

September 12, 2012



An Interview With:

**FRANK SPAZIANI
BOSTON COLLEGE**

FRANK SPAZIANI: As Michael said, we're on our way out to Chicago to play a very well-coached and very talented Northwestern team. We're excited about it.

With that, the proverbial questions.

Q. Two questions: One, you already play Notre Dame, so what does -- how relevant is Notre Dame football still, and what does playing Notre Dame as a non-conference opponent, what does that do for your program, your attendance?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, we have a long-standing tradition with Notre Dame, and I think we have a mutual respect and appreciation for each other. We understand what a great institution it is.

I think it's tremendous for our league and certainly for Boston College. We play them, and now to be playing them in other sports is valuable, very valuable.

Q. From your firsthand knowledge of what it means to a program to have Notre Dame come into your stadium, what do you see as the pluses here?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, you just alluded to it. It's a marquee brand. I think any time you add a marquee brand to your established tradition and the wonderful stuff that you have, it enhances it.

Q. And when you look at Northwestern on film, they're off to a good start. Why is that? What impresses you on the film?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, as I said in my topic statement, they're very well-coached. They

have some very good players, and they just play a very good brand of football. They know how to win, and they've demonstrated that in their first two games.

Q. Just curious, is it disappointing to add Notre Dame without adding Notre Dame football?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, from our perspective, we play them every year anyway (laughing), so it's -- I would have to digest that. And I think that's an evolving situation. They're going to be playing five.

Like I said, I think it's good for the league. It's really good. And I don't see any disappointment in there at all.

Q. But playing five and not joining the league, isn't that kind of like living together but not getting married?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, you know, let me just say this: We play them every year, and that's what I'm concerned about. And the league will have to be concerned about how it evolves with the season and how they absorb into the rest of the ACC. But from our perspective right here, once again, we play them every year. I thought they were in the ACC to be honest with you.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the tempo that Northwestern plays at. It seems like a lot of teams now try to disrupt you on offense by playing a quick tempo or changing the tempo. Seems like they were one of the first to do that. Is that getting easier to handle as more as more teams do it?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, I don't know if it's getting easier to handle. I think more teams are learning what they have to do to prepare to handle it. So in that aspect, people are becoming a little bit more comfortable with it and understand exactly what goes on. But unless your players have been involved in it and seen it a few times, it can be very disruptive.



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Q. You had a nice game from Spiffy Evans. First of all, that's a great name.

FRANK SPAZIANI: It sounds good, right?

Q. It does. I just wondered if you knew anything about how he got that. But more importantly, what kind of player is he? He's one of the guys that I don't know much about.

FRANK SPAZIANI: We recruited Spiffy as -- he's a good skill player, and when we recruited him out of high school that's what we were looking for, obviously. He's like a lot of young players that take a little bit of time to develop. He's been with us for a year and played as a true freshman last year.

He's only gotten better, and certainly that was one of his better football games. His best football is ahead of him. Now the next thing to do once you've done it is be consistent and keep doing it. Spiffy is a hard worker and he's got the talent, so we're excited about having him.

Q. What are the things that he does really well?

FRANK SPAZIANI: He's a good route runner; he catches the ball; he's got good hands; he understands coverages; he can return kicks for us. He does a lot of things well. Plus he's a good student.

Q. Am I right Northwestern has been using two quarterbacks? Do they do different things, or are they doing the same thing?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, once again, Northwestern is very well-coached. They have their offense. They're a little bit different, but they basically run the same offense.

Q. I just saw Colter has been doing more passing --

FRANK SPAZIANI: It's the other way around, no?

Q. Oh, is it? Just curious. That's what I need to find out.

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, I think what happened was they put Simmons in at the end of one of the ballgames to throw in a different manner. Maybe they seem a little bit better. I don't think he's -- they changed their offense. They might call some different plays for him, but it's basically the same offense.

DABO SWINNEY CLEMSON

DABO SWINNEY: Well, we're coming off a good win. We're excited to be 2 and 0 and to have a good start. But we've got a lot of improving to do as a team, and we've got another opportunity to hopefully grow our team this week and playing Furman. This is a game that's great for our community and really expecting a very good crowd. This is a team that I'm impressed with watching them. They're well-coached. They're 0 and 2, but they lost 24-21 to Sanford, a triple overtime loss to Coastal and really could have won either game. They've turned the ball over and that's hurt them. But this is a team that is very capable on both sides.

Hopefully it'll be a great day here in the valley, a 3:09 kickoff, and hopefully we'll have a big crowd and everybody will enjoy themselves and come in and watch the Tigers plays in the Paladins.

As far as our team, hopefully we can continue to just improve in building our program.

Q. I just wanted to get your thoughts on the news this morning about Notre Dame coming on board in all sports but football but will be playing ACC teams in football from time to time.

DABO SWINNEY: Well, I think that's great news for our conference. You know, it really, I think, says a lot, a program like Notre Dame to want to come, and I'm sure they could have their pick of conferences. And for them to choose the ACC is, I think, a great thing. They're making a commitment, I think, to play five conference football games even though they're not going to be a football member right now, but for them to make that commitment, I think that's very strong.

So it's exciting. It further secures this conference's strength of schedule, and moving forward as we get into the playoff scenarios and all that stuff, I definitely think it is a real positive for the ACC.

Q. I want to ask you a little bit about the progression of your defense. You have a new defensive coordinator, things have gone great in your first two games, but that's still when you take a look at overall in the

conference you're still toward the middle of the pack or the end of the pack. What are some of the things you guys are working on defensively to improve that area?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, and we have made improvement. The one thing I would point out is we're a very young group over there, and as I've said from the beginning of the season, we're going to be a few weeks kind of a work in progress, getting this thing really coached up. And I'm very impressed with what we've been able to do in a short period of time.

These guys held Auburn to one touchdown, and although we gave up a couple of plays that we'd like to have back, this past week we did some really good things in the first half -- the first 45 plays or so. We played very good defensive football and complemented our offense very well and really had the game under control at halftime.

We've made improvement, but the big thing for us defensively is we've got to improve our rush defense, and it's just really them doing their job from a gap control standpoint, fundamentally containing the ball the proper way, just everybody doing their job. I think they understand it, but it's just the execution of some things fundamentally and technique wise that we've got to improve on because we've given up a couple of big plays where if you leave a gap open, good offenses and good backs, they'll find it, and that's happened to us a couple times.

And then we've got to continue to improve our tackling, although I would say I've been fairly pleased with our tackling. We've tackled pretty good. But that's definitely an area that we can continue to improve. I thought our secondary got better last week.

If we can just keep making some incremental progress, we've got a chance to be a pretty good defense when this thing is all said and done.

Q. I was wondering if you had a status update on David Beasley and when a decision might be made on whether he plays this Saturday or how much?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, we're going to watch him again today at practice. He looked pretty good this morning. We're optimistic that he's going to be available, but it's pretty much right now still a day-to-day decision and might be a game-time decision as far as him playing. But I'll know more this afternoon.

Q. And with Kalon Davis coming in last week, how do you think he did when he was kind of suddenly called on, and what's he got to do to kind of keep pressure on Beasley for the left guard starting spot?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, Kalon, it was actually very close going into the Auburn game between David and Kalon, but David clearly won the job. He was definitely the guy that was out front, he earned that in the scrimmages, so he earned the right to get the first opportunity at it, and then he performed really, really good against Auburn. I mean, he played very well.

