

StaffDNA Cure Bowl Postgame Press Conference Transcript

Wednesday, Dec. 17 at Camping World Stadium

Old Dominion Head Coach Ricky Rahne, CB Jerome Carter, QB Quinn Henicle

Opening statement:

Coach Rahne: “It was a game where you are going to have to manage emotions, and I thought we did a pretty good job of that. I talked to them about how you win games, how you win Bowl games. It is techniques, fundamentals, avoiding pre-snap and post-snap penalties — that’s a huge one. Really, it is just managing the emotions and for the most part, I thought the guys did a great job, because when I say managing the emotions, you still have to play with emotion, and I think our guys, obviously, did that. I will take questions and I will let Jerome just sit here and soak up the fact that he had an unbelievable game, and then you guys can ask him the real stuff.”

On the StaffDNA Cure Bowl victory and earning 10 wins:

Coach Rahne: “Yeah, it’s very significant. I mean, having a 10th win is awesome and having a Bowl win is important, but I think just what it signifies. I thought our team prepared like champions all year, and now to be able to have a trophy that they can look at, have a ring that they can look at, and be able to remember this team, is important. I think that is why Bowls are so important. And I don’t want to say — listen, this isn’t the NFL. This is college, right?”

“These guys deserve a chance to finish as a champion and for people, who don’t think that is a good thing, I challenge you to watch our post-game celebration. I challenge you to watch our locker room, and even our sideline when the plays were made to decide this game. Bowls are incredibly important, because these are memories that these men are going to have forever.

“They’re going to remember games and plays, and Jerome’s obviously going to remember his two interceptions, which were huge, but I think he is also going to remember some of the times he was able to have with these guys on this whole trip, and how much fun he had with them, and something stupid that one of our d-linemen probably said. That’s something that’s going to stay with us for a long time.”

On was this your Gatorade bath:

Coach Rahne: “No, it is like my second or third. I will tell you that they are not fun at all, and it is not that cold at all. Inevitably, you get one or two things, either there is an ice chunk in there that nails you in the back of the head, or the guys’ depth perceptions are a little off. They hit you with the Gatorade thing. I think I’ll be okay. I had them check me out for any possible injuries, but I think I’ll be all right on that end. But yeah, the actual getting soaked part is fun and you love that part. I did tell them, I mean, I looked, I knew it was coming and I looked back at them, and I was like, ‘If this thing hits me before this clock hits 0:00, we’re going to fight.’ So, because I just — maybe I’m scarred from other Bowl experiences, but I just did not want that to happen.”

On the best thing about Quinn's performance and played the way he did:

Coach Rahne: "The best part about Quinn's performance is he didn't play anywhere near his best game, and he was still able to will the team to a win.

"To me, it was that run in the four-minute drive, where he kept going. He kept his legs going, kept just dragging people -- the competitiveness, the fight and the effort that he had right there. Then, you just watched not only how the offensive players responded, but also the defensive players on the sideline. That's what he brings to the table, and it's something that you love to watch, and as a coach, it's fun to coach that — that type of emotion, fight, and will."

On how proud you are in the defense and being able to battle through a tough game:

Jerome Carter: "I think it just shows how we compete and how we prepared during practice. That's really what we harp on, being the most physical team on the field at the time. I just feel like that's how we change things. That is how we play differently by being more physical. We have to out-physical the other team."

Coach Rahne: "Yeah, I think that with that, I don't know how many games this is this year, but I know at one point we had four games, where we had more than 300 yards of rushing than the other team. We had more than 200 yards rushing in these guys today.

I think that says a lot about everybody on our team, right? I mean, the offensive, the defensive -- everyone wants to point at the O-line, D-line, but there's a lot of other people doing that. Drones coming up and filling, you have running backs blocking. To everybody on our team, playing physical is something that is going to be the hallmark of this team forever. I think that's one thing, when they do leave with this ring, that they are going to remember.

