chance to do much. We've been locked in on practicing and watching film. We know the trip will be for no avail if we don't win, but we did get a chance to walk around South Beach. That was a blast. They had a little beach party for us outside the hotel yesterday, which was a lot of fun for the guys and got to go to the movies, as well. It's a great place. It's certainly a diverse, multicultural city, and we're just happy to be here.

Q. For both of you, if you could just address the creativity that you guys have used with the offense. I haven't seen much of you guys. I did watch the Wake Forest game, but I've heard you guys switched jersey numbers and some different kinds of things that you guys have done to keep people on their toes.

COACH ROMAN: Well, we really encourage our young players, and we let them know early that if you can do something to help the team, you're going to play in some capacity. So there are some games where 25 guys play at least two to three plays.

We really feel that that's important just to get as many people involved as possible. I really think it builds upon itself and makes everybody really that much more excited to prepare for a game.

I want to say 27 guys played with the first team in some form of personnel capacity during one game this year. So we're always going to try to be multiple in that regard, and these guys are -- it's been a really fun model to build with these guys because they're really sharp, and you can be a little bit more creative.

ANDREW LUCK: It's always interesting coming into the Monday meeting and getting the install for this week or for the weeks during the season to see what the coaches have come up with for us for whatever game plan it is. The coaches do a great job of mixing things up and putting us



in a good position to succeed, and we buy into their philosophy and try to go and execute to our advantage.

Q. Does it make it more difficult for you to prepare, and is it more fun?

ANDREW LUCK: It is a little more fun, you know, and it breaks the monotony, I guess, of running the same plays over and over again. It may be a little more difficult to memorize things, but we know it's well worth it and it'll help us out in the end.

COACH ROMAN: If I could, really it's a credit to our players to be able to learn, absorb and apply all that game planning material. How many plays do we have on our wrist band? 350 or so? These guys do a great job. It's really a credit to their preparation.

Q. Greg, Andrew gets a lot of credit for this offense, but your rushing attack is very good, as well. Talk to us about how important that rushing attack is and why they're so successful.

COACH ROMAN: Well, we're going to be physical, and we're going to run the football in some capacity. Our philosophy is that it takes all 11 to rush the football effectively, and that includes the quarterback. He's an integral part of it, and he has really, really done a good job of managing our running game.

But our wide receivers do a great job blocking, our tight ends, our offensive line, our backs. We're going to do whatever we have to do to be effective running the football. But definitely one of our themes is it takes all 11. All 11 guys on the offense are very, very involved in the running game, probably more so than other teams. I'm not going to get into specifics, but the man sitting to my right is -- he handles a lot of that burden.

Q. Andrew, Coach Harbaugh talked a couple weeks ago that during your recruiting process it reached a point where you told him he didn't need to call you anymore or bother you, that you were going to come to Stanford anyway. What was it about him that made such a positive impression on you so early in the process that you had made a decision to come to a school as a highly regarded recruit that really wasn't prudent? Why did you click with him?

ANDREW LUCK: I think a couple reasons. One, he wanted to win, and you could tell it didn't matter where he was coaching, he was going to be a winner, and it felt like Stanford was going in the right direction under him. As a former NFL quarterback I thought I could learn a lot from him. He'd been in pretty much every situation he can be in, he's had the experience. I thought it would really help me out in my career. And he was a good guy; he was enthusiastic; I enjoyed being around him.

Q. And Greg, after seeing Owen Marecic do what he's done this year, kind of answering the question that everybody wonders about him, how?

COACH ROMAN: That's a great question. You know, when we started first talking about doing that with Owen, it's very simply he's one of the very few people that you could even have that discussion about. He's a very unique person, very team oriented, very much -- very obsessive and thorough about all his preparation from a football standpoint as well as a physical preparation standpoint.

You know, he'll do whatever he has to do to help the team in any way he can. His ability to absorb information is pretty darned good, too, because there's a lot of it to absorb on both sides of



the ball. We don't just line up in one formation and run a couple plays. It's remarkable, it really is. But that's Owen. I don't think any of us are surprised he's done it.