But we anticipated being able to play Kalon, but we just got in such a good rhythm in that Auburn game, we just let him keep going. But it was good to see Kalon get in there last week, and he did some good things. He really did some good things. I think we've got a nice, healthy competition there, kind of keep both of those guys hungry and on edge and trying to get better every single week.

But we'll see what happens this weekend with David, but I don't have any doubt, I feel a lot better about this position today than I did in camp going into that first game just because I've seen them both play a little bit now.

Q. Are you okay with Notre Dame joining the non-BCS Bowl package even though they won't be a full-fledged member for football?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, yeah. I think they bring a lot to this conference, and who knows what the future holds. But I think it probably will even enhance our Bowl opportunities down the road and TV and all that kind of stuff as this thing moves forward. Again, I see it as a real positive.

Q. And speaking of real positives, now you've got Sammy Watkins back for this week and you haven't lost with him being gone. What did you learn about your team in these two games without Sammy?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, hopefully they learned a lot about themselves. Our team is bigger than any one player or coach, and it hopefully gives our team even more confidence to know that they can win without Sammy Watkins.

I think it gives Sammy a lot of confidence in knowing that, hey, listen, he doesn't have to be

the savior, he just needs to do his job. This team has proven they can win without him. But it certainly is a good thing to get him back. I don't think we're going to be worse -- in fact, I told him the other day, we're 2 and 0 now, don't mess this thing up.

But he's excited to get back on the field, and I'm excited to see him. I'm pretty sure he'll probably show up pretty quick.

Q. Just wondering how you keep the guys focused and motivated for this game when you've got Florida State on the schedule next.

DABO SWINNEY: We just do what we do. We have a daily focus. We have a way that we prepare weekly, and that just doesn't change. Everybody asks that question, but as I tell the team all the time, you only get 12 games, and you'd better enjoy each one of them and you'd better make the most of all of them. All you've got to do is look at history and you see where teams that lost their focus end up costing them. Virginia Tech a couple years ago lost to James Madison, and they went on to win 11 games. Well, that 12th win might have made a difference for them playing in the National Championship -- being in the National Championship hunt. We all know about Michigan being fifth in the country and losing to App State. You saw what happened this week at Arkansas. Not that those aren't good programs, but I know that that's sometimes a tendency for people to look ahead. But if we do our job as coaches and we have the kind of leadership I think we have on this team, we'll stay focused on the task at hand, and that is preparing daily with purpose, just bringing great effort and attitude every day and just trying to win today, don't worry about tomorrow, let's get better today.

That's how we do it, and all we're worried about is Furman and trying to get better as a football team and trying to just play a very, very good game and play to our standard, not an opponent, and it won't be any different next week. It's not going to be any different then. Everybody is going to talk about that game, and it's not going to be any different. We're going to prepare the exact same.

Again, you've got 12 of these games. A season isn't made or broken on one game. You've got to just keep preparing the same and try to do your best each week.

JIMBO FISHER FLORIDA STATE

JIMBO FISHER: We're looking forward to our ACC opener. We have a great challenge in Wake Forest. Wake Forest has a great ball club, had a great game last week versus North Carolina, did a tremendous job on defense, special teams and offensively. Tanner Price taking those guys down for a late score, like he always does, does a great job of competing in the game. Wake is a heck of a ball club. They're playing very hard, very multidimensional and all the looks they give you offensively, defensively, very well-coached, and it will be a super challenge.

We're going to have to bring our "A" game, but we're anxious to get started in ACC play. It's a double whammy because not only do we have a conference game, but it's an interdivisional game, so it'll be -- should be a great ballgame here in Doak Campbell on Saturday. Looking forward to it.

Q. Obviously one of the guys who jumps out at you for them is Michael Campanaro.

JIMBO FISHER: Oh, no doubt.

Q. Just talk a little bit about -- nobody has been able to defend him yet. He's a slot receiver, just finds the creases and cracks.

JIMBO FISHER: Well, that's one thing I think you do as a slot, great instincts. I think he has tremendous quickness and ball skills, uses his hands very, very well and obviously very tough because he goes across the middle. But what I see is a guy who understands football, knows how to set holds, knows how to set guys up on routes, has really good burst in his routes and just a heck of a football player, and like you say, he has been a huge problem for the teams he's played and will be for us, also.

Q. And their game-winning drive, he drew a lot of double coverage and has allowed the other receivers to get open, so does that become a concern, also?

JIMBO FISHER: Oh, there's no doubt. When you have a great player, great players affect the other guys on the team, and what he's doing by affecting them, he's demanding single coverage for them as he gets double coverage and is making all

those players around him that much better, and that's what a great player does. Like I say, he is one heck of a football player.

Q. I don't see any games that you guys have scheduled with Florida State coming up, but I guess that's going to change here pretty soon. Just your thoughts on Notre Dame joining the league I guess as a partial member?

JIMBO FISHER: I had no idea. Just three seconds before I picked this phone up I received that information. I have talked to no one, know anything. Just got a message, and I don't mean I haven't thought -- they're a great university, and I guess we'll be glad to have them, but I had no recollection of any of that happening.

Q. So you don't have any sort of initial --

JIMBO FISHER: No, I don't. I mean, you're the first one -- I literally found out five seconds before I picked the phone up, so I haven't had time to even decipher or think about that. I'm not saying anything -- I refuse the question because I haven't had time to think about it.

Q. Not to be bull-headed, but I had already punched in to ask a question. If Notre Dame joining the league in everything but football but agreeing to play five games a year against ACC schools, would that strike you at all as disappointing that they didn't kind of get on full board?

JIMBO FISHER: Again, I don't want to say anything bad about Notre Dame or bad about the -- I don't know -- I'm not even -- I have no idea -- I didn't know they were only playing five games. Literally I had no recollection of any -- I don't know the details of any one thing that's going on in this whole situation. I mean, I literally -- somebody said as I walked in to do my press conference, they come in and said we just got a text or a message. I said, I had no idea. I thought they were joining altogether from the first thing I heard. I did not know they were only playing five games. I'm sorry.

Q. They've joined for everything but football and they've agreed to play five games against ACC schools each year.

JIMBO FISHER: Oh, okay. I had no -- I'm not being sarcastic. Thank you for telling me that. I had no idea.

Q. Not to pile on a dead horse, but maybe if I could ask you a little bit more in a generic way, you talked a good bit last week and earlier in the off-season about the difficulties of scheduling non-conference games with a potential nine-game ACC slate. If you've got a team like Notre Dame that's in that mix that is not an official conference member but will be obviously playing ACC schools, given that you have that annual rivalry game with Florida, as well, is that something that you could see Florida State being able to do, or would it be problematic given the nine-game ACC schedule plus the Florida game?

JIMBO FISHER: Well, I mean, I think it sounds like that we're doing it, so I mean, you have to play them home and home? If it's a home and home, I think you're only going to have six conference games one year, that could be an issue. But again, I haven't thought through it. You know what I'm saying? When it's home, I guess it's wonderful. I have not thought through it because I had no knowledge of the information.

But I mean, it's a quality opponent, a great opponent with a great tradition. We played them in the Bowl game last year.

Q. When you've got an opponent like that, obviously you talk a lot about the significant economic value of that seventh home game. Is there maybe sort of secondary economic value and certainly recruiting value in playing a national program like that for you guys, though?

JIMBO FISHER: Well, I don't think recruiting wise. We weren't playing them before and we were recruiting very well. So I don't think it'll affect recruiting in any way, shape or form, for us anyway.

