

No. 4 Clemson tops NC State 55-10, wins ACC division title

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Trevor Lawrence said he and his Clemson teammates aren't focused on trying to make a point about their outside-look-ing-in position in the first College Football Playoff rankings.

Maybe not, but the reigning national champion Tigers sure are playing with an overwhelming edge all the same -- and that has for now at least secured their ticket to the Atlantic Coast Conference championship game. Lawrence threw for two scores and ran for another in a dominat-ing first quarter, helping No. 4 Clemson beat North Carolina State 55-10 on Saturday night to clinch the league's Atlantic Division title.

The Tigers learned this week that they were fifth in the four-team playoff rankings. Yet coach Dabo Swinney had said the Tigers (10-0, 7-0, No. 5 CFP) were in a "good spot" and needed to focus in-stead on finishing strong.

Since surviving a 21-20 scare at unranked North Carolina in Sep-tember, the Tigers have won five straight games by 31 or more points.

"I think with something like (the CFP ranking), it's hard to just avoid it and not see it and not hear any of that," Lawrence said.

"But we don't really focus on it, especially now. I mean, after the 12th week or the ACC championship, that'll be important for sure then. ... If we don't win next week and the week after that and the week after that, it doesn't really matter about the playoff if we lose a game."

Starting that way was enough against the Wolfpack (4-5, 1-4) as Clemson extended its school-record winning streak to 25 games.

Clemson scored touchdowns on all four first-quarter drives, two coming after turnovers to give the Tigers short fields their hum-ing-along offense didn't even need.

"Our guys were locked in and just really ready to play," Swinney said. "And our execution was tremendous in that first half. We re-ally played about as clean as you can play. We didn't make many mistakes."

There weren't many positives for N.C. State beyond freshman Zono-van Knight's 53-yard TD run. That came early in the third quarter, long after the Wolfpack's typically rowdy fans had fled for the exits to leave the rest of the game to play out in a largely empty Carter-Finley Stadium.

"The bottom line is we can't turn the football over and win a football game," Wolfpack coach Dave Doeren said. "We turned it over three times in the first half against a team that's as good as anybody we're going to play every year. You just can't do that."

THE TAKEAWAY

Clemson: The four-time reigning ACC champions claimed the league's Atlantic Division title with the win and No. 22 Wake Forest's loss at Virginia Tech earlier Saturday. That will give the Tigers a shot at becoming the first team in any power conference to win five straight league championship games when they face the Coastal Di- vision champion Dec. 7 in Charlotte, North Carolina.

N.C. State: Injuries have caused an already young team to force even younger players into the lineup, and it didn't get better Saturday night. A Lawrence keeper ended with three Wolfpack play-ers lying on the turf in pain and ultimately left freshman line-backer Payton Wilson with his left arm in a sling and an ice bag on his shoulder with what Doeren called a shoulder sprain. Red-shirt freshman QB Devin Leary got little chance to build confidence in a bumpy second start -- including simply dropping the ball in the pocket for a turnover -- in a game that got away quickly. N.C. State must win two of the final three games to reach a sixth straight bowl game.

POLL IMPLICATIONS

The Tigers could move up in the AP Top 25 with No. 2 Alabama losing to No. 1 LSU. They also could rise in the playoff rankings with Alabama (No. 3 CFP) and No. 5 Penn State (No. 4 CFP) both falling Saturday.

POSITION VERSATILITY?

Clemson gave offensive lineman John Simpson and linebacker James Skalski a chance to show off some positional versatility in this one.

The Tigers' 42-0 halftime lead included 6-foot-4, 330-pound Simp-son taking a goal-line handoff and plowing in for a 1-yard touch-down.

"Getting in there was insane," Simpson said, adding: "It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

And near the end of the game, after Clemson added a 1-yard scoring run with 11 seconds left, the Tigers let Skalski unsuccessfully kick the extra point.

Swinney said Skalski makes kicks in practice but "all of a sudden, he got a little stage fright out there tonight."

