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An Interview With:

**FRANK SPAZIANI
BOSTON COLLEGE**

FRANK SPAZIANI: As Mike stated, we have an off week. A couple things we're trying to get accomplished: One, we're trying to get healthy; and then number two, work on some fundamentals and get ourselves to game week next week.

With that, I'll take some questions.

Q. The conference in some ways seems, at least on a national scale, seems to be off to a little bit of a slow start. How important does that make the game Saturday with the only two ranked teams left in the country in terms of just kind of the overall image of the league?

FRANK SPAZIANI: You mean --

Q. Clemson-Florida State ballgame.

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, it's two good football teams playing each other, and certainly they have a lot of national visibility. I think they'll hold their own in the rest of the country. They've got to worry about each other right now.

Q. Is it something that the conference needs, though, a marquee game nationally at this point with some of the criticism that's been leveled the ACC's way?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, the criticism will be what it may. I think every team needs a star, every league needs a star, every movie needs a star. You know, you need marquee teams, and I think we have our share of them. But once again, it has to be done on the field. It's only good for everybody if somebody is a standout and brings everybody up.

Q. Nick coming off that 24-tackle performance is now leading the nation in tackles. Just wondering for your assessment for the way he's played in the middle for you guys so far this year.

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, Nick has been a -- I guess the right word is a pleasant surprise. I mean, Nick came back as a fifth year senior with no guarantee. As a matter of fact he was looking at backing up and being a contributor as far as leadership and his experience, and the fact that he wanted to come back and be a part of the team says a lot, and he got an opportunity, and he's making the most of it. I'm happy for Nick and certainly happy for us.

Q. How has he been able to make the transition from -- I think he mentioned he'd been playing outside his whole career, so how has he been able to transition into the middle filling the shoes of a pretty outstanding player for you guys and been so productive?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, the spot where we had Nick is probably one of the most difficult ones on our team to play, not that there are any easy ones. But he feels a little bit more comfortable in there, and once again, being institutionally motivated and feeling comfortable has led to some productivity, and we hope it continues.

Q. Tell me a little bit about your thoughts on Chase (Rettig). He's had a fantastic start to the year, and with the league having the notoriety and the great quarterbacks, he's definitely leading the way. What do you think about his start this year?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, I think Chase has played very well for us. He's fit into the system that we've put in place for him. He and Doug get along very well. I think he's playing very well. I mean, he's a big-league quarterback we feel. He hasn't done some of the elite things, but he's close, and we need to help him. But if he keeps progressing like that, the future is really bright for

him and us.

Q. When you say some of the elite things, what are you alluding to?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, he's making some very nice plays, and once you get into the elite category is when you make some spectacular throws and decisions. He's making some real good ones, but there were a couple in the first three games that he would like to make and we would like to have him make, and he might have been just a little bit off. That's what I'm determining as elite.

DABO SWINNEY CLEMSON

DABO SWINNEY: Good to be with you. First of all, it's just a really special game to be a part of. Got a great amount of respect for Florida State, and it's a great place to go play a game. Two good teams battling it out every year when these teams get together. It's always an exciting game, and I don't have any doubts that it'll be the same this year.

You know, obviously a very huge game. You know, it's getting into conference play for us. They've already played one, but not only conference play but division play, so from that standpoint there's a lot at stake. Obviously it's not going to be the end-all. We both have a lot of games left to play after this, but certainly a huge, huge game for both teams. Proud of where we are at this point. We wanted to be 3-0.

I don't think we're a great team yet at all. I think we've got a chance if we continue to improve each week to be a very good team at some point, and we're going to have to play very well to have a chance in Tallahassee. It's a tough place to get a win. Offensively they're explosive, their quarterback is special, they're running the ball really well, they've got all kinds of scheme out at wide-out, their tight end is a good player. They are solid up front.

Their defense is as good as anybody in the country. They're one of the best defenses last year, and right now giving up three points in three games, I don't care who you play, that is hard to do, because some of these games they're getting up on a lot of people and they're playing a lot of

guys, but they're still not giving up points. That's a real compliment to their defense. Big challenge handling their front and all their speed that they can put on the field.

Their special teams is something that could very well determine this game. But we're going to need a great week of prep. I think we've had a good start so far and looking forward to being down in Tallahassee in a great environment and hopefully playing our best game.

Q. One of the things that their defense does well, particularly well, is pressure the passer, particularly from their defensive ends. What are the keys for you to keep Tajh -- his mobility is certainly going to help to keep some of the pressure off of him.

DABO SWINNEY: Well, you're exactly right. I think Werner, heck, he's leading the country in sacks. He's certainly a top guy in this conference. They do a great job. They have the ability to get pressure with four guys, and when you can do that, that is a huge advantage from a defensive standpoint.

So the big thing is that's the match-up that we've got to be productive in. If they dominate our offensive line, it's going to be a long night. We've got to be able to -- I mean, they're going to win some battles but we've got to win more than they do in the line of scrimmage, and then as you said, our quarterback has got to make plays. We've got -- he's got to extend some drives with his legs. There will be some times where it ain't going to be pretty and he's going to have to scramble. So far this season he's made some really big plays for us in that regard, and he's going to have to play great in every area Saturday night against this defense, because I mean, this is a big, big challenge that we're facing. Definitely the biggest challenge to this point, and may end up being the biggest all year from a defensive standpoint. These guys are as good as anybody you can play in the country.

Q. A lot of teams can pressure you from one direction or the left side or the right, but they come at you from everywhere it seems like.

DABO SWINNEY: Yeah, they do.

Q. Is there one spot to concentrate on?

DABO SWINNEY: You've been watching the same film I'm watching.

Q. I spend a lot of time in the film room.

DABO SWINNEY: Yeah, there's no question, they've got the ability to pressure you. So we've got to be smart and make sure that we give ourselves a chance to be successful. We've got to be able to run the football. I mean, that's a huge part. We can't be one-dimensional. We've got to have some type of balance against these guys and just do what we do. We've got to execute our system. There's going to be some -- when you've got this amount of talent on the team, on the field between both teams, there's going to be some wins and losses throughout the game.

But it'll come down to turnovers and who makes the most big plays and who can win that battle more often than not at the line of scrimmage and probably special teams somewhere along the way.

Q. I was just wondering, DJ Reader has stepped in pretty early and been able to play for you guys. I was wondering what you've seen out of him so far and what he's shown you in the first three games.

DABO SWINNEY: Yeah, we really like DJ Reader. I'll tell you what, we are so excited about him. Way ahead of where I thought he would be as a true freshman. He is a big load, technically sound, plays with low pads, he's tough, strong, physical, likes to play, likes to practice, and athletic, a big, athletic guy for his size. I really, really like what we've seen out of him in three games and expect big things from him as he continues on through his career.

Q. And he's trying to do the football/baseball, play both sports at the same time. You guys have experience with that with Kyle Parker. Drawing from that experience, how difficult is that for a player and how difficult is that to accommodate on you guys' end?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, I've got a lot of experience in it because obviously my starting quarterback was their best player on the baseball team. He wasn't just a player, he was the best player, led them in home runs and all that stuff. But I've also had a basketball player, Nuke Hopkins played basketball here his first year. I've had several track guys, Spiller and Ford ran track every year. I've had to do that a number of times, and I don't have any problem with it. If guys can help other programs, then I'm all for it, as long as

they're productive and they can contribute to the team and their success.