Q. I was going to ask you the exact same question you were just asked about having to play Notre Dame and Florida as part of your three-game non-conference schedule. That's what it would appear, though, would happen, you'd get them, and I'm not sure -- obviously it's not detailed out yet, but I think you just answered the question.

JIMBO FISHER: Yeah, I had no knowledge of it. I'd have to think through it. They're a great opponent. It is a great thing for us. That's a great venue and all those things. I'm not

saying that. But all the scenarios and what happens and all that, like I said, I literally found out five seconds before I picked the phone up.

Q. Chris Thompson starting I guess on Saturday according to the depth charts and has been quite a turnaround for the young man in a year's time since that injury up there?

JIMBO FISHER: Yes, it has, and I'm very happy for him. He's had no ramifications, no signs of anything being ill. He's been fully healthy and probably better than I've seen him since he's been here. I'm very excited for him and very happy for him.

Q. Are you familiar in all your years of coaching with somebody coming back from an injury like that?

JIMBO FISHER: No, I haven't, not one with a back scenario like that one. I haven't.

RANDY EDSALL MARYLAND

RANDY EDSALL: Yeah, we've got a tough ballgame against Connecticut this weekend here on Saturday. We're looking to get better. I think we got better from week one to week two, and we're looking to get better from week two to week three, and hopefully we'll be able to do that. We look forward to playing a tough opponent in Connecticut.

Q. Can you give us some thoughts on the Notre Dame move? What do they bring to the table?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, I just found out about it. I was in meetings all morning, just walked into my office, and happened to catch the tail end of Jimbo and just happened to hear that -- hear the news.

I think they're a quality institution, they're a quality opponent, and we look forward to having the opportunity to play them.

Q. And how did you find out? Did you find out just by hearing Jimbo or previously?

RANDY EDSALL: Like I said, I was in meetings all morning, offense and defensive meetings, game planning for Connecticut, and just walked in here and happened to hear about it on the telephone right before I got on the call.

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Q. How if at all does your familiarity with the players on Connecticut's roster, how has that helped you in your preparation for this game?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, again, it's about our guys going out and just executing our game plan. I have a tremendous amount of respect for the University of Connecticut and the players there. What we'll do is, again, we're just trying to make ourselves better, but eventually all we have to do is we've got to go out and play on Saturday.

Q. Do you still have relationships with any of those players?

RANDY EDSALL: You know, I addressed all this yesterday, and because of NCAA rules, it's very, very difficult to have relationships with the former players because you're really not allowed to talk to them because of tampering and all those sort of things.

No, I have not really talked to any of them because of the way the NCAA is structured.

Q. Obviously big improvement for you guys from game one to game two. What were you most pleased with or most surprised about looking back there?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, I think that we were able to move the ball better offensively. We ended up making some big plays in the game. We cut down on the interceptions during the game, and I just thought we were a little bit more consistent. We were better on 3rd down, as well. Defensively I thought we played very well against the run. We had a couple of -- five plays we gave up like 160 yards.

But I just thought that the total team effort against a quality opponent was very good. We had the opportunity to take a drive at the end of the game to put the game away, and we did. And so I think we made good improvement, and now we've got to make more improvement this week, as well.

Q. I know that the Notre Dame news is new to you, but I just kind of wonder if it's at all disappointing to hear that they joined for everything but football but have agreed to play five games against ACC schools. Would you rather they were all in?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, I mean, personally, yes, I wish they were all in for football.

But again, until I get all the information in terms of how those five games are going to be structured, and is it going to be a home and home situation where you play them at home one year and then next year you go there or vice versa, or who are the five teams they're going to play? There's still so much information. But again, I think for the overall good of the league, it is a quality institution and a quality program.

Q. What does Goins bring to the table, his return this week, and how big a factor could he be with the skills that he has?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, Isaac started practice, and he's done really well. He's a junior college young man who was here with us in January, so he got a chance to know the system and understand the system and was the backup as we started camp, and then he got the mono. So again, we feel it's a guy that even though he hasn't played here, he's played in the junior college ranks, so gives us some added experience and added depth.

Q. I want to ask you a little bit about Perry Hills, definitely made great improvement from game one to game two, which you've already alluded to as an overall goal. But tell me a little bit about some of the things that you saw. I'm sure he had jitters and everything one week, but he definitely looked a lot more composed last week.

RANDY EDSALL: Well, I think, again, having that first game under his belt and being out there really helped him. You could just see that he was a little bit more at ease last Saturday. And again, I think the big thing is he utilized a lot of guys around him. A lot of guys stepped up, and he made some great throws. We had some really good catches. And I think he's starting to just feel more comfortable.

You know, when you get into the game plan and learning that and being under the center, the more he plays, the better he's going to be. I think that he'll make good improvement again this week, as well.

Q. What do you think is a major area that you would like to see him improve on quickly?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, I think you've got to understand, this is a true freshman coming out of high school and really didn't play in the same type of an offense that we're playing in. But his

whole -- I think what's going to happen, you're going to see continued growth in every area of him playing the quarterback position, and that's what we want because we want him to be a well-rounded quarterback, not just a guy that can run the ball or just throw the ball or whatever. And I think the biggest thing is I think just in terms of the -- I think the game will slow down for him, and that's what we want him to do is get the game to slow down, and then, again, just seeing things and reacting very, very quickly. And I think those are the things that we want to see maybe the quickest improvement. But those are the things I think will come the quickest for him.

Q. It appears that A.J. Francis had a really good game at Temple, the blocked field goal, a sack, a fumble recovery. Just tell me a little bit about what he does for you there at defensive tackle.

RANDY EDSALL: Well, you're correct. A.J. had a very good game, had a lot of productivity in that game, and that's something that we want out of A.J., being a fifth year senior and being a guy that is a mature young man, is a knowledgeable young man, is somebody who has the skill set to be productive. If we can continue to get that kind of productivity out of A.J., then I think we're going to be even better on defense.

But he's a guy that works extremely hard, wants to do well, starting to take a little bit more of a leadership role with our team, which is good. And again, it's just one of those things where I've just seen a guy who's just matured so much in the last six months because, again, the focus and what he wants to accomplish for his team and his teammates.

TOM O'BRIEN NC STATE

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, as you said, we're really excited about being home for the first time this season. It seems like it's been a long time since we've played here at Carter Finley. Concerned about playing South Alabama. They've done a great job, Coach Jones has, the roster is full of junior college and Division I transfers. They're playing a safety who played at Alabama, linebacker who played at Virginia Tech, tailback

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played at Georgia. So they have some really good people playing on both sides of the football. They'll be a big challenge for us, but we look forward to the opportunity to play.

Q. I'm just wondering what your reaction is to the news of Notre Dame joining the ACC.

TOM O'BRIEN: I just walked off the practice field and found out. I really don't have any reaction because I don't know much about it. But obviously the ACC thinks it's good for us, so it's good for us. That's my reaction.

Q. I'm just wondering, last week y'all play a 10-6 game and they play a 9-3 game. Is anybody going to get to double figures this week?

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, 10 is double figures, isn't it? We made it (laughing).

No, certainly as you well know, the one play had a lot to do with that game last weekend. Certainly it was a throwback game, and there's nothing wrong with playing games like that where two defenses go at each other and play extremely well, which happened last week. I just hope our defense continues to play like it did last week and we protect our quarterback a little better this week.

