

October 10, 2012



An Interview With:

**FRANK SPAZIANI
BOSTON COLLEGE**

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, you're absolutely right; we've got Florida State in Tallahassee and certainly a very talented football team that's well-coached and has a lot of talent. It's going to be a challenge for us, and we're looking forward to going down there.

Questions?

Q. Obviously you were part of really strong BC teams here in this league and in the other league. What's different about this year's team? Is the talent level different? Is the experience level different? Why has this year been a struggle for you guys?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, you know, a combination of everything you just said there. And I would add we've got very difficult challenges. Some of the teams we've played have been very good. So you put it all together, and the one thing we're trying to get home here is that we just -- we're close but we're not crossing the line here, and we've just got to try to put our finger on exactly what it is. We're working on it.

Q. And have you put your finger on it? What's keeping you from getting over the hurdle there?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, you know, we've just got to get -- here's been our problem: Obviously we've had a problem on defense, and one of the problems is that we've been -- we've had guys in and out, and along with a number of other things, but just getting consistency of guys out there practicing every day. That'll help. When we get that, we'll be a little bit better off.

Q. As you see Florida State on film, from last week's game, what did NC State figure out with Florida State's offense to give you and everyone else in the league some clues?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, let me just say this: NC State played a very good game, obviously, and they were into it mentally. They played hard for 60 minutes, and I think that's what you can take out of it. That's what happens, I think, when you're playing a team of Florida State's caliber. They got it down to a four-minute game and they made some plays at the end.

Q. Just wondered if you'd had any chance to meet up with your new athletic director (Brad Bates) here in the last 24 hours since he arrived on campus.

FRANK SPAZIANI: Yeah, we did. We spent some time together yesterday.

Q. And how did that meeting go?

FRANK SPAZIANI: It went fine.

Q. From your perspective, I wonder what is the relationship like these days between an athletic director and a football coach? Has it changed here in the last five, ten years, or maybe you can explain it a little bit for us.

FRANK SPAZIANI: The relationship between your boss and an employee?

Q. Yeah.

FRANK SPAZIANI: It has to be a -- that's the relationship to start out, and then it has to be a working relationship. You have to be a team. In order for a lot of things to happen in a football program, it has to go from the top all the way down to the bottom level in your program.

That's the relationship, and once again, everybody has to be on the same page because there's not much of a margin for error in any program going anywhere.

I don't think that's -- I don't know if I'm the right person to be asking that question to, but I don't think that's changed. I think that's in any successful organization, yours included. You have a boss, right?

Q. Absolutely. I was asking because of the high pressure now it seems like on football coaches maybe compared to 10, 15 years ago to win immediately and the pressure ADs may feel to get things done in one or two years. That's kind of what I was asking.

FRANK SPAZIANI: Okay, well, that's a little different question then, right?

Q. Right, but it also goes to the relationship between the AD and the football coach.

FRANK SPAZIANI: I think what has changed, what has changed along that, is there's a lot more finances involved, and obviously that changes the dynamics of the -- but the relationship still has to be the same, but there's immediate financial consequences that maybe weren't there 10, 15, 5 years ago, whatever.

Q. And one more question if I can: You had mentioned some of the injured players like Chris and Bobby, particularly on offense. Are they closer to coming back for you guys?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Bobby Swigert?

Q. Yeah.

FRANK SPAZIANI: No, Bobby was back last week, and he's back. Chris (Pantale) started practicing with us last week. He's practicing more this week, and we have to see how that goes. But he's getting closer and closer now. Exactly what's going to happen on Saturday, I'm not sure where we go with Chris. But Bobby will be there.

Q. Is there a better situation in terms of whether you come down to Tallahassee, maybe they're still undefeated and ranked high, or a team coming off of an upsetting -- or being upset like last weekend in terms of your approach in bringing your club in here?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, no. That's a very common question. Once again, I can't get into my opponent's psyche. That's Jimbo (Fisher)'s job to worry about the psyche of his football team.

The best way we approach it, and it's held me in good standing throughout coaching, is get our guys to be playing at the highest level they possibly can and expect the other team to play at their highest level and then go from there.

Q. I'm working on a story about guys that take a non-traditional routes to college football, whether they worked in a factory or in your case you have a guy who was playing in the minors for a couple years and is a good bit older. How valuable is it to have a guy like that with that kind of different background when you're dealing with kids that a lot of times come in from high school and have known only football?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Dave Shinskie, I presume that's who you're talking about?

Q. Yes.

FRANK SPAZIANI: I can't say enough about Dave, I really can't. He came here when we didn't have a quarterback. He hadn't played for six years, had been in the minor leagues, and we won eight games with him. We won two the following year. We made a quarterback change, and that probably wouldn't sit well with a lot of people. But Dave is a great teammate, and he's a great asset to our program. We are very fortunate, A, that he contributed to those wins and he's still helping contribute in another way. But he's a great teammate, and I attribute that to some of his maturity and what he's been through and stuff. I can't speak for other guys on our team, but we're very happy to have him.

Q. You've been saying that on defense one of the struggles is guys going in and out and you were trying to decide whether to go with a group of guys and go forward from there or kind of deal with guys going in and out --

FRANK SPAZIANI: No, we're not deciding to go forward with it. In other words, we know who the players are, we just -- they've been in and out, a little inconsistency working. We've had some injuries and some guys haven't been there, and you have to make plans -- that's been part of the problem, and it's not an excuse; everybody's got injuries. But that's been part of the problem.

