

Texas head coach Steve Sarkisian, Ryan Day Appreciative Of 12-Team Playoff Format



The semifinals of the College Football Playoff at the Cotton Bowl Classic feature arguably the two best teams in the country, Texas and Ohio State. Under a four-team playoff format though, this game may have never happened,

After finishing the regular season with two losses, including a 13-10 shocker to Michigan, Ohio State was ranked No. 6 in the College Football Playoff committee's final ranking.

As it was with the 12-team format, the Buckeyes not only made the playoffs but received a home game in the first round. After dismantling both Tennessee and Oregon in back-to-back rounds, the Buckeyes are now national championship favorites ahead of their matchup with the Longhorns on Friday.

During a joint press conference with Texas head coach Steve Sarkisian at AT&T Stadium on Thursday, Day emphasized how the new format has allowed Ohio State to grow after the loss to Michigan.

"With the way that this is set up, I think you're allowed a loss or two throughout the season, to learn and to grow and to build as a team, where in the past if you were to lose a game like that your whole season was ruined," Day said.

Texas, the No. 3-ranked team in the country in the final rankings, would've made the four-team playoff. Instead of needing just two wins to be national champions, the Longhorns had to get through Clemson in round one and Arizona State in the Peach Bowl to make their second straight semifinal game. Still, Sarkisian doesn't feel like his team got the short end of the stick.

"I think from the first time out, I don't think many of us are going to complain about this 12-team playoff," Sarkisian said. "I can speak on behalf of us. With (Darrell K-Royal Texas Memorial Stadium) hosting, that first-round game was electric, it was a tremendous atmosphere, now playing in two bowl games for the Peach Bowl and the Cotton Bowl is an amazing opportunity for our players."

After two rounds, the 12-team format has already had its detractors. Perhaps the biggest argument used against the expanded playoff is that conference champions like Boise State and Arizona State shouldn't have received first-round byes just because they won their respective conferences. Although each of the four highest-ranked conference champions received first-round byes, none of them made it to the semifinals, making some question if winning a conference championship helps a team in the playoffs.

According to Sarkisian, the motivation to win the conference championship isn't altered by the playoff format.

"For us, this was our first year in the Southeastern Conference, and we wanted as much or more than anything to try to capture that championship, and we got an opportunity to get into that game and went into overtime and didn't come out victorious, and then we regrouped and we got ready for this tournament, for this playoff," Sarkisian said. "I don't know if that'll ever be diminished to the fact of that's always one of the goals, especially when you're in the Southeastern Conference or the Big Ten, there's so much history and tradition in these conferences that it means a ton."

Day understands the 12-team format may need some tweaking, but to him, its impact on college football has been a positive one.

"I feel like the playoffs are great for college football," Day said. "I think we're all looking to figure out how to make it better and what that means for the conference championship game. I think we all want to win the conference, that matters, but moving forward, how that looks, I think we're all trying to figure that out."