Q. I just wonder about them because, again, I don't know the level of competition they're playing or anything, but when you look at their defense on film, is it capable of giving you --

TOM O'BRIEN: Yeah, as I said, they're playing with a linebacker that's a Virginia Tech transfer. They're big safety is an Alabama transfer, junior college kids, more kids on the defense. They've got the ability to shut you down.

You're always challenged. All you have to do is they're a Sun Belt Conference team, and Louisiana Monroe had a pretty good night last Saturday night in Arkansas.

Q. Brian Underwood with the touchdown reception for you, a note here says three career touchdown receptions, all of at least 33 yards. When he does get in the end zone, it's a long strike. Tell me a little bit about his capabilities and if he's the kind of guy that you would like to get the ball to a little more.

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, Brian is just starting to -- last year was his first time to play. I think we saw spurts of what he's capable of doing. He had

a knee injury in preseason camp, was not really healthy the first game of the year. I think he's probably almost back to full health, but Saturday he got a chance to make a play for us, and certainly he has a speed similar -- I don't think he's in the TJ Graham race, but they'd have heck of a time racing trying to find out the winner. But he's that type of guy that when he catches the ball, he can go all the way with it.

Q. Also with Mike Glennon, did you see, even though it was a low-scoring game after a shootout in your opener, Mike Glennon, what kind of progress did he show you?

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, we had some difficulties with the wind and the weather and going -- throwing the football, protecting him to start with, receivers running the right routes. We've worked hard this week to get everybody back on the same page so we can be much more efficient throwing the football and help him out.

Q. How is that offensive line doing?

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, we had to -- Rob Crisp was out and we started another different offensive line. Crisp, I don't see him coming back this week. We'll save the same guys we had last weekend in there and see if we can do a better job.

Q. Has Earl Wolff returned to practice yet, and how optimistic are you that he's going to be available for you on Saturday?

TOM O'BRIEN: You know, I don't have an injury report, but hopefully he'll make it for Saturday's game.

Q. Is he back at practice yet?

TOM O'BRIEN: I don't have a comment on that.

JIM GROBE WAKE FOREST

JIM GROBE: We felt like we were very fortunate this past weekend to beat a very talented North Carolina team, a team that's very well-coached. The game went right to the wire, and we were fortunate to make enough plays late to get a win.

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this week going down to Florida State. Playing in Tallahassee is always tough, and of course a top 10 team with a great coaching staff and great players. So we've got our work cut out for us again this week. But very happy to get a win this past weekend with North Carolina.

Q. I just want to start out with Zach Thompson, see how his eye is doing and see if K.J. has been able to have contact, just where they're at in terms of recovering and returning to full speed?

JIM GROBE: I think it looks like everybody is going to go, with probably the shakiest one right now would be Nikita with his ankle. My experience has been with ankles, no matter how slight or how serious, kids are all different, they all heal differently. Of course for him he's pretty active, so he needs to be full speed. I think he's probably the shakiest one right now, but we'll see. I don't know, sometimes overnight -- we had that happen with Terence Davis last week. He had the separated shoulder, and we thought he was hopefully going to be back for Florida State, and almost overnight he felt better and played and made a couple nice catches against North Carolina last week.

Kids are all different, but right now we're hopeful for everybody, but probably Nikita is the shakiest one right now.

Q. So Zach's eye examination went well then?

JIM GROBE: It went well. It went well. I think we're going to try to let him do a few things. I think he's pretty much been given the green light. But we're not sure until he gets some activity exactly what's going to happen. If he had any kind of problems with his eye at all we wouldn't take any chances. But we're kind of a day at a time.

But I think as far as Saturday, he's kind of been given the green light to go.

Q. What does your defensive line look like without Nikita?

JIM GROBE: Well, I like Tyler Harris. I think he's a true freshman, but he's a big guy, he's very athletic, he's a pretty physical kid. I really like the things that he's doing right now. Some of our other guys that have been very productive, I thought the nice thing was when we didn't have Zach Thompson last week that Hasan Hazime came in and played absolutely great, and now he'll be starting at defensive end. That might give us a chance to move Zach down inside.

I think what we've got is -- it's really hard to replace Nikita, but I think the thing we've got is we've got about five guys in that defensive front for those three positions where we've kind of through practice in August rotated those guys around, and most of those guys have played either nose guard or defensive end.

I think we've got enough athletes that we can move those guys around. We'd hate to miss Nikita, but I think Tyler Harris will be the guy starting out, but we'll have to roll some of those guys in behind him to try to keep him fresh.

Q. Aside from that match-up which I'm sure a lot of people will be watching your D-line against their offensive line, what do you think are some of the keys to this game?

JIM GROBE: Well, I think big plays. When you look at them, I don't know what we can take away from their first two games because they just dominated so much. But they're averaging about 13 yards a catch, and they're averaging, I think, over seven yards a rush. So they're running the ball and throwing the ball really, really well. What typically happens with us and Florida State, it's the team that limits the big plays that usually comes out on top.

So I think that's going to be big for us down there, especially with their crowd and know they're going to be pumped up, and because we got them last year, I know they're motivated to get a little bit of revenge.

I think in that environment, a key, especially with a few of the young kids that we're playing, is to try to limit big plays on both sides of the ball.

Q. Two-part question for you. Number one, how have you felt like your offensive line has progressed through the first two games of this year, and second part to that: What have you seen from Florida State's offensive line on film compared to what you saw from them last year?

JIM GROBE: Well, our offensive line is still in flux. I think we're moving guys around. Last week we had to bump Antonio Ford out to tackle, and we took a backup center in Whit Barnes and started him at our left guard position, and then real, real quick, Colin Summers, our right tackle, pulled a calf muscle early in the game and we had to play freshman Dylan Intemann. We're still moving

those guys around, and sometimes they'll play different positions.

So it's not good right now, but the one thing I will say, I thought we got better last week. I thought we made some pretty good improvements. North Carolina was really talented, and they got after us up front. But we were able to get some hats on people and maybe weren't as physical as we need to be.

But I think going forward, I'm encouraged. I think we've got good players. We're just young and inexperienced. We make some mistakes, too many mistakes. But I think going forward we've got a chance to get better.

I think in the first two games what we've seen from Florida State is just good stuff in both areas. I think they're physical, I think they do a nice job run blocking. It seems to be a very, very athletic offensive line. And then their pass pro is really good. I think they're protecting E.J. Manuel really well.

Physical coming off the ball, running the ball, good pass pro, and I think for a young offensive line, some guys that are first-time starters, they don't seem to make many mistakes. We're impressed in their first two games. We'll have our work cut out for us, I think.

Q. How well do you remember when Chris Thompson went down there last year, and I know he was on the field and he was hospitalized actually there for a night with two broken vertebrae, and he's back, and I'm wondering what recall you have on that.

JIM GROBE: Well, it was scary. When I saw the hit, I knew it was a pretty good hit. Sometimes you just get caught funny. It's not -- some of the things you don't see. I didn't know that he had a problem with his vertebra until after the game, and then I heard that he had some problems.

But when he first got hit, I thought it was a good, solid hit, but it wasn't something that I thought would be real, real serious at the time, and then he had some problems on the field. We went from not a lot of concern to being pretty scary. I knew when they went ahead and took him back to Tallahassee that he was probably going to be okay. I think, like you said, I think they maybe kept him overnight, but I did not realize that it was that serious until that next morning, and then when I called to check on him, they said they had already released him and he was on his way to Greensboro to fly back.