And DJ, I'm actually excited about seeing him because I can't imagine a pair of baseball pants fitting around his thighs, first of all. They're going to have to put two pairs of pants together to get this guy in a uniform, and I want to see him on the mound. I've never seen him play baseball live, so I'm excited about that.

But it's just something that you have to work with. You've got to do a good job with the other coaches of the sport. And then that particular player, he's got to do -- he has to go above and beyond. When you're going to play two sports, when everybody else is having off time, if you're going to be successful, you're probably having to go and work on your own and do some things just to stay in tune and in shape and make sure you're ready when that time comes. And I think he's done that. He's worked his schedule where he can go and throw the ball a little bit and he gets in a couple batting cage sessions here and there when he gets an opportunity.

When it's time to play baseball, he'll go over there, and we'll support that 100 percent.

Q. When you watch the film of Florida State's win against Wake Forest, do you look at that and say, yeah, they're better than they were last year because they're doing this better or they're doing that better? What do you notice on the film to explain that game last week?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, first of all, they're playing at home, and that's always a big advantage when you have an opportunity to play at home. Secondly, they got that No. 3 back there, and he's a very special player if you pay attention to that game. Wake had him sacked one time, and he's big, strong, athletic guy, he breaks away, and next thing you know he throws a touchdown pass on a complete scramble busted play. So that's a big factor for them.

The other thing is they're running the ball very well, and they're creating a lot of explosive plays. I mean, that game really got away in a flash, taking the punt back. They're hitting long runs, a couple long passes. Next thing you know it's 30 something to nothing at the half, and it's pretty much over. But they're just playing very good ball in all phases. They're dominant on defense. Heck, they've only been in the red zone

three times in three games. Heck, I hope we can cross the 50 and get a 1st down after watching the tape. I'm telling you, these guys have played really, really good defense. They're being very efficient, making explosive plays, running the football on offense. They've got a special quarterback. They've got all kind of skill outside that can run, and that's why. I mean, they're just physically dominating their opponent to this point.

Q. Considering how you've played this season so far, do you kind of think, okay, well, we played Auburn already, we've got Sammy Watkins back, we're totally ready for this test here?

DABO SWINNEY: Oh, absolutely. We can't wait. I wish we could load the plane and go today. We're excited about the opportunity. We also recognize that it's a very difficult task we've got in front of us, but we're excited to have a chance to go compete and just see where we are.

As I said, we're a work in progress. I don't think that we're a great team right now. I think we've got a chance to be really good. If I'm on the outside looking in, I'm probably picking Florida State, too. But that's why you play the game. We're going to go down there and compete our tails off, and if we can give ourselves -- we're going to have to play really well, there's no doubt about that. We've got to play really good.

And the other thing we've got to do is take care of the football. You turn the ball over against a team like this that can play defense like they can, it's a long day. So we've got to just continue -- and we've done a good job of that, so if we will continue to do a good job of taking care of the football, win that turnover margin, the guys can make plays make plays, quarterback is going to have to play really well, not just give up any just big bust type -- they're going to score; we just can't give up those charity type plays. We've got to make them earn everything they get. If we do that, hey, we've got a chance. But we're excited about it, and we'll be ready.

Q. How big is it for the league not only to have two top 10 teams playing each other because it's pretty rare but also for you guys to go out there and look like two top 10 teams?

DABO SWINNEY: I don't know about all that. But Florida State is a very good team. Jimbo has done a great job down there. He doesn't get enough credit. That guy has done a phenomenal job. Florida State and Clemson should be two of

the best teams in this country every year. When I got this job here, and I know when Jimbo got the job there, that was his goal, and that's certainly my goal. It's very exciting after three, four years here that we've won a conference championship, Florida State has played in the championship. Both of us have battled really, really hard. We're both recruiting at a high level. So we should both be one of the best teams in the country. I think Jimbo would probably tell you the exact same thing, and I think he's done a phenomenal job down there in kind of building Florida State back the way they should be. And we do, we need Clemson and we need Florida State from a conference standpoint to be what they're capable of being, and that is two of the best football teams in this country. There's no question about that.

From that standpoint it is great for the league. It's exciting. But you know, this is just one game, and I know everybody makes a big deal -- but it's just the fourth game. That's it. It's the fourth game. It's a big game. It's a huge game. But if we win it, we've got eight more games to play, and it ain't over. If they win it, they've got a bunch more games, and so do we. You've got to take care of your business week in and week out. They're not going to crown us or dethrone us with one game.

JIMBO FISHER FLORIDA STATE

JIMBO FISHER: Hello, everybody. Looking very forward to this weekend, but were very proud of our guys this past weekend against Wake. Thought we played a very sound, very good ballgame against a very quality opponent. Jim Grobe teams are always very well-coached, very tough, and you have to be able to execute to beat them, and I thought our kids did in all three phases. I thought our defense was very dominating, thought our special teams did a great job, and our offense was very physical and ran the ball and made throws and converted on 3rd downs and the red zone opportunities which we had, and I was very proud of that.

We still have a lot of growing to do. I still think there's a ton of room for improvement. But I like the attitude which our kids are taking, the way we're practicing and preparing, and we have a



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huge challenge in Clemson. Clemson is a great ball club. Very anxious to watch our guys, how we respond to this as far as going through all the media and being able to eliminate the clutter of the things and keep focused on the ballgame but still be able to deal with the extracurricular things that are part of this, and it's a very important game for us at Florida State, a very important game for Clemson, a very important game in general. But hopefully here at our University you're going to play in a lot of important games, and this is part of you learning in that process, and hopefully we were able to gain some experience from last year's situations and occurrences and we can still play well in this game and do the things that we need to do.

But we're looking forward to a challenge. Clemson has got a phenomenal ball club, very well-coached. Dabo has done a tremendous job with their program, and it should be an exciting weekend.

Q. They have in Tajh Boyd obviously an exceptionally mobile quarterback who can make a lot of things happen, make plays with his legs and his arms. How important is it for you to get the pressure on him defensively and try to make him uncomfortable back there?

JIMBO FISHER: Well, I think that's the key in any situation, with any level of ball. I mean, I don't care if you're Peyton Manning, Tom Brady or whoever. If they can affect you with rush and pressure, it's not comfortable whoever you are. And that's always the name of the game.

But the challenge is to make sure you do it within your rush lanes and not let him scramble and create plays with his legs and create big plays. He creates a ton of challenges, but it is always a defense's job or mentality to affect the quarterback in any way that they can possibly do that, but he is a heck of a player, and it will be a great challenge.

Q. With (Brandon) Jenkins gone and now (Cornellius "Tank") Carradine and (Bjoern) Werner playing more minutes at defensive end, are you happy with the way they've responded to that?

JIMBO FISHER: Oh, yes, I am. It really hasn't changed Werner as much as it's given more time to Tank. Werner always was doing it, but I've been very pleased with those two. Like I've said before, I've always felt like our ends were 1A, 1B and 1C. We felt very comfortable with all those guys, and been very pleased with the young guys

when they've played. The young guys that are getting quality reps, I've been pleased with them. But those two older guys I think have done a phenomenal job.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about what it meant for Chris Thompson to have the kind of performance that he had against Wake after what happened last year?

