Quotes from tonight's bowl press conference

Raiders ready for Mobile

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COACH RICK STOCKSTILL: We're very excited about the opportunity that we have to play in the GoDaddy.com Bowl a week from tomorrow. We started practice on Monday, we gave them off three days, we practiced after finals, then turned them loose and we got back Sunday and started practice on Monday. We have had three really good practices. I love the attitude of our team right now. We have a great sense of urgency, and our practices have been good. Our guys are excited; our staff is excited, to play Miami. Miami is an excellent football team, they are 9-4, they won the MAC conference championship in their upset win over Northern Illinois, who I think was ranked 25th at the time.

Miami is a really good football team, they have good players on both sides of the ball, and they are really sound in the kicking game. We are excited about the challenge and the opportunity.

(On winning a bowl game last year and its impact on this game): Last year when we went to the New Orleans Bowl, we had only a handful of guys who had played in the Motor City Bowl in 2006. On this team, everybody went last year except the new freshmen and junior college players we brought in. Most of our team has won a bowl, and I don't know if it's a comfort level as much as it is a confidence level. I know I have a lot of confidence in this team, and these players have a lot of confidence in themselves. They know what they have to do to prepare for a bowl game. Our number one objective is to win the game, and our number two objective is to have fun, and number two will never go in front of number one.

I like the attitude and focus of our team right now, and I am really excited about the way we are preparing for this game.

(Is this game about "us", playing a team we have never seen before?): It has been about "us" ever since I got here five years ago. "Us" is the only thing we have any control over, how we play, how smart we play, how physical we play, how well we play. We can't control anything Miami does. Your plan and you prepare for the team that you are playing, but the bottom line is, if you play up to your ability, if you play up to your potential, then you have a chance to win every game you play.

(On Miami's two wide receivers): We have played teams this year that had more than one good receiver, so it's nothing new for us. They are both really, really good players, but again I have a lot of confidence in our secondary to match up with those guys, and I have a lot of confidence in our front seven to be able to put pressure on the quarterback and make him, hopefully, move his feet a little bit in the pocket and not have as much time as he'd like.

(On Miami having a new head coach): I don't think it will affect us one way or another. Playing 13 games, and being conference champions, they are not going to come in all of a sudden with a new defense or a new offense. They may add a few new wrinkles or what-not, I don't see it being an advantage or disadvantage for us. Our game plan will be in when we leave here on Sunday, get in a Monday practice. But we may get in only two practices because of an early luncheon on Wednesday, and because of painting the field the day before the game.

(On how proud you are of this team, not giving up, not quitting): I am proud of this team, and I hope they are. This team overcame a lot of adversity,

I kept telling them that we had one more game at the end of our schedule. I believed that we would end up in a bowl game because I knew the toughness that this team had mentally, I knew they were a good football team, good football players, and I knew the resiliency they had and the toughness they had mentally, and they continued to believe in the message, and they never gave up. We had great leadership out of our seniors, and when you accomplish what we accomplished in order to go to this bowl game, when your back was against the wall and you had to fight those last three games, and two of those games you are down 14, and 13, in the first quarter. They fought and they kept believing, and they never gave up when a lot of teams would have. That's why I am proud of them.

(On the attitude of the team about the game): There is nobody out there on that practice field that is just "happy" to be going. We are excited to go, we want to go. That was our objective before the season, to go to a bowl game. Miami has to be excited too. They were 1-11 last year, and it's been a while since they have been to a bowl. I know they are excited, they want to be there. We want to be there. As a college coach and player, this is what you play for. This is your reward for the hard work and the sacrifices you make from January 1st until the end of December. We are hungry. We want to win this game.

(On carrying the Sun Belt Conference banner in this game): Well, that's just something that is out there. But you don't say, "Okay, let's win this game so we can say the Sun Belt went 3-0". We want to win this game so we can celebrate in the locker room and be proud of what we accomplished. Yes, we are carrying the flag for the Sun Belt Conference. Yes, we are 2-0. Yes, we want to be 3-0, but that's not the main objective. The main objective is to win this game for the

players in that locker room, for our fans, this university, and #4 is the Sun Belt Conference.

(On being only game on TV on that night of Jan. 6th): It's a great opportunity. These guys that have been here four and five years, that have put their heart and soul into this program, this is the last college game they will ever play, and to go out there and play the right way, with the character and the passion and the toughness that you want your team to play with. They can go out there and have folks across the country say on Friday morning, "Did you see that #20, or that number 47, or 74 or 21 last night?" That's what we have a chance to do, to showcase our university and our football program to a lot of people out there. To me that is another step in building this program and taking it where we want to go. You are the only game on TV, and let's go out there and play it with everything we've got.

JEREMY KELLEM: Last year it was a whole bunch of excitement. My first two years things didn't go as we had planned, and I was at home watching every single bowl game. Last year at New Orleans, it was just so much fun. To me that was the biggest game I had ever played in in my life. This year, we are going in with the same attitude. We just want to get a victory. As seniors, we know what to expect, and we want to have fun, but we know our objective is to win the game.

(On Miami's star wide receivers): They pose great challenges for the whole defense. They like to line #11 up in the backfield and give him a lot of touches, and #8 is their deep man, so all eleven of us on the field have to be aware of where these two guys are at all times. It's going to be a team effort. I know we are going to be playing man to man. We are trying to dominate the man in front of us, so we all have to take up that challenge, and not try to beat them by ourselves, but to beat them as a team.

DWIGHT SMITH: Last year, the seniors did a great job of showing us how to act, and this year, as we head down there to Mobile, our seniors are going to do that this year, to let everybody know that we are going to have fun, but that first of all, we are going to try to win this ball game.

MARK FISHER: Our confidence level carries over from our FIU game. We didn't know if that was going to be our last game, or we were going to get to go to a bowl game. Last year, our confidence level increased as we closed the season, and this year, winning that last game and the bowl game last year, I think our confidence level is even higher, plus we are just more comfortable now.

(On earning the bowl bid in last three games): I think it means more because we go out there on the practice field and fight, not for ourselves, but for our coaches and teammates. We had our back against the wall, we were 3-6, and the team didn't give up. It means a lot to us, particular the seniors, to have earned it by winning three straight games rather than having it dropped in our lap.

PHILLIP TANNER: Even though I didn't get to play last year, I learned that it was a great experience. We had fun, but going out and winning the game was the most important thing. Just from practice this week, our guys have been working really hard all year, and getting better and better every week. Confidence rolls over every day from practice to practice. We go out at practice to get better each day.

(On Motor City Bowl in 2006): My first bowl game, I was nervous. I knew I didn't have that big of a role, and last year, I was hurt, just sitting on the sidelines, watching how exciting it was. I can say the big difference in the two was how much more fun winning was

(On closing the season by winning out): It defines a man, how he will deal with adversity, how will he bounce back. In the Western Kentucky game, it showed that it takes all three phase of the game to win a game. Rod Isaac recovered the fumble on defense and took it back for a touchdown, then the offense went out and scored, then we were faced with adversity again when they got close enough to kick a game-winning field goal, and our special teams came through and blocked it. We just showed that when we get knocked down, we're going to get back up.

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