Just a blessing that he wasn't hurt more seriously, but I've got to tell you, he's playing great right now, and I'm glad he's back. I'm glad he's healthy and back. But he's going to give us some problems Saturday I'm afraid.

Q. You mentioned improvements. How do you explain the -- what did you do better from having a tough time against Liberty to beating North Carolina last week?

JIM GROBE: Well, I think we were just kind of a work in progress. I think the first game, there are a lot of mistakes, a lot of jitters in the first game, and some mistakes. I thought Liberty's kids played great. Every time I talk about all the mistakes we made, it seems like I'm not giving Liberty credit, and I don't mean to do that. I think their kids played really tough, aggressive football with us.

But I think just kind of typical things that happen when you're working on fundamentals and game plans and those type things. The first game is always a little bit shaky, and I think we made -- you talk about the improvements from first to second game being pretty big usually, and it was for us, there's no question.

Q. You had Notre Dame at your place last year, I believe. With Notre Dame joining and playing five ACC football teams a year, what does that bring an ACC football team? What does having Notre Dame in your stadium, how much of a plus is that? Is it worth the ACC bringing them in if they're not going to be a full-fledged football member?

JIM GROBE: All I can tell you is that I think it brings a lot of respect to our conference to have Notre Dame affiliated. Our game last year with them was probably the most exciting environment and fun night that we've had playing football.

Now, the problem is they're good, and we had a chance late to tie it and go overtime. We didn't get the job done. So that was tough in the locker room after the game. But the excitement and the experience of having Notre Dame come to town was fantastic.

Q. You guys have won four of your last six against Florida State and won down there and that's a tough place to do that. Why have you guys been such a thorn in those guys'

sides?

JIM GROBE: You know, I can't explain it. I can only say that every year teams -- you match up better some years than others with all the teams on your schedule. Sometimes it just matches up that the things they're doing, you play better against than maybe with some other teams. And I think a couple times we played them, their quarterback situation was unsettled, which it's not right now. They really weren't sure who their guy was. A couple times we played them, we had pretty good football teams, especially defensively a couple of those times. And then I think we've got a lot of Florida kids on our team, and I think those kids tend to really get pumped up.

So I think there are just some teams that you match up with a little better once in a while and some teams that you're a little more motivated to play against. I think with the number of kids that we have on our roster from Florida we've been able to get pretty excited to play the 'Noles.

Q. Has it been tougher to scout for them this year because of the two teams they've played or have you seen enough on film from those guys, even though the competition hasn't really been at a high level that you can pretty much get an idea what to expect?

JIM GROBE: You know, what we've got to go on probably more than anything else is last year. Last year E.J. was hurt and came in right at the end of the second quarter and then played the third and fourth quarters against us. Early the Trickett kid was a little bit inexperienced and we had a little bit more success early in the game and then we hung on and just were very fortunate to win at the end. We're kind of going more off last year and some of the other teams that they've played. They've shown great ability, and I think I mentioned a while ago, I think they're averaging over 13 yards per catch and over seven yards per rush. Talent wise you know they're very, very talented.

But I don't think you can take a lot from their first two games as far as what we expect this Saturday. I think we're kind of looking at our game and some of the other teams that they've played because a lot of those kids are back this year that were playing for them last year.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

September 12, 2012



An interview with:

**PAUL JOHNSON
GEORGIA TECH**

COACH JOHNSON: Good morning. It was good to get back home last week, get back out on the field and play after what was a really tough game in Blacksburg on a Monday night. So got another tough conference game this week, a division game. One that is at home with a team that beat us a year ago on the road. So Virginia comes in undefeated and it looks like a really quality football team, so we'll have a real challenge in front of us this Saturday.

Q. I've would like to ask you about Vad Lee. He obviously got a chance to play Saturday and put up some pretty impressive numbers. Can you just evaluate how he did, and is it something that might mean more playing time in the future?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, Vad played well Saturday. I mean, I think he's got a tremendous upside, and we've said that all along. We're excited that he's here. He continues to improve every day. As he improves, his playing time will increase. I don't have any set plans to use him this week, per se. But I'm not going to say he won't play either. So we'll just kind of see how the game goes. I think he's got a bright future.

He's got a lot of things he needs to work on like a lot of guys. But I think we're excited that he's on our team. I think he's going to be a really good player.

Q. One other thing I wanted to ask is when you're in a game where you're so clearly superior as you were Saturday, is it dangerous or possible to avoid or pick up bad habits or do things because it's coming so easily, or is that something in times that you can experiment and work on things? How do you deal with that?

COACH JOHNSON: I thought that for the most part at least defensively we came out ready to play and played well. We had some hiccups offensively, but you know I think when our guys watch the tape, they understood that we didn't play all that great. Sometimes the physical mismatches can cover up technique problems and areas where you need to do things better. So we're still a work in progress and continuing to try to work fundamentals and get our systems down.

Q. Coach, just wondering what your reaction is to the news about Notre Dame joining the league?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, I really haven't had a lot of time to adjust to exactly all of the details and all of that. Certainly Notre Dame is a storied program with a lot of rich history and tradition. I was fortunate at Navy we played them every year, and they're a class outfit, so I think it will be a positive for our league.

Q. Is it kind of a bummer that they didn't join for football all the way?

COACH JOHNSON: I really haven't even had time to look and see. We're buried here trying to get ready for Virginia. So I haven't had time to see exactly how all of that will unfold.

Q. When you were at Navy you were playing them every year. Can you talk about what it is to go in there and play?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, I think at Navy it was different because we played them every year. It was always a big game. Any time you went into South Bend to play, it was a special deal. We played our home games in different pro venues. I mean, we played them in FedEx, or we played them in New York one year and different places.

It was always a game. It was a great challenge for our guys. When I got are there, Navy hadn't beaten Notre Dame since 1963, and we went on a little spell where we got them three out of four years there. So it was my last year and

then the next two, I think, they got them. It was an exciting, fun game.

Q. How do you feel about them other than the non-conference game?

COACH JOHNSON: Again, I think when they get all the details worked out and I see what it's all about, I'm sure it will be exciting. You know you're going to get a national reputation team and a quality opponent and a team that tries to do things the right way.

Q. You've got a start from Zach Laskey at running back. What does he bring to your offense? What do you like about him?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, Zach's got good quickness. I think he's got pretty good feet, and he's probably got better speed than people give him credit for. He had a really good camp. He kind of earned it. He ran the ball well. We've got to do a better job blocking than some of the other intangibles, but I was pleased with him. I think that he brought some good stuff to the table and it's been necessary. Because David Sims who was a starter a year ago has really been banged up and hasn't been healthy all year.

Q. Also about Virginia, what impresses you about them in particularly from watching their quarterback Michael Rocco?

COACH JOHNSON: I think they're big and physical on both lines of scrimmage. Last year they beat us up up there. I give them credit. They got after us. So that's going to be our challenge. We've got to see if we can stand in there toe-to-toe with them and do a little better job than we did a year ago.

We were feeling awfully good about ourselves up there a year ago when we went in there 6-0. So we need to buckle our chinstraps and be ready to play on Saturday.

Q. What have you noticed about (Michael) Rocco?

COACH JOHNSON: He's very efficient. He's completing over 60% of his throws. They do a good job of mixing it up on offense and protecting him. He's played very well for them.

LARRY FEDORA NORTH CAROLINA

COACH FEDORA: We're looking forward to this opportunity of going on the road and having the opportunity to play a ranked opponent. Charlie (Strong) has done a great job up there with his football team in a short period of time. They've recruited some excellent talent, and we're really looking forward to see how we measure up.