JIMBO FISHER: I think as much as anything it was a great relief, and people don't realize, and I was skeptical because everybody wanted to talk about the story going into the week about him getting hurt against Wake, and I knew it would affect him. He would go talk and do all that, but I knew subconsciously it was a big moment for him. I think there was some nervousness during the week as we saw little bits and pieces, but he doesn't try to show that. But I think it is; it's a barrier that he's gotten past, and I think it was huge for him to do it and for him to move on with this season because it was the one-year anniversary, that game, and I think mentally it was a huge burden off his shoulders in my opinion in his mind that he was able to go out there and do that so he can look forward to the rest of the year.

Q. Last year Sammy Watkins was kind of flying under the radar, a little bit of an unknown player what exactly he could do. Are you gearing up your defense any more to kind of center in on him and maybe throw away from him?

JIMBO FISHER: Yes, I called Commissioner Swofford and asked him if we could play with 13 guys and he would not allow me to do it. That knocked my first plan out, so we can't play with 13 to be able to try to double him and double a couple of the other guys and get an extra guy on the run. Maybe if we get 14; I'll take 14 if they'd let us. No, we have to know where Sammy is at at all times, but that's the thing about it: It's not just Sammy; it's (DeAndre) Hopkins, it's (Jaron) Brown, it's (Andre) Ellington, it's (Tajh) Boyd and their tight end. They create so many different playmakers, and they have them. But he makes them better because you definitely have to know where he's at at all times.

Q. Can you just talk a little bit about what Everett Dawkins has meant to your defensive line through the years, and it seems

like he's not real flashy but just been a real steady rock in the middle there for you?

JIMBO FISHER: Oh, there's no doubt. Defensive tackles - I say this all the time - they're the most unselfish people in the world. They have to be. They have to stay in there and stay in run gaps and let the ends rush up the field and make sacks. And they sometimes can get them as a defensive tackle, but they've got to make sure those gaps get sound up front and push the pocket so the quarterback can't step up and scramble, and they've got to make on double teams so the linebackers can make plays.

Everett is an ultimate team guy, but Everett is a very, very good football player. I think he'll play at the next level. I think he's a big, powerful body he's got himself. He's 303 pounds and he stays there right now. When we recruited him he was about 235, 240, and he's developed and changed his body, and he's a leader. He's got a great mentality, a great mind, a great competitor, and I just -- blessed that he is with us and has had a phenomenal career here at Florida State.

Q. Did you know early on that he was the type of guy that could add 60, 70 pounds, whatever it was?

JIMBO FISHER: We thought he had the capability because of the way his legs and shoulders and hands, he was on a big frame, big body frame, and we didn't know how big he could get, but by being a fifth year senior and taking that time, it's really evolved. We knew he could get big, we just didn't know how big.

Q. With the way your team has played so far this season, do you go into this game more optimistic, more confident than maybe you did last year?

JIMBO FISHER: I don't think there's any doubt because any time you come off a loss you're never as confident, I don't care what you say, and we had some injuries and we had some unknowns. We don't have as many unknowns and we have played well, so yes, I think from that standpoint we are a much more confident team, but I think experience allows you to be more confident, too. I think we've got some older guys, some guys that were in the fire a lot, so from that standpoint, but not from the standpoint that you say -- any disrespect to Clemson, they're a phenomenal team, but I think from within our own framework we are more confident in what we're doing, we're

better at what we do, we're more knowledgeable at what we do, so from that standpoint, yes.

Q. And personnel wise are you maybe even a better match-up than you were last year against Clemson?

JIMBO FISHER: I hope so. I hope so. I think so. I think I've got some young guys that have really developed, some older guys that have really changed who they are and what they've done and really grown, like you want guys to grow and mature as they do in college, so hopefully from that standpoint, yes.

RANDY EDSALL MARYLAND

RANDY EDSALL: Well, we've got a tremendous challenge ahead of us on Saturday to go to Morgantown and play, and if you've ever played in Morgantown, you know that's a very difficult place to play. Their fans are very passionate and very loud, and going against the No. 8 or No. 7 team in the country presents another challenge as they're very talented and led by their quarterback Geno Smith. And then with Tavon Austin and Stedman Bailey, also, and then defensively Isaiah Bruce and Terence Garvin and Darwin Cook are the guys who lead them on defense.

We're looking forward to going there and continuing to get better.

Q. Can you talk about the addition of Brian Stewart and what he has meant to the defense so far this season, just his style and what he's been able to do?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, I think that Brian has brought an aggressive scheme here and our players have really picked it up very, very well. Brian is a high-energy guy and a detailed guy in terms of what his expectations are of the kids, and I think our players have really bought into it and really enjoy the style of defense that we're playing, and that combination has led to the success that we've had so far. Again, we have even higher expectations for our defense than what we've already seen.

Q. There are numerous talented

quarterbacks around the country, but what makes Geno Smith one of the special ones?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, you can tell that he's got a very strong arm. He knows where to go with the ball. He throws the ball on time. He's athletic. He can also beat you with his feet.

And the thing that I've been a little bit more impressed with having the opportunity to play him every year for the last few years is that he's gotten a lot stronger. You can see that he looks stronger, he's tougher to get down in the pocket. But again, just very sound fundamentally and technique wise, and again, just very settled into what they're asking him to do.

Q. Maryland and West Virginia have played for a long number of years. With their move to the Big 12, is it the kind of series that will continue down the road, or has that kind of thing been worked out yet?

RANDY EDSALL: I know we have them for about six more years, so after that I'm not sure what that's going to be, and I think that's just something that we have to evaluate as we continue to take a look at what's going on with the ACC, how many conference games we're going to play, and then you have the addition of Notre Dame in there. So again, it's -- I'm sure it's something we'll evaluate as we get closer to the end of the contract that we have with them now to see if it's something that's going to be feasible to be able to continue due to the fact of the changes that have happened to the ACC over the last couple years.

Q. Well, after the way West Virginia has played so far this year, how the heck do you stop that offense?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, you just have to be very sound and very disciplined, and what you do hope, I think your offense has to be a little bit of a part of it. When you possess the ball, you have to try to use as much time as you can and then also be able to score.

I think it's a combination of doing things on your offense but then also defensively it's just being very sound, very solid and trying to make them go the long way if you can. But they've been very good. When you take a look at the numbers that they've put up, 55 points a game, over 600 yards of offense, it does, it presents a tremendous challenge, and we just have to make sure that our guys do their job and play as hard as they can.

Q. When you look at it on film, could this be one of the bigger challenges, one of the better opponents you've faced in your coaching career? How good a team could this West Virginia team wind up being this year?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, again, I've competed against West Virginia for many, many years, and I think that West Virginia is always a very good team, and this is another one of their very good teams. You know, I don't know what the future will hold for them after our game, but I have a tremendous amount of respect for them and their personnel, and like I said, we have a tremendous challenge.

Q. Is there a defensive player who you could envision his athleticism to match up with Geno Smith and you might put him on Geno as a spy?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, I'm not going to get into specifics in terms of maybe what our game plan would be. But again, I think there's things that you do to -- you take a look at their offense and what he does and everything else, and like I said, he's a guy that can beat you with his arm and he can beat you with his feet.

Q. With Tyler Cierski back at the top of your depth chart, how much can he help you in the run game this weekend?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, again, as we put a plan together, Tyler has practiced and practiced well, and we'll determine just exactly what we'll end up doing with him throughout the game as the week continues to move forward.