Q. For each of you, what is the West Coast perception of Bud Foster and his Virginia Tech defense having done so well nationally for so many years? They're a little off this year with some injuries and some younger players playing, but how are his system and overall results perceived on the West Coast?

ANDREW LUCK: I think as a player watching his team, you know they're tough, they're physical and disciplined. It's quite possibly the best defense we'll face all year. I haven't been around football for too long, I guess, not like Coach Roman. But from my short history, growing up and watching Virginia Tech, you always knew they were going to be a tough football team that flew around with the football. We know we're definitely going to have our hands full, and I think it's a great reputation anywhere in the United States.

COACH ROMAN: Yeah, I don't think their reputation is geographically limited. I remember when I was coaching in the NFL and I was evaluating an offensive player, if I had a chance to watch them against Virginia Tech, I made sure I did, because I could see them on the offensive line, I could see them have to deal with quickness, toughness, relentlessness. As a tight end I could see him having to deal with guys trying to beat him up at the line of scrimmage and having to match up with him in coverage. At quarterback I could see him evaluate him against all the different coverage looks they need to see with the variety that they'll see, which is somewhat NFL like, and as a wide receiver you could see him against defensive backs that are going to come up and try to lay you out. So I think their reputation is long and well deserved, and it travels everywhere.

Watching them on film, it's obvious why; you'd better pack your "A" game when you play Virginia Tech.

Q. Andrew, what's the toughest class you've taken, and how did you do in it?

ANDREW LUCK: Toughest class? I think Engineering 14. It was statics. I got a B, thankfully. It was sort of a grind-it-out class.

Q. I'm not sure if this is even taboo to bring up, but what has it been like since the end of the regular season to focus both on this game and your future? Is it a difficult task to do that?

ANDREW LUCK: I don't think it's too difficult. I've tried not to think about my future until after this football game. I don't want it to get in the way of the team, of our chances in the Orange Bowl. I think if I start thinking about it too much, it'll be a detriment and my head will be in the wrong place where the game. So it hasn't been too difficult. Just excited to be in the Orange Bowl and trying not to let anything get in the way of it.

Q. A lot of people wondering about both you and Coach Harbaugh; do you guys talk about it, joke about it, or is it just a silent thing?

ANDREW LUCK: Not really. I don't feel like it's a forbidden place to go to in speaking but we don't really talk about it. I think we both have our sights set on the Orange Bowl, and that's about it right now.



Q. Greg, getting back to the Virginia Tech defense, who are the players on that defense that impress you the most?

COACH ROMAN: Well, I'd say their secondary as a whole is extremely talented in the sense that they have very, very instincts and very good ball skills. I think Andrew would probably agree that you can't just throw lollipops up there against this secondary, because they've shown that they're going to come down with it.

Really, their front seven or front eight, depending on how you look at it, are very, very, very disciplined, very much where they need to be when they need to be there. But the thing that's stood out to me, on top of their physical style is their always going to have 11 sets of eyes on the ball every single play, and when the ball gets where it's supposed to get, there's going to be a whole lot of bodies. They're always watching the ball, always rallying to the ball, and they play very, very well as a unit.

But their secondary has really stood out with their ability to finish plays on the ball, intercept the ball. I believe they got 22 interceptions. They've been very, very good in the red zone; I believe 40 times teams have been down there and 10 times they've come away with no points. So they're a great team defense, and you've got to be careful of that secondary because of their ball skills.

Q. And another question for you, Greg, Coach Harbaugh has tried to explain how exactly your play calling works. We've assumed all along that he has the final say in the play calling, but you're the assistant head coach for the offense. You've got David Shaw as the offensive coordinator. How does the play calling actually work? Do all three of you huddle before every play?

COACH ROMAN: We don't have time to have a board meeting, so I'd say that we function as a team, and we're always going to make the best decision for the team to put these guys, our players, in the best possible position. A lot of our work is done ahead of time. But we like to keep that a mystery.