Q. I was just wondering what you've seen from Teddy Bridgewater on film? What has impressed you about how he started his sophomore year?

COACH FEDORA: I think it's pretty special. I think Charlie's got to be very happy about the way that young man has performed at this point. I think he's got to be excited about the future there at Louisville because the kid looks like he can beat you with his legs or he can beat you with his arm. Those kind of quarterbacks are by far the toughest to try to defend.

Q. A lot of times making the leap from freshman year success to continuing that in sophomore year, a lot of guys sometimes don't progress as they should. Is there anything in particular that you've seen out of him that he's doing that looks like a mature quarterback out there?

COACH FEDORA: There is no doubt. I wouldn't have known that he was a sophomore until I looked on the depth chart. He looked so comfortable back there in the last two games and he's done such a nice job of making a play when something breaks down. He looks like he has a comfort level with what's going on. So it's obvious the reps that he got last year have helped him to see the game in a slower manner, and also just gave him some confidence that, hey, I can go out there and compete.

Q. How much of a challenge is it going to be for your secondary this week to be able to slow him down given some of the results last week against Wake?

COACH FEDORA: Yeah, it's a scary thought after what we did last week. We're working hard on our pass-rush lanes making sure that we contain. We sit in there with him. At the same time you're trying to get pressure, but not

trying to open up lanes for him. On the back end you have to do a great job of coverage.

They obviously have more than one receiver that's making plays for them. So that makes it even more difficult. So it's definitely a concern for us.

Q. I was just wondering if you had any update on Gio heading into this game?

COACH FEDORA: You know, Gio practiced yesterday, and said he felt fine. So we'll see how that goes.

Q. Wondering your reaction to Notre Dame joining the league?

COACH FEDORA: I mean, obviously Notre Dame matches up with us both on and off the field with the entire league. I think that's a great thing. I think I don't know enough about it, how it's going to work for football with the five games, when we would play them. How often we would play them.

So there are too many things not to know about it to really comment on about it. I know it's a good thing for the ACC.

Q. Is it at all disappointing that they're not in full bore for football?

COACH FEDORA: I haven't thought enough about it to tell you whether or not it's disappointing or not. I'm concerned with trying to figure out how to beat the 19th ranked team in the country this week.

Q. Want to ask you about Fedora ball a little bit. I like to call it that. You've still got over 84 plays or so against Wake on Saturday. But it definitely seemed at a lot slower pace than it was of course against Elon. What do you think you need to do this week as far as getting that pace back on your side against Louisville?

COACH FEDORA: Well, we're going to continue to do the things that we're doing in practice and trying to prepare ourselves to get better in that area. I mean, we're still not where we want to be. We've still got guys that are still learning how to get lined up quicker, how to process quicker. Our quarterback is doing the same thing. Our offensive line making the calls quicker so that we can snap the ball at a more fanatical pace. When that happens, then we'll get to where we want to be, but we're still a ways from that.



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Q. How is Bryn (Renner) doing, any affects from the collision?

COACH FEDORA: None whatsoever. There have been no effects.

Q. What else defensively are you working on this week coming off that Wake Forest game?

COACH FEDORA: We've got to obviously get more pressure on the quarterback, and we've got to do a good job of that and also containing him. You can't just go wildly up field and leave him running lanes, because Bridgewater has shown that he can beat you with his legs, so we've got to get more pressure on the quarterback and we've got to cover people. So, hopefully if we can get better in both those areas, we'll be a better team.

Q. In the absence of Gio (Giovani Bernard), you get A.J. Blue a long run there. Can you tell me what he gives you? Is there a big dropoff, or is he as productive a back?

COACH FEDORA: I don't know if he's as productive as Gio. Gio's pretty special. He's done some things here that nobody else has done. So that would be hard for me to compare the two. What Blue does give us is he's the leader in that position. He's also one of the leaders on our offense and our football team. He's very well respected. He's a physical kid. He's a tough-minded kid. He doesn't care if he's running the ball or blocking or whatever he's doing. He's on special teams. He wants to help the football team win.

He's got a great attitude and he rushed for over 100 yards and did everything we asked him the other night. So Blue is doing the things we need him to do.

MIKE LONDON VIRGINIA

COACH LONDON: Yes, we are excited about the opportunity to get into our conference play. This is our first road game, first travel situation for a good few numbers of first-year, first-time players. But we're anticipating a hard-fought contest, and we look forward to going to Atlanta. Thank you.

Q. When Georgia Tech played Virginia

Tech, they did a really good job shutting down the run. There is some sentiment that maybe is playing in the first game of the season. You have a lot of time to prepare for that offense. With only one week to prepare, is it difficult? How big a challenge is it?

COACH LONDON: I mean, first of all, Coach Johnson is very detailed. Just great tactician when it comes to running the triple option. He's got answers for a lot of things. He played in a lot of games using that offense. So he has a remedy for a lot of defenses, a lot of looks, a lot of stunts, a lot of blitzes. And you, while you're getting ready for it, you just don't know what you're going to see - double slot formation, on balance formation, parts of the pistol formation.

Obviously, the advantage is someone that's been running an offense for such a long time. It's advantageous to them. But all you do defensively is try to make sure you take care of the necessities of the triple option, that's the dive, the quarterback in the pitch. You try to make it simple for your guys, and you try to do maybe some things that hopefully will cross up the reads of the quarterback.

But you're right. You have some time to practice it and study, and study the techniques. It's something you don't do when you're preparing for other teams that might be spread style or high prostyle team. But the more concentrated time that you have, the more prepared you may be. That doesn't always mean you're going to be tackling and diving. The dive's handed off. So it does, it makes it interesting.

You have to do a lot of maybe spring practice, devote a practice to it maybe early in your August camp. Devote a couple sessions to it and go from there.

Q. Last year when you played -- Coach Johnson said y'all physically beat them up. Is that something you saw and you think that's something you can repeat?

COACH LONDON: Well, I don't know about the part about physically beating them up. I think when you have assignment oriented football and you want someone to tackle the dive, whether the dive guy gets the ball or not, that's important. When you want someone to take the quarterback and hit him legally and he doesn't have the ball, that's important.

So I think you just have to carry out all the elements of whatever your defense may be and make sure there is someone to count it for. Any

one of the players could get the ball. It's a physical game on both sides, because the low scrambling, and the blocking and having to use your hands to stay on your feet on the perimeter and on the inside. It becomes a physical game for both sides because of the kind of offense and game it is.

Q. Coach, maybe I misphrased the question. I think what he meant was you lined up and ran it down their throats when he was talking about beating them up. You rushed for almost 272 yards, which is a lot. I know it's not a lot for them with their option. You were running more of a power game; is that right?

COACH LONDON: Well, you do what you're capable of doing. I mean, your game plan is predicated on what's moving the ball. At that time for whatever reason we're able to run the ball. But I'm quite sure Coach Groh, I've never been around anybody that can gameplan teams and what they're doing. So that was last year.

Now we go into this game with a game plan and try to do a couple things, show some new wrinkles. But understand for us, we have to be able to run the ball in light of last week. So we have to make a concentrated effort of doing that.

Q. To kind of continue that line of questioning, does Georgia Tech's defense look different to you this year?

COACH LONDON: You still see coach running the elements of the three-four. What you also see is now there are some four down linemen look. Make him one of the four rushers. So you see vintage three-four and a lot of stuff the coach has done. But you also see some different elements of four down linemen look and coverages and things like that.