TOM O'BRIEN NC STATE

TOM O'BRIEN: As Mike said, the Citadel is coming in. They've started off great this year. They've beaten two top 10 teams in their division, Georgia Southern and Appalachia State at Appalachia State last weekend. Triple option team that certainly presents a lot of problems to any defense when you have to get ready for it in one week. Offense is centered around Dupree, their quarterback, who makes the thing go. He's a very quick, fast guy that does a great job with the option. It'll be a big challenge for our defense and

our football team this week, but look forward to a great night here. It's military appreciation night, and we'll see how we can slow the option down.

Q. Is their option similar to Georgia Tech's in any way?

TOM O'BRIEN: Yeah, it's very similar to what Georgia Tech does from what we've seen on tape. Everyone has got their own peculiar little wrinkle here or there, but the base of the offense is run the way that Georgia Tech's base offense is run.

Q. Having played them in the past, will that be of much help?

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, I think it certainly will be, having at least the last couple years. Actually we played Wofford I think my first year or second year here that runs that same offense. We spent a lot of time working on Georgia Tech here the last two years. Obviously we were successful the first year we played them, not so successful our second. But hopefully there's been a little bit of carryover getting ready to play this football team, Citadel.

Q. What are you looking at to improve offensively on the team in the weeks ahead? What areas do you think your offense can improve upon?

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, we certainly can get better in our pass protection, keeping our quarterback clean and making sure we're at the right spot so that we can get the football off. We gave up too many sacks two weeks ago at Connecticut, got a little bit better last week, but certainly that's a work in progress.

Q. And on the defensive side, is there any particular area that you want to see some changes this week?

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, you know, the big change has to be defending the option. You have to -- you go back to doing things that schematically working to defend the option is going to have a lot different than what we've done the last three weeks. It's all about reading your assignments and following your assignment to the ball and being disciplined. They believe that if they run 30 triple options that you can't be disciplined whether you're the dive guy, the quarterback or the pitch guy, that you can't be disciplined enough for those 30 snaps so they can make plays and sooner or later the ball is going to go flying over your head.

Q. Three games into the season do you have any -- is there anybody that you've really seen starting to emerge for your team?

TOM O'BRIEN: I don't think so right now. I think we're still -- the guys that have played seem to be a little bit ahead of the guys that haven't played. I think some of the guys that haven't played are making progress. But we're still a work in progress.

JIM GROBE WAKE FOREST

JIM GROBE: I was very disappointed in our performance this past week. We got our ears pinned back pretty good. But at the same time I think we played a really good football team. I was very impressed with Florida State in really all three phases. I thought their kicking game was great as well as their offense and defense played really well, very disciplined, very talented, and I wish we'd played better. But I think I came away from the game disappointed in us but very, very impressed with Florida State.

Q. Talk about Army's triple option, specifically the (Raymond) Maples kid. He's kind of become their go-to guy the last couple years in that offense.

JIM GROBE: Yeah, I think what they've done is they've got a lot of good ball carriers. They've got a lot of guys that are very, very capable. The Maples kids is really special. He's got great balance. He's very physical. You know, he makes great decisions. I think that's what you notice is they have talented players, but I think they do such a nice job executing. You know, it puts a lot of pressure on you because they're not just a one-man team. You've really got to defend a lot of different guys in that running game.

One of the issues that they give you offensively is you spend a lot of time trying to get people at the line of scrimmage to stop the run, and then it opens up some of their throws. So they're going to be a great challenge for us.

Q. Where do you see any aspect of your game against Army that you could see as possible mismatch, something you could take

advantage of on them?

JIM GROBE: You know, I really don't. I think the thing that's the problem for us right now is that they are -- they're very complex on both sides of the ball. You know, the running game is sort of a spread offense, but it's got its roots in wishbone football, which is a tough, hard-nosed approach, which suits the academies perfectly.

But they also give us some problems defensively. They're a unique preparation for us. It's a defensive scheme that we don't ever see, so they not only give you problems on offense but they give you problems on defense. It's hard to even look at match-ups as far as your players are concerned because you spend all your time getting ready for schemes that you typically don't see during the year.

Q. I think I read where you said after the game Saturday that Florida State is a special, special team, and I'm wondering what you might identify as the big differences between them this year and last year when you faced them.

JIM GROBE: Yeah, I think the thing that I noticed, and I commented to Jimbo (Fisher) before the game, but typically what we've tried to do at Wake Forest is try to play a lot of juniors and seniors, try to grow our kids up, and hopefully by the time they're older guys be able to compete in this league.

But we really reversed the roles Saturday. Florida State is a very veteran football team. This is the most veteran football team that I remember. Of course I'm in my 12th season here now, but I don't ever remember a Florida State team playing as many juniors and seniors as they're playing right now. I think defensively Saturday they had 10 juniors and seniors starting for them. I think they had a sophomore corner who's another great player. But the thing that's remarkable to me about this Florida State team, they've always been very talented, but they've always relied on a lot of young players to play, and this is a pretty veteran, tough, hard-nosed, crusty football team.

Q. To build on that, the big question everybody wants to know is are they back? Are they for real?

JIM GROBE: Well, you know, they remind me of some of the Florida State teams we played when we first got to Wake Forest. We weren't as competitive as we have been over the past few years, but -- and a couple of those Miami teams, a

couple of Larry Coker's teams back in the day and a couple of the Virginia Tech teams that we faced, of the really, really good teams that we faced over the last 11 plus years, I would say they're right there with the best of them. I thought in all three areas, I thought offensively they were very talented, they run the ball well and they've got the real good quarterback and skilled receivers. I think their offensive line is playing good.

I thought defensively they're really physical, they're big and physical and they run to the football and they don't make many mistakes.

And then their kicking game I think is fantastic. They've got a kicker that kicks the ball as high as most people punt it, and so you've got some issues with trying to return kickoffs, and then I think their punting game is good.

So I liked all three phases.

Last year I think here in Winston, I think they had over 100 yards in penalties, and they didn't have any of that stuff Saturday. They really managed the game well. They didn't have many penalties. I just came away impressed. I didn't see any weaknesses when we left Tallahassee.

Q. Given that, I guess how much do you kind of write off last week as that was just playing one of the best teams in the country, or how much is it your team took a step backward and we need to improve this or that for this week?

JIM GROBE: A little bit of both. I thought our win over Carolina was a good one, and I think Carolina is a very talented team, also. And when we went down to Florida State, I really did not expect that to happen to us. I thought we would compete better. I thought we had a couple opportunities early in the first quarter to make a game out of it and wasted a couple of good field position opportunities, and then it just seemed to snowball. But I was really disappointed in our team, but I think the flipside to that was I've just got a sense -- now, we'll find out this week when Florida State plays Clemson, we'll find out if they're for real because I know Clemson is very talented, also, so it'll be two great teams playing this weekend. But I came away from there feeling like we played a pretty special football team.

Q. If I could piggy-back on that, just in terms of defensively, is there anything you take away from that game that moves you into this

week, or again, is that something where you just ran into a team that was clicking everywhere on offense?

JIM GROBE: You know, I think there are things we take away from it. I think as good as Florida State is, we saw some things in the game that we could have done better. We had some opportunities. You know, maybe not to beat those guys. I think even if we'd have corrected some things, we might not have been good enough to win the football game. But I think we saw where some of our weaknesses are. I think we've got some things that we can work on.