"Maybe some of them will probably go into college coaching, some of them might be high school coaches or whatever, but they are going to say, 'Hey, this ring right here was built on playing football the right way and playing physical.' Like I said, I have used this word a lot and I know I am not supposed to, but it is violent, right? The beautiful part about this game is it is the most complex game in the world, but ultimately, it is decided by who can be the most violent, play-in and play-out."

On the guys in the locker room ending the season with a bowl win:

Jerome Carter: I think it's resilience and the brotherhood that we've got in the locker room. We would run through a brick wall for each other. I believe that's what you've got to have with a team in order to be successful, you know what I'm saying? Like my buddy right here to the side of me (*points at QB Quinn Henicle*), I'd run through a wall for him, and that's what you need with a team."

On the how the team rallied a finished strong after a tough stretch in the middle of the season:

Coach Rahne "I mean, in today's game where the setup is made a little bit for a mercenary mentality, I think our guys invested in each other. They invested in our culture, they invested in each other, they invested in the coaching staff — and I think our coaches did that too. That's not

always easy, right? I mean, the reality of it is, when guys are going to leave, and all of that sort of stuff, it is easy to not invest in developing those relationships with each other. I mean, that's what's safe, right? Because you can get hurt the other way. You can't get hurt if you don't invest. But when you invest in somebody, yeah, you can get hurt, but the reality of it is that is the only way to feel joy, and the only way to feel love. I think our guys have done that, and that's what we were able to do when we lost those two (conference) games.

“But hey, listen, our team was crushed. I'm not going to sit here and act like they didn't care, because they did. I mean, they did, because a team that is playing in the playoffs right now, we know we had them on the ropes, we had a chance to beat them, and we played our worst half of football that we played all year. They didn't sulk about that.

“Instead, they invested in each other, they invested in the coaching staff, the coaching staff invested in them, and they kept believing what some guy who's getting older and has a lot of gray hair and likes to pretend it's blonde, and curses too much, says to them all the time. I think it just says a lot about these guys and how much they enjoy the game of football.

“That's one thing that I think people don't understand, that it's okay to love something, and our guys love the game of football. People are like — my youngest son, in his typical fashion, decided to make fun of me, because I cried after the game.

“But what he doesn't understand is that I cry when he scores a goal, because I love somebody that much, right? I mean, that's just the way it is. I am blessed with, and yes, I have two sons that mean the world to me, but I have 111 other ones that mean the world to me, too. The reality of it is those two back there (*his sons*) are going to go off someday and create their own life. Well, some of these guys are going to go off someday too, and that doesn't mean I'm going to love them any less.”

On how special was it to have your mom in the stands watching you in your first Bowl win:

Coach Rahne: “Yeah, there's a 0% chance that my mom was going to miss this. I mean, there was no chance. It was awesome. My nephew was here too, and to have my best friend from college here and one of my best friends in the world, who I have met, since I have been in Norfolk, that was great. It is great to have people invest in you and your journey, right?”

“My brother-in-law is here, my mother-in-law, my dad, my stepmom, and it was a great deal. My sister would have been here, too. She is still ticked off, because she is a principal, so she couldn't miss her last day of school. They would probably get on you for that. She was hoping the game would be a little bit later.

“I really appreciate the people who invest in me. I don't communicate well enough during the season, and probably ever, but I will just use the season as an excuse right now, but they know how much I love and appreciate everything they give.”

On the turnout and all the fans that were able to come down to Orlando:

Coach Rahne: “It is awesome. They were loud, too, man, they were loud, right? I thought, obviously, their fans don't have far to go. We had a little bit farther to go. We usually have good winter weather, but this year we have not. As these guys know, because I have just been making them practice in the coldest weather we have had in Virginia in who knows how long, snow and all those sorts of things, and just acting like it wasn't existing, but the whole time I am freezing right there with them. Those fans that came down here, it meant a lot. I know, especially to these guys, and it certainly means a lot to me as well.”