But I tell you, they look fast. That is one thing when you look at them, they look fast and they're running the ball really well.

Q. You alluded to it, but the toss and the stretch is working really well. Looking back at them, what was so successful on the line?

COACH LONDON: I don't know. I think it's just the fact that sometimes you're playing at home and it was a big game for us. They were ranked. It was a big game. So sometimes the atmosphere kind of assists the players in the way they play. I don't know if it was one thing or the other that they were doing or weren't doing.

We just happened to be clicking that day and blocking the people that we were supposed to be blocking, like I said. But that was last year. This year you see a lot more activity. You see a lot more athleticism you see a lot more of guys changing up who is rushing off the edge; three-men front to a four-man front. So there are a lot of different looks that may cause more problems, because last year they were the three-four.

But this year they're more multiple. Coaches have different guys being in the position to make plays for them. So we have our work cut out for us.

Q. What were your -- when did you find out about the Notre Dame issue, and what do you think about Notre Dame joining the ACC and the fact that it will be playing five games to start out with?

COACH LONDON: I tell you, we practice in the morning. I just literally walked in the office. I've got all kinds of papers and memos and things laying on my desk. People come up and ask me about that. I'm looking at a little page of John Oliver about it. But I know Notre Dame is a great academic school. I know their brand is something that the ACC and Atlantic Coast Conference and the types of schools that are there can enhance on both sides, theirs and the ACC.

I don't know the particulars about who we play and how we play them. I understand maybe it's five games or something like that. But I think it can be positive for the league. When I find out more in detail about it, I definitely would be making some further comments about it. But right now from the standpoint of them, the team, the University, what it stands for would be a positive for the ACC.

Q. In an unrelated follow-up, how much of a relief is it this year not to be having all the questions about Al Groh and first game trip back to Charlottesville and first game with Al et cetera, et cetera?

COACH LONDON: Well, other than you just asking that, this is football. The prior relationship with the past relationship that I have with coach is a tremendous amount of respect. I learned a lot of football from him. He promoted me within the ranks here at Virginia.

So he's moved on. We've moved on. It's three years apart now. I'm sure they have goals

and aspirations that they're focusing on just like we are.

FRANK BEAMER VIRGINIA TECH

COACH BEAMER: I feel as if Pittsburgh is an improving football team. I think they played a lot better in their second ballgame than their first. I think it's to be expected. I think with a new staff and new way of doing things, there is an adjustment period. They're going through that a little bit. I really think they have good players, tough guys.

From our past experience in the Big East, we know when you play Pittsburgh, you better be ready to play a very physical football game, and I think that's exactly what this has the makings of. So we know we've got to be ready to play our best here come Saturday.

Q. I want to ask you your reaction to the Notre Dame news? What does it add to the conference to have them kind of in the mix for some of these football games?

COACH BEAMER: Yeah, I don't know all the details. I understand they're going to have a conference here at 12:30. But as a statement, I think it's great for the ACC and great for Notre Dame. I think both of us benefit. So I look forward to finding out the details of it.

Q. One of the things that they'll factor into the bowl deals, in other words, they won't be eligible for your BCS as they would be for other bowl games. I'm curious, is that a concern that they'll be taking away a bowl spot from one of you guys?

COACH BEAMER: I would think other bowls may be interested in joining the ACC team. With the idea that they could get Notre Dame. So, you know, I think that's all good. I think it helps us with the bowls in every way.

Q. Is it at all disappointing that they join but don't join all the way in football? Does that kind of feel like living together without getting married?

COACH BEAMER: I think the fact that they're going to play five teams and rotate around

is okay. Again, I don't know the details. I'm interested in finding out the details before I comment much more.

Q. If I can take you back a couple weeks, I was curious about your thoughts about Georgia Tech's defense. I'm curious if they look any better this year in the system?

COACH BEAMER: Yeah, they've got some variables going on there and different looks and people coming from different places. I think they're very athletic, certainly well-coached. I thought they played really well.

Q. One thing that Coach Groh has said a few times is in that third year players really begin to understand and react more quickly. Is that something you saw at all?

COACH BEAMER: Yeah, I think that's true. Again, I think going to the different fronts that adds to it. So I think they're a good defense.

Q. I'm wondering, I know this is a non-conference game, but the fact that they're going to be an ACC member next year, has any kind of dimension at all been added to this game?

COACH BEAMER: Well, it's just one that having the history with Pittsburgh you know how tough they play, and I think their offense and defense right now is exactly that. Good fly around and good toughness. Like I said earlier, they're playing better every week. I think their tailback's getting better every week, and they're certainly a concern for us.

Q. Normally you schedule a game like this as an home at home. Are they scheduled to come in next year? Is that in limbo because of the conference?

COACH BEAMER: Yeah, that's my understanding. They're scheduled to come here next year, so we'll work through that.

Q. I was just wondering one other thing. You guys are third in the nation in pass defense. How much of that is a function of how well you're playing pass defense, and how much of it is a function of the offensive viewpoint maybe being run oriented?

COACH BEAMER: Well, I think any time you rank up there in pass defenses it's a two-way street. You've got to get a rush and you've got to play coverage on the back end and they go

together. You can't do one without the other and be good. So I think it's a total team effort along those lines.

Q. Pitt likes to throw a little more than the first two teams you've played. Is that a fair statement?

COACH BEAMER: Yeah, I think it's a fair statement. I think they've got the ability to throw. They've got big, tall wide receivers, the kid Sadler, and, you know, they've got a great tailback there. So I think they've got the makings of a really good offense.

DAVID CUTCLIFFE DUKE

COACH CUTCLIFFE: I am happy that our team is taking it serious. We talked about not forgetting what happened out west and why. I do believe that our team has taken it seriously on the practice field. So I think we've gone about our business to get better. Rome wasn't built in a day. We can't correct everything we did poorly from a blocking and tackling standpoint but I do like our intensity and our focus.

So we've got a big game this weekend, but because it's the Bowl City Classic about Durham, it's about two great close institutions that are five miles apart, we're very proud to be a part of it. With that, I'll take any questions that you have.

Q. Coach, you were briefly at Notre Dame, and the guy you worked for was the AD at Notre Dame. I just wonder your reaction to them coming into the league, and what you think it will do for the conference.

COACH CUTCLIFFE: I don't know much about the whole circumstance, so it's hard for me, the little bit I heard, I guess they're in the league in all other sports besides football or something.

Q. They're committed to play five games a year in football.

COACH CUTCLIFFE: So I didn't say anything I shouldn't have said. But anyway, I certainly think it can be a good, high profile program. We all know that. A national following, which we have some great programs in the Atlantic Coast Conference that have that type or similar following so it certainly should end up long-term being a good fit. And Notre Dame is an

outstanding academic institution that falls in line with who we are in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Q. I wanted to ask you since you've been at Duke, recruiting North Carolina has been a priority and you've had a lot of success. Playing this game this week against Durham's other college, I mean, does it help you locally? I mean, Duke's had a problem historically of sometimes being a part of North Carolina and making it more part of the community and maybe helping you in the long run recruiting local kids?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, I do I think this is a game that the community really does take to heart. When I say a celebration of Durham, it truly is and you know that. People cater -- all the high schools in Durham and local area people are very aware of this ballgame, and we have local products on our team and they get to display their skills in front of their communities. So I'm convinced this is a great thing in every area for us and we're going continue to recruit the state of North Carolina very hard. They have tripled the number of players on the team from the state of North Carolina, and I'm very proud of that.