I mentioned I think last week that I think we have the potential to be a good football team, but I didn't feel like we're there, and it kind of exposed us a little bit Saturday.

So I think we've got some thoughts personnel-wise, maybe some guys that need to go up on the depth chart, some things that kind of stood out to us. But I think overall we just came away feeling like we played a pretty, pretty good football team.

Q. And is there any update on Nikita's (Whitlock) status?

JIM GROBE: I would say it's a stretch to think that he'll play this week. I think he's not been able to practice for a couple days, and that's one of the issues that we've got. You know, you have guys that you try to get ready by Saturday, and you think, if we can just get him healthy for Saturday. But down in Tallahassee, we had two or three kids that didn't practice much last week, and we actually got them in the game Saturday, but they didn't play very well because they hadn't practiced. That's your problem.

We certainly want to get Nikita back, and he will help us immensely once we get him in the mix, but we need to get him not only back healthy but we need to get him practicing again.

Q. Three weeks into the season you've got two undefeateds left in the conference and two ranked teams at this point. How important is it you do have the big national marquee game Saturday, how important overall in terms of getting a positive look nationally on the conference which has kind of struggled across the last few years and taken a little bit of heat from where it stands nationwide?

JIM GROBE: I think it makes it really big. I think one of the things that I've said over the past few years is the ACC has probably taken a little

more heat than we should because we haven't had a team make a run at the National Championship. That doesn't mean that we're not a great conference, that we don't have a lot of good football teams. I think we're a very balanced conference, and I think we've got a lot of good teams, and you've got to play every week to win. But I think this game, after coming out of Tallahassee this past Saturday, I just thought that Florida State is really, really special, and I think everybody feels like Clemson is the same way. I think this is going to really highlight our conference. I think this could be a battle between two great football teams, and I think that this might be the year that we've got a team that can make a run at the whole thing. I think certainly whoever comes out of Saturday's match-up with a win is going to have to carry the banner for the ACC.

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**ACC Coaches First Hour - 9 19
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September 19, 2012



An interview with:

**PAUL JOHNSON
GEORGIA TECH**

COACH JOHNSON: Good morning. As you said, we have another division game this week. I think it's important. Miami always has a group of great athletes, guys who are good players. Right now they're 1-0 in the league. They have a road win. We're looking up at them in the conference standings, so it's a huge game for us.

Miami has handled us fairly easily the last couple years. So we have to see if we can't put our big-boy pants on and play a little better against them.

Q. What do you think you need to do better or differently against Miami than you have recently?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, I think we've turned the ball over against them. We haven't played particularly well offensively the last couple years. We haven't gotten stops on defense when we needed to either.

Last year's game, we played very poorly offensively. But in the second quarter, we put together a 90-yard drive to get the game to 14-7, let them return the kickoff, then score with a few seconds left to go up 21-7. Then the third quarter put together a long drive and lost it on downs. They went down, scored, the game is over. We have to be in the game.

I think last year in the game, first half, maybe both teams had the ball four times. When you get it, you have to do something with it. We have not been able to do that.

Q. Given on how you played offense last Saturday, maybe do you think this is a better team?

COACH JOHNSON: Every team's different. Our '09 team that we took to Miami was

pretty good. So it's just been a case of they played well and we haven't played as well.

But we've got another chance to play here at home on Saturday and we're excited to have a chance to play. Hopefully we'll get better each week. We have this season, we've gotten better each week.

Q. I want to ask you about Tony Zenon. I know he's down in the depth chart. How is he progressing and developing in the offense?

COACH JOHNSON: Tony's doing great. He's played some of the last couple games. Good chance he maybe our punt returner this week. We're finding ways to get him on the field.

But he's done very well when he's been out there. We're excited about what he brings to the table. I think he's got a great future.

Q. What are some of his limitations at this point?

COACH JOHNSON: I don't know so much about limitations. Tony is a smaller guy. But I think it's just having guys who have played in front of him. The guys who played are a little bit older and been there, but he's been in that rotation. The A back spot, we played four, five, six guys in the last two games. He'll stay in the rotation and get to play a little more as we go along.

Q. Last year up in Charlottesville they hurt you running the football. I want to say they had over 200 yards rushing. Last Saturday they didn't get 100. A matter of different personnel? Did you make adjustments in your defense that was more successful?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, I think up there a year ago they had 272 yards. The thing that people overlooked up there a year ago is they held the ball on us. We had a hard time getting the ball. We had some big plays called back. They played better than we did.

This year was a different team. We were ready to play. I think we played with some

emotion. They've got some different injuries inside, a little bit on the offensive line. Hopefully we played better.

We haven't run the ball as well as they did a year ago yet. But they certainly have good players and they probably will before the year's out.

Q. Coach, I was wondering, with one offensive line coach this year, have you spent more time with them this year in meetings and on the field?

COACH JOHNSON: No, not really. I mean, Coach (Mike) Sewak has done a good job with them. Really in meetings there's only one guy that can talk anyway. You got two guys, they met together.

But we've got a GA assigned to them. We added a couple new GAs. Preston Pehrson is helping Coach Sewak. Actually on the field, putting in game plans, it's the same both years.

The answer is I haven't put in any more time this year than a year ago.

Q. How is having more GAs to help you guys?

COACH JOHNSON: It's easier to run practice. You really struggle to run practice, trying to run scout teams, with only one GA on each side of the ball that can be on the field.

So now with two on each side of the ball, it gives you some leeway to practice, run some scout teams, do some things. It makes it a lot easier.

Q. What do the other three do, their responsibilities?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, on offense you have Preston Pehrson. Paul helps with the D-backs, really runs the scout team. Defensively Maurice Duncan helps with the secondary and the scout team. Ben Anderson helps with the D-line and the scout team.

It gives you four guys, it helps out on the field where you only had two a year ago.

An interview with:

LARRY FEDORA NORTH CAROLINA

MIKE FINN: We welcome North Carolina head coach Larry Fedora. We'll bring on coach,



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ask for a brief opening statement, then go to questions.

Coach.

COACH FEDORA: Yeah, we're excited about getting back into Kenan Stadium, playing in front of our fans. Looking forward to Ruffin McNeill and the East Carolina Pirates coming in here and playing.

Q. Larry, does the way you came back and made it a game against Louisville leave you encouraged?

COACH FEDORA: I don't know if it means that we're close to where we want to be. But it was good to see that we had that never-say-die attitude, that our guys fought all the way to the end. I was proud of that fact.

The problem is, why were we in that position in the first place.

Q. How do you address that going forward?

COACH FEDORA: You hope you grow from it and learn from what happened in the second half, that you continue to play with the same intensity level that you did in the second half.

You start the game that way. You don't wait for something to happen; you make something happen.

Q. Coach, how is Giovanni (Bernard) shaping up for this week?

COACH FEDORA: He had a great practice yesterday. Had a smile on his face, was moving around really well. I'm excited about it. Hopefully he is, too.

Q. I know you don't get into details of everything, but as far as the injury goes, is it just something that's nagging, you're not going to hurt it any more, or...

COACH FEDORA: Really, it's hard to tiptoe around the subject. I mean, it's better just to tell you that he's feeling good, had a smile on his face, practiced well yesterday, and we'll just see what happens.