On playing a Bowl game that brings awareness for cancer:

Quinn Henicle: “It means everything. It's why I play football for games like this and atmospheres like this. Being able to have a chance to go down to Florida with my teammates, having a nice weekend with them, going to Universal, I am so blessed. It is an awesome experience. I didn't play my best game. I didn't throw the ball well, but because of my teammates, they rallied around me, and we were able to get it done. We were able to get the win. That is really what matters most.”

On the importance of bringing awareness to cancer

Quinn Henicle: “Cancer is a horrible disease. It means so much that we were able to raise money to help a cause and find a cure – that is what it is all about.”

On what it means to get a win for the seniors and graduates on the team:

Jerome Carter: “As I said earlier, we really just played for the ones, who were playing their last game. Coach [Rahne] mentioned that in our meetings, and we took it to heart. It was about playing for them.”

On ending the season with 10 victories:

Coach Rahne: I think it's a new team every year. I have thought that for however long I have been coaching now. I think 21 or 22 years, whatever it is, and using track. I learned that early in my career that it is always a new team.”

“So, I don't think that you necessarily can build off anything, and I think it's even more prevalent now. You have to reestablish the culture every single year, because the culture is the combined actions of everybody in the organization. It's not what you say it is. It's what the actions show. So, it's not necessarily going to be easier or anything like that, and I'm glad. I don't want it to be easy. If something is easy, I tend not to enjoy it as much. I like it when things are hard. I like it when things are difficult. It means more to me, and I think it means more to the people.”

On what it means to win MVP:

“Quinn Henicle: “This really is a team award. I couldn't have done it with my guys, my offense line, the whole offense. The defense played their tails off. They got us the ball back with big stops, and we were able to put it all together as a team. This really is a team award. It's not about me. I couldn't have done it without my whole team.”

On how did you guys battle through some of the injuries and penalties?

Jerome Carter: “Sometimes when you are competing, things like that happen. But you have to keep your composure and just walk away from stuff. You can’t retaliate on things like that. It is bad for the image of the program and the head coach, and you as a player.”

Quinn Henicle: “Yeah, I think that also comes back to culture. We are there for each other. We are not going to do stupid things to put each other in jeopardy. It is a team game, we fight for each other until the whistle blows, and once the whistle stops, it is over. We did a good job of keeping each other accountable.”

Coach Rahne: “I think part of it, too, is you could tell their team cared about each other, too. If you look at a lot of the chippiness, a lot of it was about thinking that your brother just took a cheap shot, right? And whether or not that was true or not, that doesn’t matter. A lot of it was ‘Hey, I didn’t like the way that that just went down to somebody I care a lot about.’ We have all got to understand that it speaks a lot to both teams and how much they care for each other. You are not going to get chippy if you don’t care about the people, right? And I think you saw that because of how much they care about each other.”

On How hard was it to get back up after some of those hits:

Quinn Henicle: “I think that’s football. You get hit, you get back up. I like to say I am a tough kid, that’s just part of the game. As I said, my teammates are very supportive, and the medical staff is very helpful for me. It’s football, that’s what you do. I wasn’t going let anybody take me out of that game. This means too much to me for me to be able to sit out. I wasn’t going to be taken out.”

Coach Rahne: “I think I made double, triple, quadruple checks to make sure he was okay. His mom is an awesome lady, but like most quarterback moms, I am a little afraid of her. She’s not the biggest, but she is feisty.

“I was going to make sure that he got checked out multiple times. I’d like to say, and I know it’s the last question:

“Monarch Nation, I really appreciate what you did for us this entire year. How much support you gave us going into the year, how much support you gave us throughout the year, and then into this Bowl game and the support that we are getting going forward. I am proud of the direction that the program is going, but we have a long way to go. We have championships to win, but being able to point to a championship this year is a great step, and I am really proud we were able to get that done. I could probably speak for Quinn and Jerome, and if Devin, he’d be saying the same thing.”