Q. This is specifically for Andrew but Greg can jump in, too. There's talk with the way the system is set up now that the other BCS games now other than the National Championship have lost some punch. What's at stake here for you guys in this game? What are you guys trying to prove in this game? You're not natural rivals with this team, never play them, so in your mind what is really at stake here in this game?

ANDREW LUCK: As a player I think everything is at stake. I don't feel like any punch is lost. I'm not playing in the National Championship; obviously that's the goal for every team. But to get to play in an Orange Bowl, a historic, prestigious Bowl, all of us, I speak for the team, I think all of us are very, very excited.

A lot of guys grew up East Coast, South, and out at Stanford we're sort of national team -- not national, but a lot of guys from different parts of the country, so I know guys that grew up watching Virginia Tech. A lot of guys' favorite team growing up was Virginia Tech, so we definitely have a lot at stake and we'd hate to lose, and we know the season would be a success if we did win.

Q. Greg, do you want to add anything to that? What are you guys trying to prove here?



COACH ROMAN: I would just echo. I think it's about proving it to each other. It's definitely on a national stage, we're aware of that, but this team has always been about each other, playing for each other. I think we're 11 and 1 at this point, and this team has one more go-around on a big stage, and it's an opportunity to -- for the last time to prove it to one another. I think as coaches, as players, just us as a team, to go out and put our best performance, make it last.

Q. This is probably simplistic, but what makes Andrew so special? Why is it that NFL scouts say if he comes out he's going to be probably the No. 1 pick in the NFL draft? Why do you think that is?

COACH ROMAN: It's a lot of reasons, and quarterback position is the most hard to evaluate because there's so many intangible things that go into it that you can't quantify or measure like you can height, weight, speed, arm strength; the ability to make split second decisions, the ability to be a leader, the ability to instinctively do something in the pocket, feel the rush, et cetera. When somebody comes around that you just over and over and over on film see, wow, he's doing things that you really can't coach, then you know you have somebody special. And to do it as consistently as he does it -- you know, Andrew is just an attention-to-detail guy from the moment I met him. He wants to do everything perfectly, exactly as you instruct him, and then he has some God-given ability that he really -- if the play breaks down or whatnot, he just instinctively makes great decisions.

Q. John said a couple weeks ago to us that he came in pretty polished already when he came to Stanford. What would you say he's improved on the most since you've been at Stanford?

COACH ROMAN: I would say everything. He's improved on everything mechanically, he's improved -- I'd say accuracy he's improved, knowledge of football he's improved. Andrew came in and had a very good base, and he has just really kind of brought that entire base up along with him. So I don't think there's anything that was severely lacking when he came in, other than he mainly operated out of the shotgun in high school. The center snap and getting away from center and his footwork, those were things that were new to him to a certain extent, and he's really, really done a good job this off-season preparing for this past season, and I think it's really shown a lot this season.

But there wasn't any real deficiency, ever. But he's gotten better and better just inch by inch in everything, his entire game.

Q. I ask this kind of tongue in cheek, but you said Owen was one of the few guys you could even talk about going both ways. After watching Andrew clobber a defender and force a fumble, have you given any thought to letting him go both ways for you guys?

COACH ROMAN: Boy, he would -- I'll tell you what, it's amazing. One of my favorite plays, if not my favorite play ever as a coach, was when we were playing Cal and he took off on a scramble and literally just threw a forearm into the chin of a Cal safety and just knocked him head over heels and kept running. He looked at him for a second and then kept running. It's just one of the best moments I've ever had as a coach to witness that.

So I think those two plays are just a great indicator as to what a competitive athlete he is and what a great football player.



Q. Along with the 350 plays, do you guys ever on the flipside of that think about putting "slide" in big letters on his wrist band? I know you enjoyed watching that play, but does his recklessness ever kind of worry you?

COACH ROMAN: Yes, it does, no question. But it's just -- he's just so competitive, you know, that we've given up in installations telling him not to pull and block somebody on a reverse because we'd always say that and then in the game he would pull and block somebody on the reverse. We just respect his competitiveness. He's got a real blue-collar mentality.