Final	1	2	3	4	T
CLEM	28	14	7	6	55
NCST	0	0	7	3	10

Scoring Summary -----

FIRST QUARTER		CLEM	NCST
CLEM TD 10:56	Trevor Lawrence 7 Yd Run (B.T. Potter Kick)		
9 plays, 84 yards, 4:04		7	0
CLEM TD 5:00	Tee Higgins 33 Yd pass from Trevor Lawrence (B.T. Potter Kick)		
10 plays, 92 yards, 4:10		14	0
CLEM TD 3:31	Travis Etienne 4 Yd pass from Trevor Lawrence (B.T. Pot-ter Kick)		
2 plays, 3 yards, 0:36		21	0
CLEM TD 1:31	Travis Etienne 19 Yd Run (B.T. Potter Kick)		
2 plays, 21 yards, 0:54		28	0
SECOND QUARTER		CLEM	NCST
CLEM TD 4:30	John Simpson 1 Yd Run (B.T. Potter Kick)		
7 plays, 74 yards, 2:57		35	0
CLEM TD 0:45	Justyn Ross 33 Yd pass from Trevor Lawrence (B.T. Potter Kick)		
6 plays, 70 yards, 2:22		42	0
THIRD QUARTER		CLEM	NCST
NCST TD 13:04	Zonovan Knight 53 Yd Run (Christopher Dunn Kick)		
5 plays, 75 yards, 1:56		42	7
CLEM TD 6:21	Travis Etienne 8 Yd Run (B.T. Potter Kick)		
11 plays, 75 yards, 6:43		49	7
FOURTH QUARTER		CLEM	NCST
NCST FG 13:43	Christopher Dunn 46 Yd Field Goal		
11 plays, 56 yards, 4:48		49	10
CLEM TD 0:11	Michel Dukes 1 Yd Run (James Skalski PAT failed)		
7 plays, 23 yards, 2:38		55	10

Team Stats	CLEM	NCST
First Downs	27	13
Passes for First	15	6
Rushes for First	11	4
Penalties for First	1	3
Third Down Efficiency	4-12	4-13
Fourth Down Efficiency	3-3	1-2
Total Yards	549	290
Total Plays	77	60
Avg Gain Per Play	7.1	4.8
Net Yards Rushing	246	124
Rushes	41	31
Yards Per Rush	6.0	4.0
Net Yards Passing	303	166
Comp-Att	25-36	14-29
Yards Per Pass	8.4	5.7
Times Sacked	1	2
Yds Lost To Sacks	-5	-16
Interceptions	0	0
Punts	4	5
Punt Average	46.3	52.2
Penalties	10	6
Penalty Yards	72	45
Fumbles	2	4
Fumbles Lost	0	4
Time of Poss	35:45	24:15

Individual Stats

RUSHING							
CLEMSON	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Travis Etienne	14	112	8.0	2	26		
Trevor Lawrence	8	59	7.4	1	28		
Lyn-J Dixon	9	50	5.6	0	15		
Chase Brice	2	17	8.5	0	10		
Michel Dukes	3	11	3.7	1	7		
Chez Mellusi	2	5	2.5	0	7		
John Simpson	1	1	1.0	1	1		
Darien Rencher	1	1	1.0	0	1		
Team	1	-10	-10.0	0	0		
NC STATE	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Zonovan Knight	12	139	11.6	1	53		
Trent Pennix	1	5	5.0	0	5		
Keyon Lesane	1	5	5.0	0	5		
Devin Leary	9	5	0.6	0	13		
Jordan Houston	7	-15	-2.1	0	3		
Team	1	-15	-15.0	0	0		
PASSING							
CLEMSON	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Trevor Lawrence	20	27	276	10.2	3	0	94.1
Chase Brice	5	9	27	3.0	0	0	32.8
NC STATE	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Devin Leary	14	29	166	5.7	0	0	12.3

RECEIVING							
CLEMSON	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Justyn Ross	4	75	18.8	1	33		
Tee Higgins	4	73	18.3	1	33		
Diondre Overton	2	34	17.0	0	32		
Travis Etienne	3	31	10.3	1	27		
Lyn-J Dixon	2	27	13.5	0	17		
Joe Ngata	2	18	9.0	0	9		
Frank Ladson Jr.	1	13	13.0	0	13		
Will Swinney	2	13	6.5	0	11		
Darien Rencher	1	8	8.0	0	8		
Amari Rodgers	3	7	2.3	0	9		
Cornell Powell	1	4	4.0	0	4		
NC STATE	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	LONG		
Cary Angeline	2	53	26.5	0	38		
Tabari Hines	3	30	10.0	0	22		
Devin Carter	2	27	13.5	0	19		
Emeka Emezie	4	21	5.3	0	8		
Jordan Houston	1	19	19.0	0	19		
Trent Pennix	1	16	16.0	0	16		
Keyon Lesane	1	0	0.0	0	0		