Q. Is there anything specific that you guys are focusing on this week to improve upon from the Louisville game?

COACH FEDORA: Yes. Really still trying to find out who we are as a football team. The

focus this week has been on our energy level in everything we do, starting with Sunday night, then yesterday's practice, today's practice. Hopefully today's practice will be as good or better than yesterday's practice. We'll move on from there.

It's really about us. We're really looking at ourselves this week.

Q. Did you see anything in practice in the week leading up to that game that would have led you to believe that they might come out a little bit sluggish in the first half or was that a surprise to you?

COACH FEDORA: No, it really was a shock to me, it really was. I thought our guys were prepared. I thought they were ready to go.

Ultimately that's my responsibility. So I was the one that failed them.

Q. You've faced the Lincoln Riley offense before when you were at Southern Miss. What is typical of what he likes to do? Are they very similar to what you do on offense at all?

COACH FEDORA: No, not really. Lincoln comes from the Mike Leach system. They're going to throw the ball around. He has no fear of throwing it around, all over the place. They have a very, very solid philosophy, a very sound offense, all their principles.

They're going to move the ball around from sideline to sideline, get the ball in a lot of different peoples' hands. They're going to take the one kid, I believe his number is 2 or 3, the receiver of theirs, move him around and get the ball in his hands.

It looks like this year they're probably trying to run the football a little bit more than they have in the past. The one thing about it is, Lincoln knows what he's doing. He's played the position. He's going to do a great job of coaching those quarterbacks and they're going to move it around.

Q. This is a really important game for them from a rivalry standpoint. Do you get a sense from your kids this is something special, a little bit more out of the ordinary because you're playing an in-state rival?

COACH FEDORA: Again, that's one of the things we talked about before the year, something that was going to be important to this football team. It's an in-state team, a very important game for a lot of reasons.

One, because it's the next opportunity for us. You got a bad taste in your mouth. No one

likes the way the last one ended. The only way you can change that is to go out and play on Saturday and play the way you're supposed to play the game.

Q. When you put up a lot of offensive numbers, the quarterback gets a lot of attention. How is your offensive line doing for you this year?

COACH FEDORA: I think they've probably been the most consist of all the position groups up there. This last week, I was disappointed with the pre-snap penalties we had, our center/quarterback exchange.

Overall, I would say those five guys up front have been the most consistent throughout all three games.

Q. Anyone in particular out of the group that stands out?

COACH FEDORA: I mean, Jonathan Cooper has played really well for us each week. So has James Hurst. Those guys have been very, very consistent for us.

An interview with:

MIKE LONDON VIRGINIA

COACH LONDON: Have an opportunity to travel and play a very, very good football team at TCU. Rich tradition, a lot of things that Coach (Gary) Patterson has done there. Our players are excited about going back on the road and having an opportunity to play well.

We look forward to a challenge. It's a great offense, particularly a great defense they have there. I understand that it's sold out. A large Virginia alumni contingent will be there. We're excited about traveling and making the trip.

Q. I'm sure you're not eager to talk about last week's game. But Zach Laskey, he was telling me yesterday his only offers were Air Force, Navy and Georgia Tech. I'm curious if that kind of surprised you, given the way he's been able to play so far?

COACH LONDON: I didn't know about his offers. But I know that I've read things and I've heard that Coach Johnson has mentioned, I

believe he was a punt returner from last year. How athletically he has bought into what his skills are and what they're asking him to do.

I just think a lot of times you have kids that want to, don't mind what role they have on a team, they embrace their role. A lot of times they do well.

You can see he made a case for himself as far as embracing a role and an opportunity to play, has showcased his talents in a couple of games for sure.

Q. Do you think he looks like a legitimate ACC running back?

COACH LONDON: He looks like he's a legitimate football player. That's number one right now of everything else. So I'm quite sure they are lucky and feel fortunate that they have him.

Q. Mike, given the issues you've had with your blocking, how much two tight end have you used, and do you kind of have a dilemma because Jake McGee has been such an outstanding receiver, whether to use him more, or use another of your tight ends who maybe is more experienced from the blocking standpoint?

COACH LONDON: Well, obviously on our roster, you look, there's four or five different tight ends. People characterize your tight ends: on-the-line tight ends, move tight ends, potentially tight ends that could play in the backfield, provide pass protection.

I think after the third game, we're still trying to find that continuity, that consistency, of which grouping, which personnel is going to help us maximize our offense.

I think Jake has shown from a pass-catching ability, he's shown he's pretty good. Obviously he's a weapon that we need to rely on. So teams don't start game planning and ganging up on what they see on film, that one tight end goes in, this is all they do type of thing, it's incumbent on us, the offensive staff, Coach (Bill) Lazor, to come up with schemes that will allow Jake to block, whether it's on the line, motioning to, a safety, a linebacker, lined in bunch, whatever it is.

That's something that we have to continue to look at to make sure that we put people in the right positions to execute a block or execute what we're trying to do, whether it's run or pass the ball. We've been doing that this week. It's a continuing process as the season goes on, to find out who

gives us the best chance, whether it's to run the ball or protect the quarterback.

Q. Mike, you guys played pretty well on defense in the first couple of games. Last week obviously was a different story. Just wondering if it was just a matter of the different type of offense you were facing, things just kind of snowballed for you, or what do you make about your defense headed into this game?

COACH LONDON: We talked about it before. You're right, defensively guys have played well. You get into a special type of offense, assignments requires, details requires. You can't play cautious. You can't play intimidated. You can't guess on reads.

They got on us early; they just stayed on us. You got young guys back there in the back end that have to play the pitch and the quarterback part of that offense we played. They didn't play as well as we needed to.

So you move forward with that mindset, that you don't dwell on what they didn't do, and you start focusing on the style of offenses that we'll play from this point out, from TCU all the way down to the rest of the teams we'll play, more akin to the type of things in spring practice that our offense does, the things we'll have to do.

We're hoping the formations and the motions and the plays and the concepts that our guys have practiced time and time again, you get back to playing an offense, although this offense is really, really good, they've been running this offense for a while, they're very productive, you're going to have to make plays, tackles in the open field, things like that.

But we want to make sure that the mindset that that game is over now. With this defense, I feel good about our defense, we're going to have to play well because we're playing on the road, playing a good team. But the mindset has to change.

It changed that Sunday basically, moved on, being the third game. Now we're getting ourselves ready to play, as I said before, on the road and play a top-20 team.

Q. Talk a little bit about Khalek Shepherd. Obviously you were pleased with his work on special teams last year returning kicks. Seems to be playing a lot more from

scrimmage. A little guy early on. Was he a little bit too slight to take the pounding? Has he come on in that area?

COACH LONDON: Well, I think when you look at his production, he's done a great job as far as our kickoff returns. He's got to be in the top 10 in the country, one of the tops in the ACC in the returns there. Not so much in punts.

Last couple games, punting situations where the ball is all over the place. But he has the confidence to run and go get a punt. There's an art to catching a punt and you have to be fearless. Think that's something he's demonstrated.

I think the other thing he does, he's got great hands. Being able to come out of the backfield, go in as a running back, but play as a wide receiver in terms of the personnel groupings that we have, provides another asset that he can give us.

Like I said, he is, like the other running backs, by committee, with Perry (Jones), K.P. (Kevin Parks), he has waited his time, been a cheerleader for all the other guys, now has embraced a role that has shown to increase his opportunities to touch the ball.