Q. And cross your fingers along the way?

COACH ROMAN: No question, no question. You'd better believe it.

Q. Obviously there's been a lot of factors that have resulted in the transformation of the program to where you are now. How much of that do you think is tied directly to Andrew?

COACH ROMAN: Well, I think having a player of his ability has a lot to do with it. But again, last year was Toby, right, Toby Gerhart. He's the reason. This year it's Andrew. I think those guys are very good players, but there's a wealth of other really good players, too. So to look at our team's success or program's success, you've got to look deeper. Our offensive line has given up five sacks this year, I believe, and maybe seven the years before. For a drop-back passing team can you really find anybody who's ever really done that? Our running game has been very productive. Our defense this year has been very productive. Our special teams the past couple years has been very, very solid.

So it goes beyond one player, you know, and they're definitely our shining stars. But our program is very deep. I think there's a lot of young, bright kids around this country that want to come to Stanford, get a Stanford degree and play football at Stanford.

Q. If you had to pin down certain keys for your offense, what would they be?

COACH ROMAN: Keys for our offense? I'll tell you what, our offense is pretty multiple. We kind of built it to where we can be different against different teams and different styles of defenses. So we can adapt and change pretty well. I think it's very important for us to have a balance, to be able to run and throw effectively on all downs, and when you look at us, I think we've been very balanced on 1st and 2nd down. Obviously 3rd and long you're going to throw it more than you run it, but I'd say balance is definitely the No. 1 thing.

Our players prepare very, very well, and we go into every game saying we're going to play harder than the other team, and that's going to be a given. That's a goal of ours. Obviously against Virginia Tech that's going to be a challenge because they play so hard, so we're going to have to really amp up our game. But there's no question balance is the key to our offense.

Q. Just kind of a follow-up, I think it was on ESPN they said, well, what you have to do against Stanford is take away the run. As weird as that sounds with Andrew Luck at quarterback, do you think that's a reasonable theory?

COACH ROMAN: I'm not sure I'm buying that. Yeah, we'll have to wait and see. That sounds like a setup to me.

But I think people around football and defensive coordinators, we're always trying to create -- identify conflicts and attack conflicts in the defense, and then when they figure that out,



we'll want to attack the next conflict they just created by adjusting. That's kind of how we set things up, and once the game starts, it just comes down to playing football and our players execute the plan.

Sophomore RB Stepfan Taylor

On Stanford sophomore quarterback Andrew Luck:

"It's kind of hard to play the game and watch him at the same time, because he makes amazing plays during practice and the games. He's a great guy and the team loves him for that. He's a great leader."

On Stanford's offensive line:

"The offensive line has been excellent the whole year, and also the tight ends and receivers blocking downfield. We go out hard in practice everyday and are dedicated to the running game."

On Andrew Luck's line calls:

"Andrew controls the whole offense. He's a smart guy and it's incredible how much he takes in and how he reads the defense to put people in the right positions."

On Stanford's complex offense:

"We have to buy into the system and know the coaches will put us in the right spots and we have to follow that."

Senior WR Doug Baldwin

On the BCS:

"It's an opportunity for teams in different conferences to go to different parts of the country where they haven't been to play. It's good representation for their conference. Specifically talking about the Pac-10, we get the opportunity to go to the east coast and represent the Pac-10 and show people who don't get to watch us what Stanford is all about. In that sense, it's a great opportunity for teams across the nation to further themselves and the name of their school on a national level."

On Virginia Tech sophomore cornerback Jayron Hosely:

"We watch ESPN and I know he led the [Football Bowl Subdivision] in [interceptions], and I've been watching him on film. I'm thankful for the opportunity to go against the best competition. I'm a very competitive guy, so I like to go against the best of the best."