Q. Can you declare whether Blair Holliday will be attending the game on Saturday? If he is, what will that mean to you and his teammates?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Right now their plans are to come in. I don't think anybody can just say confirmed because when a guy is in therapy like he is, that's obviously a little bit of a day-to-day situation.

I know when I went down there two weeks ago on Wednesday, it lifted my spirits incredibly just to be with him, to sit and talk to him. His friends haven't seen him and talked with him in quite some time other than by text or by phone and there is nothing like face-to-face contact. Regardless from a football standpoint, it wouldn't matter.

Again, I hope that can happen, but we've got to understand the circumstance. That is their plans right now, but that's where it is.

Q. Want to ask you about your running attack. You've got five guys that have seen some action. Do you see any progress this week or taking a look at somebody about to break out between those guys?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: We've got good players back there. One of the things we're addressing is trying to use those good players more. I don't think we're far enough into the season to see anybody break away. I love all of them in different ways. Obviously the two most experienced in numbers of carries are really Juwan and Josh Snead, and then of course Desmond Scott has taken the unselfish approach of going to go out and play receiver, but he can also move in the back field and has a lot of experience.

But our two youngsters, (Jela) Duncan and (Shaquille) Powell are extremely excited. We've got to find ways to grow our backs more into our system. Part of our running game, receivers take part in all of our screens, et cetera, et cetera. But I want our backs more involved. So we've worked hard this week to try to get them more involved in the ballgame.

Q. Wondered if you could evaluate how Kenny Anunike is playing?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: There you go, Al. That's the one that stumped you. Anunike. Kenny has played well. We're limited his snaps. He's still in a circumstance where he gets a little tender and a little swelling with overwork. We have to manage a little bit the number of snaps right now. But he's had some good play, you know.

The thing that I'm most encouraged about is as the season goes and Kenny gets healthier, you know, and I'm going to think really positive thoughts for Kenny as he gets healthier and stays healthy, that you're going to see his chances to make plays continue to increase.

Q. You also talked in the spring about Dez Johnson maybe making a leap and really improving things. Have you seen that pay off on the field yet?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Not as much as I would like, but he's going to get an opportunity this week. There is no question it's all there. (Jordan) Dewalt-Ondijo is making a return. You got to remember, he hadn't practiced until the week of the opening game. So I see our entire defensive front hopefully continuing to grow.

AL GOLDEN MIAMI

COACH GOLDEN: It's great to be back home after being on the road the first two weeks of the season. We're playing Bethune-Cookman team who came in here a year ago and was up 14-7 at the half, and then 24-14 at the start of the fourth quarter and did a great job in terms of total yards against us. Very aggressive group, a group that prides itself on toughness and resiliency. Came back in the first two games 21-0 versus Alabama State, and 14-0 against South Carolina State.

It's an experienced group with a high-powered offense. So it's obviously going to be a good challenge for us on Saturday.

Q. How is it to get back and get over the mental hump?

COACH GOLDEN: That's our focus. We've improved so much this week in practice. We've had spirited practices. We've been resilient. Now we have to carry it into a game with a team that's played with a lot of confidence and how they played us last year. I think you're right on. We definitely can't be concerned about last week. We have to improve our team and play well, just execute ourselves.

Q. Is there any one area? Obviously, overall execution and all of that. But is there one area that you're especially concerned about improving?

COACH GOLDEN: Concerned about a lot of areas. I was concerned about a lot of areas when we got back to Boston College. We were lucky enough to win that game. We had explosive plays and takeaways, and that aided in our ability to win that game. But clearly there were a lot of breakdowns across the board there.

As I said a week ago, we could not play the same way in Manhattan, Kansas, so we were going to get run out of the building. So we got run out of the building.

Q. I know you have a very young team on defense. Taking a look at your points against by quarter, you seem to be losing early in the first and then again in the fourth. Is that part of the conditioning and getting used to the college game or is it just part of the scheme of being young? What do you think?

COACH GOLDEN: I don't want to make any excuses. The other team executed certainly early on. BC did a great job early on offense, and jumped out to the first two touchdowns in 16 plays.

We never got them off schedule and never got off the field on third down. The same could be said against Kansas State. We had the same situation. We didn't stop them on third down. They had a long drive to start the game. One drive, sometimes that happens in the opening drive.

But you have to get the team off of the script. Our offense didn't answer. In fact, we turned it over, then they came right back and went up 14-0. So I think there's a lot more reasons than just the transition to the game. We're playing with 17 freshmen or sophomores on defense, and they just have to all learn how to do their job and execute their role in the game.

Q. Let's get into some of the positives. Let's talk about some great things that you've seen with these youngsters and some things you saw in practice this week?

COACH GOLDEN: I just think the reality of it is that a lot of these guys are growing up before our eyes. They're not getting tested or I shouldn't say they're not learning in cupcake games. They're learning at Chestnut Hill in the ACC to open up the season, and then at Manhattan Kansas. So any mistake they make along the way is being compounded.

They've been resilient. They're staying confident and just growing. But certainly we expect (Duke) Johnson to continue to improve and Malcolm Lewis, and Herb Waters, has had a good week. (Ereck) Flowers continues to be strong at the tackle spot, and we're seeing a lot of other guys come on, Deon Bush, Earl Moore.

So, again, we're growing, we're learning, and hopefully we can continue to improve.

Q. I wanted your thoughts on the Notre Dame announcement today?

COACH GOLDEN: I think it's great. I think it's great for, first of all, they represent what we all represent in the Atlantic Coast Conference. And Doug, when you think about it, of course I've lived where you live now. And now we're really talking about we have Boston, Pittsburgh, and New York City now with Pitt and Syracuse, we have all the Atlantic Cities now, D.C., Baltimore, Richmond, Charlotte, all the way down now to Miami, and now we're adding Notre Dame who has national appeal. Even though they're not a full-time football member right now in all the sports and obviously we'll have a scheduling coalition or whatever you want to call

it.

So I think all of those things are really going to benefit our product here in the ACC.

Q. Do you think ultimately that they'll be a football playing member?

COACH GOLDEN: I think I share the sentiment of anybody, we'd like to have them. They represent all the things that we represent in the Atlantic Coast Conference in terms of committing to student-athletes and graduate rates and doing things the right way. So I would hope that that would be the point.

But to be honest with you, I just found out myself, because I don't know. I haven't even looked at it. Is the ink dry yet? I just think it's great and can't say enough about their leadership in our conference offensively and what we've gotten done in the last year.

Q. I just wonder, is there a reason Duke Johnson can get more touches? Is that something you want to do?

COACH GOLDEN: Yeah I don't think there's any question. We had 17 plays designed for him on Saturday. And to be honest with you, the game got out of whack. Now we're just not in the system. So I don't think there is any question we want to get him more touches. He'll get touches in a variety of ways. So we've got to do a better job doing that. We've just got to stay on track.

But between kickoff returns and catching the ball and running the ball, I think he had over 200 yards the first game. Then Duke didn't play as well the second game. He had some drops. He'll get over that, and we have to do a better job getting the ball in the back field.

Q. I was looking. I'm sure he had too many kickoff returns in that game?

COACH GOLDEN: Correct.

Q. Wondered about his rushing.

COACH GOLDEN: It got skewed. There is no question it got skewed because of the way the game went. Again, I've got to make sure I do a better job. That's my fault.

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