He's been a pleasant, I don't want to say surprise, but a pleasant addition that his skills can go beyond returning kicks coming off of the backfield and even blocking.

You mentioned Jake McGee and some guys. That's another name that we'd like to be able to utilize his talents as well. We're glad that we have him. We're glad he's a selfless player and he wants to help the team win by anything he can do.

Q. Some specifics about TCU. Another big game for the ACC. What are some things you guys need to do to get this victory on the road?

COACH LONDON: Well, when you look at them, you look at them defensively, they are an outstanding unit defensively. They play the 4-2-5 defensive front, which a lot of teams play. They get a lot of run support by their rovers or safeties, down safeties. They don't do a whole lot, because they're very confident, and they play well, execute well, what they do with their coverages and run fronts. They play aggressively. The defensive end, No. 90, is an outstanding player and rusher, run defender.

I think offensively, they have a system that as a coordinator you look at different things. When teams run a draw, but they do things with the

play-action fake to it, understand you're going to hold the linebacker there for an extra second. Instead of just running plays, the types of things they do offensively, you have to be on guard, you have to have your eyes open and be aware that it's not just a draw, it could be a tunnel screen pass or whatever it is.

They're very good. They're well-coached. They're very good at doing particular things that can affect a defensive player's read.

In the kicking game, they have a returner that is outstanding, punt return, kickoff return. They're fast and athletic.

Coach Patterson, there's something to be said about longevity, being with a program, being as successful as he has been with the coaches and players on his team. No wonder they're a top-20 team. No wonder over the last couple years they've been in the mix of mentioning some of the best teams in the country.

Q. What are some strengths Virginia brings into the ballgame?

COACH LONDON: I mean, we're going to have to, despite what has been characterized as not being able to move the ball, we're going to have to be able to move the ball by finding ways to exploit whether it's a coverage or whether it's a front, whether it's through the air, to the ground. We have to find ways to move the ball regardless of how we do it.

We can't go two pass plays incomplete, third down they gear up and rush and put pressure on the quarterback, now we're punting the ball. We're going to do those things.

I think our tight end, our running back, we have to use those guys in this game a lot. I think defensively we're back to playing coverages and concepts that we've been playing.

I think one of the strengths for us has been our kicking game as far as not only the punt and return units but the cover units.

We get on the field, we're going to have to play well. They run well in the open space and you got to be able to tackle. We're looking to move the ball, have a controlled game, keep our defense off the field. We know it will be loud. When you're always on the road, there's another element that you have to raise your level to. Guys have played on the road now, so there's no on-the-road jitters. It's a college football game that has to be played now.

Our aim is to do whatever we need possible to help us give us a chance to win the game.

An interview with:

FRANK BEAMER VIRGINIA TECH

COACH BEAMER: I'm really impressed with this football team. Very well-coached, play hard. They got experience. Offensively, defensively, up front, they're good. Back end, they're fast. They really play well on the special teams. This is a really good, well-coached football team that's coming in here Saturday. We're going to have to get ready to play a really good football game.

Questions.

Q. I wanted to ask about left guard. What are you preparing to do in David (Wang)'s place? Who do you have practicing there and will they rotate?

COACH BEAMER: Well, we got (Matt) Arkema working in there, (Michael) Via working over there also. Between those two, they'll take care of that position.

Q. How confident are you in those two guys?

COACH BEAMER: You know what, I think they're going to be okay. Arkema is a tough kid. Hasn't played very much. Via, he knows all the positions, and he's a valuable guy to us.

Q. Last week Bruce (Taylor) had to go home for the family situation. When did he leave you guys and when did he know he would be back for the Pittsburgh game?

COACH BEAMER: He left I believe on Thursday night and he flew up to Pittsburgh on Friday.

Q. Frankly, has the youth and inexperience on the offense limited at all what you can do with the playbook?

COACH BEAMER: It hasn't helped. There's no question that when you're playing new freshmen tailbacks, four new starters on the

offensive line, new starter at tight end, that affects your play.

But, again, what we need to do is become a more consistent play-after-play offense. That's what we're striving for.

Q. When you watched the film, did it look to you like Logan is trying too hard to compensate or carry the load for the group right now? Is he forcing some things because of that?

COACH BEAMER: No. I think Logan (Thomas) is going to be just fine. He has a couple throws he'd like to have back. But we got to protect a little bit better, run the right routes. It's a combination of things that have caused us to be inconsistent.

But I visited with Logan yesterday, have every confidence that he's going to be fine.

Q. Coach, it looks like your team and Bowling Green are kind of in a similar situation, coming off a disappointing loss. Will you talk a little bit about how your kids have reacted to that.

COACH BEAMER: Well, it was disappointing. But we lost to a team that played very well, and they lost to a team that played very well. Both of us had a loss last week. I know both of us are going to be ready to play this week.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about mood and tenor on the practice field. Tougher? Harder? Your thoughts on it.

COACH BEAMER: Well, we went back to work. I'm sure they did the same thing. That's the only thing to do. This game, there's disappointments. You got to get back to work and get things corrected.

Q. You said you met with Logan. Was that a routine meeting or did you want to check in with him?

COACH BEAMER: No, I passed him, we sat down for a couple minutes and talked.

Q. Remember last year, a lot of people came down on him really hard, then he had that terrific game against Miami. All of a sudden the tide turned. Is that a similar situation?

COACH BEAMER: Like I say, I think Logan is fine. He knows what he's doing. We

have to make sure everybody else knows what they're doing. We get that done, we'll move the football.

An interview with:

DAVID CUTCLIFFE DUKE

COACH CUTCLIFFE: All right. We've had good work this week. We have a lot of getting better obviously that we need to do. I think our players have taken that to heart to some degree this week.

We have a Memphis team that's hungry, like we are. They're certainly hungry to win. They have talent. A team that worries me on the perimeter offensively, and a team that's got a lot of athletes defensively that line up in a lot of different places, and they're playing a lot of different people. A very well-coached Memphis team.

I think Justin (Fuente) has put together quite a staff. So we're looking forward to a weekend at home where we're celebrating the 100th season of Duke football.

With that, I'll take your questions.

Q. Certainly you're facing a team that hasn't won yet. What flaws do you see that make you think, We can take advantage of this or that?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: I think their biggest issue at this point is that they've turned the ball over. They're doing a lot of things well. They threw for 323 yards. They have a kicking game that is as solid as it can be. Their place kicking and kicking off are very good. Their punter, averaging over 45 yards a punt net, which is incredible.

I think the thing that they haven't done is take care of the football. You can't count on that if you're Duke. We're going to have to play extremely well to put ourselves in a position to win the game.

Q. I was going to ask you a little bit about your history with Memphis. I remember you being here when you were at Ole Miss, you had four games with them, obviously a lot of games when you were at Tennessee as a

coordinator. What do you remember about those games?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: I think Memphis always has athletic teams. Lot of friends through the years that have played and coached there, so I am very familiar with their program. Again, a lot of friends that have been coaches there and players there. So a lot of history. A lot of thoughts about the Liberty Bowl. I've coached in a lot of football games there. Obviously the City of Memphis. A lot of good memories is what it amounts to.

Q. Can you tell me a little bit about this home and home series, how it came about, what you find most attractive about it.