On Stanford's complex offense:

"Fortunately, I've been in the system for four years now. It's a challenge, but not as difficult as a lot of people think. You go out there, learn new things everyday, and learn to enjoy it. We do things that have never been done before in college football. We create match-ups and get different situations which enable us to have a positive outcome. It's a numbers game, all about angles and



math, and outnumbering the defense. The coaches do a great job of getting us in situations to make great plays.”

Senior C Chase Beeler

On Stanford's running game:

“As an offensive line, our keystone will always be to run the ball. Our thought process is that if we can run the ball, we can open up that dimension of the game, then Andrew [Luck] can do what he does best.”

On opponents stacking the box to stop the run:

“That hasn't happened much this year. Other teams have realized how talented Andrew [Luck] is. We like to consider ourselves as a threat with the running game. Andrew and the receivers help us out just as much in establishing the running game just as much as we help them establish the passing game.”

On Virginia Tech's defense:

“The biggest things we've picked up on film as an offensive line is that they play extremely hard. They're relentless in their pursuit of the ball so it requires us to protect [the pocket] however long it takes to get the ball off. That, in conjunction with their very talented secondary, [which] often presses the ball and makes it more difficult for the receiving corps to get themselves open. We have to persist throughout the entire duration of the play, and the plays may take longer because it'll take more time for them to develop.”

Senior FB/LB Owen Marcic

On playing on both sides of the ball:

“I never expected that I would be asked to do it. A bunch of guys during the spring of last year were practicing on both sides of the ball. It was for Coach [Harbaugh] to see if he had talent in the right places.”

On the decision to play linebacker and fullback:

“There was no question once Coach [Harbaugh] asked me to do it. I figured I'd give it a shot and it is best to do whatever you can to help out the team.”

On his first game playing both ways:

“The first game was crazy. I didn't end up playing the whole game. It was definitely a rush and a lot of fun. At the time, I don't think I was ready, mostly mentally. It took a while to learn the defense.”

On balancing the academics and athletics:

“There's campus drive that splits campus with athletics on one side and academics [on the other]. When you cross the street on one side, you have to flip the switch [and] put everything you have into academic studies. As soon as you cross the street, [I] really [have to] devote [time] to the



athletics side. Whatever you are doing, you have to pour yourself into it and give it your full attention.

On the position he prefers:

“At the beginning of the year, I felt a lot more comfortable at fullback because that is where I was the few years before. I learned the offense, inside and out. But as the year has gone on, I have grown a lot more comfortable on defense. I have always enjoyed being on the field, no question about that. I love being on the field for offense, defense and special teams. So now I feel more comfortable on either side.

Senior WR Ryan Whalen

On the importance of having a balanced offense against Virginia Tech:

“They have a great defense. They have a really good secondary. I know they are physical up front. They fly around to the ball. That is something we have tried to do all year: be balanced. With a quarterback like Andrew Luck we are able to throw the ball, but also [have] a great running game with Stepfan Taylor and Anthony Wilkerson. That is something that is important to us, to be balanced and move the ball around.”

On facing the Virginia Tech secondary:

“I think it’s exciting. I treat it more as an opportunity. I agree with Coach [Roman] and what he said about the secondary. It’s probably the strong point of their defense. They like to mix it up.”

On playing on a big stage:

“It’s huge. It hasn’t totally sunk in, but it’s a great opportunity for us to be on a national stage. A west coast team getting to be able to display its talents in front of the nation on a Monday night is what you play for. This is what I dreamed and hoped for.”

On Andrew Luck:

“Andrew does get a lot of credit, but he deserves it. He is an awesome player. He’s the best quarterback in the country and he’s had a tremendous year.”

On the emergence of the running game:

“[I] think the running game has surprised some people. A lot of people were thinking, ‘[since] Toby Gerhart is gone, is Andrew going to be able to throw the ball the whole time?’ But Stepfan [Taylor], Anthony Wilkerson, Tyler Gaffney and Jeremy Stewart; all these guys have stepped up and had a huge year [and] Owen Marecic leading the way blocking. The offensive line has done it all: run game and pass game. That has been a big part of our game, being balanced.”