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, it's in the state of Tennessee, which is an area we recruit. Obviously with our history in Mississippi, it's in our recruiting circles. It's staying in the southeastern United States is important to me as we develop our non-conference schedule. I think it's both programs that are trying to get to the next level, work hard to get there. So we have similar circumstances in that regard.

It looked like a good fit when we both needed non-conference ballgames.

Q. Coach, tell me a little bit about Blair Holliday being back this past weekend.

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, it was a surreal moment when he walked in our pregame meal all dressed to a T in his new suit. He's a big, tall young man. You could have heard a pin drop when he walked through the doors. Everyone was seated except me. I was getting ready to bless the food. He came in. The only comment that was needed, I said, Hey, everybody, let's welcome back No. 8. He received a standing ovation from the squad.

He proceeded to go around the room giving people hugs, greeting people. It was really one of those times where the clock stopped. Time did stand still for a moment.

The other kind of comical part was that we thought, he went out for the coin toss, we thought the safest place for him to watch the game would be up in our building, my office area that overlooks the stadium. He wouldn't have any of that. We couldn't have pried him away from the sidelines.

They kind of put him back there where he was safe, and our players kind of surrounded him. I think he had the time of a lifetime just being back

on the sideline with his buddies. We were very happy that he was here.

Q. How is he progressing?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: He's making progress. He's got lots of challenges, as you might imagine. He knows it. We had a long discussion about that.

When you know what you used to could do, and he's very aware of that, the most difficult thing is to fight frustration, depression, a feeling of 'I'm not going to get there.' I just told him, Rome was not built in a day. It's going to take more patience. A guy that was an elite athlete, things were happening quickly for him. I told him that it's not going to be the same. But his goals were our goals. Whatever he wants, I want. We were there to support him. Kind of left it at that.

Q. I wanted to ask you about your overall injury report. I feel like it's the longest one in the ACC every time I type them up. Is it a situation that's improving or do you feel like you're hanging on by a thread each week?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: We have hung on by a thread. It's beyond anything I ever would have imagined. We got some people back the last two days in practice. We hope we'll be able to release tomorrow, but Jordan Byas looks better. We were able to get Walt Canty back. He played partially in the last game. Lucas Patrick, one of our really promising young offensive linemen is back practicing. A couple of others. Kyler Brown and Britton Grier, a couple more defensive players.

There are some that just aren't going to get back anytime soon or at all. We had another freshman who was playing well for us, Corbin McCarthy, tore his labrum. He had to have that repaired yesterday. So he is out for the season.

It's been hit-or-miss. We don't have any choice but to accept it. I think our coaches have done a great job trying to get a lot of people ready that we didn't think were going to be involved in certain areas and they are now. So it's just part of it.

Q. Are they more bones and fractures or are they conditioning things like pulled muscles, joints?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: No, we don't have any pulled muscles. Most of them have been broken bones, ligaments, the shoulder, the serious injuries unfortunately which have required surgeries. Jordan Byas tore cartilage. There's no

rhyme or reason. We're not out of shape. We're not this or we're not that. I guess it's Art Chase (Duke SID) not living right, just unlucky.

An interview with:

AL GOLDEN MIAMI

COACH GOLDEN: We're in the middle of our preparation right now for Georgia Tech. Clearly this is a mature, physically rugged team on both sides of the ball. I think they're markedly bigger and stronger up front, the front seven on defense. Their offensive line, probably his biggest team on both sides.

Led by an excellent decision maker at quarterback in (Tevin) Washington. Big play potential both at the slot position and big long receivers that can catch and post, but are unselfish enough to really block on the perimeter.

On defense, a 3-4 look. We're getting multiple pressures in front, which is kind of a trademark of Coach Groh. Four strong linebackers, two inside guys very active, one of the best players clearly in the conference, if not the country, in (Jeremiah) Attaochu, and a very active, physical secondary.

Again, it's a mature team, a team that is going to be quite a challenge for us on Saturday.

Q. When you watched the film from last week's Georgia Tech game, did it look like more of a problem to deal with than when you looked at film last year before your game?

COACH GOLDEN: It's always a problem to deal with Georgia Tech. I just think he's got this personnel exactly the way he wants it after five years, four years, whatever the case may be.

I think they're always physical and relentless up front. I think the biggest difference on the offensive line right now is they're big and strong. (Omoregi) Uzzi and (Will) Jackson on the right side are physical guys, strong guys. (Jay) Finch is as relentless as any center we'll see. On defense they're 6'6", 270, 6'7", 345, 6'4", 300 with their down three. They're a mature group and clearly present a lot of problems.

Q. What must you do better on defense

than you did against Kansas State a few weeks ago?

COACH GOLDEN: I think that's the challenge. Clearly we can't give up explosive plays. We have to try to take the ball away. I think that's critical in this game. They're going to get their rushing yards. The biggest thing is to try to get some takeaways, try to create some negatives. You have to tackle really well, play assignment football.

You can't get paralyzed by the option. Defeat low blocks. Have eye discipline. Tackle really well.

Q. Given your background with Al Groh, does that make you any more inclined to give input into the offense or is he hard to read?

COACH GOLDEN: That's it. I think he's multiple. Clearly I think you know from covering Coach Groh, when he feels really good about the maturity of his team, then he feels like he can do more.

Clearly in the first three games we're seeing a variety of ways that he's attacking people. Then you look at the depth chart and it's clear it's because he's got a mature group and everybody that runs the 3-4 knows that as your maturity and your football intelligence within the defense increases and improves, you can do more because it's really an interdependent defense.

I think right now they're executing it really well. They're really personnel-ed right now in terms of the size of the linebackers and the size of the guys up front.

Q. Could you talk a little bit about Duke Johnson. He's currently third in the ACC, second nationally in all-purpose yards. It's special being a freshman. Talk about some of his talents.

COACH GOLDEN: I think his greatest talent is that he's humble, a team player. He's unselfish. He prepares like a veteran. I think that's the starting point.

We're trying to keep his odometer down. We're not overloading him with plays, but at the same time when he's in the game, he's explosive.

Again, we're going to continue to find ways to get him the ball, plus his kick returns. He's had two sizable kick returns already, one for a touchdown and another one 72 yards I think.

Again, he's doing a great job. He catches the ball in the backfield, he blocks. He's running

hard. He's unselfish on special teams. That's what has given him an opportunity to make an impact with the all-purpose right now.

Q. A housekeeping issue. After seeing practice today, are you sure that Allen (Hurns) and Vaughn (Telemaque) are full go for Saturday?

COACH GOLDEN: Well, Allen is definitely a full go for Saturday. We're monitoring Vaughn. We're hopeful that in the next 72 hours he'll get over the hump. But he has made considerable progress during the week here.

Q. As of now, you intend to take him up there?

COACH GOLDEN: I do, yes, sir.

Q. You've had some pretty good success against Georgia Tech. What do you think have been some of the key factors the past couple years?

COACH GOLDEN: We've only played them one time. I think last year anybody that would have watched the game would say we made some plays on special teams and got the takeaways. Then we were able to play with a lead.

Again, to me I look at that as an anomaly. To me, this is a different team on both sides, us and them. Don't really draw too much from last year. Clearly there are parallels in terms of how they run their offense and defense, how we run our offense and defense, because we both had continuity with coordinators.

But I don't really draw from anything in the past. This is going to be a great challenge for our team. This is a very mature and physical Georgia Tech team.

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