We know who we're going with, and we just have to make sure they just get lucky a little bit with having them stay healthy for us and be out there every day, because on defense you need to be recognizing a lot of things, and it shows up first on defense when there's some participation issues.

An Interview With:

DABO SWINNEY CLEMSON

DABO SWINNEY: Well, we are enjoying an open date. I think it came at a great time for us. It was a great win this past Saturday, especially, again, not playing for two weeks, to be able to get a big win like that against an opponent that's been very difficult for us the last couple years. Proud of our guys and how they played. We're going to take advantage of some time hopefully to heal some guys up, get a head start on Virginia Tech, give our guys the weekend off, and then come back and have a full game prep week for next weekend.

But right now, hey, we're in good shape; we're 5 and 1. Proud of our guys; we seem to be improving. But we've still got a lot of ball left to play, a long way to go, and looking forward to trying to have a great second half. Just got to refocus and recommit and basically start from scratch against Virginia Tech.

With that, I'll take your questions.

Q. I was curious if you agree with Nick Saban's recent declaration that he thinks hurry-up offenses present a greater injury risk to defenses, and if you do agree, what can be done to reduce that risk?

DABO SWINNEY: No, I don't agree with that at all. I think that's not reality. It's one guy's opinion, and everybody has their opinion. To me if you look around -- what makes college football fun is you have a lot of variety. There's a lot of variety in college football. You see different things from week to week, whether it's the spread or the "I" or the triple option or whatever, and I think that's one of the things that makes it an incredibly popular game is you just really never know from week to week. If you really want the same old thing and everybody to be conformed then you've got that in the NFL. That's what Sundays are for in my opinion.

But I don't agree with that at all. I think that we have a play clock, and if you look at us, we substitute all the time. We're constantly changing personnel. We play fast, but we're constantly changing personnel, constantly multiple formations and shifts and personnel groupings.

Now, when you do that, the defense has to be allowed to change personnel, and that's the

refs' job, to manage that part. But we don't just put the same 11 guys out there and play them for 80 plays. You know, I don't know if there's a lot of teams that do that.

But I just think that we've got a great game, and the variety makes it even better. But everybody is -- some people like vanilla ice cream, some people like chocolate, some people like strawberry. It's kind of to each his own. But we're happy with what we do right now, but everybody, again, has to have their own philosophy and be committed to it. But I don't agree with that assessment or comments.

Q. I was just interested, last year DeAndre (Nuk) Hopkins had a really fine year but he was kind of overshadowed by Sammy (Watkins) and the year he had. With getting the start, fast start this year, can you talk about how he's emerged as a go-to guy even since Sammy has come back?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, I mean, he's -- to me really not much has changed. He was a go-to guy last year. I think he had over 70 catches and over 1,000 yards receiving. You know, he's pretty much a go-to guy since the day he's arrived at Clemson. He's just different in that his -- when he came in here as a true freshman, he was a good player, a very talented, young player but still had a lot of developing to do physically and mentally.

And then last year he took another step forward and was tremendous. But the reason he got overshadowed is because Nuk had been here, Sammy Watkins had just gotten here, and you just don't anticipate a true freshman doing what Sammy did. I think that's why he kind of stole all the headlines, because it was his first time here.

Sammy came in here a little differently, more physically prepared, he was 200-something pounds, and really from a technical standpoint and just picking the game up, he was off the charts, when you think about him being a true freshman.

So I think that's probably the biggest thing. But Nuk, again, is a guy that has been great since he got here. He's just been developing. And the biggest part of his development has been physical. He's developed mentally, but the physical part has really allowed him to become a dominant player. He was probably 170-something, maybe 180 when he got here; he's 200-something pounds now, strong. He had never had an off-season. He's always played basketball. This was the first year

he didn't play basketball. So he spent from January all the way to August really developing physically, and he's just so much stronger. And with that strength comes confidence.

So he's -- and then he got off to a really good start, and we're really not doing anything different, we're not forcing things, we're calling the same plays we've always called, but he's just continuing to have a great season.

And then Sammy has only played in three games, and people have paid pretty close attention to him, and Nuk has gotten a lot of one-on-one coverage and he's won the majority of those battles. Just a great player, and really proud of the season he's having.

Q. Do you think you've ever had two receivers of the quality you have right now with Hopkins and Watkins?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, I mean, I've had a lot of good groups. I mean, they're as good as probably any we've had around here. Back when I first came to Clemson, we had Derrick Hamilton and Kevin Youngblood, Airese Curry, those were pretty talented guys and fun to coach, but we were a little bit different style of play. We were pretty much all pass as opposed to what we do now. We really want to have balance and run the football.

But these two guys are probably right there at the top.

Q. How would you assess where your defense is at this stage of the season, and where are the improvements that you're looking for in that unit?

DABO SWINNEY: I think we're improving. I think we've had two -- the last two weeks, I think I've seen some solid improvement, in particular up front. We're really pleased with what I see taking place. We've got some guys really growing up right before our guys. There's a lot of things maybe that the naked eye doesn't see but we certainly do from a coaching standpoint. I really like the development.

I think Corey Crawford is really coming on, Tavaris Barnes is starting to show some signs that we are excited about from that young group, and then all those D-tackles, Grady (Jarrett), DeShawn Williams, Josh Watson, DJ Reader, Carlos Watkins, Rod Byers, all those guys, we just feel like we've got a solid group there that's very much improved from when we started the season.

We've still got a ways -- they're learning every day, and they're applying that learning, and that's what's exciting about what I'm seeing.

I think that we've got some young linebackers that are coming on for us and developing. We're excited about Travis Blanks. Gary Peters is a guy that's kind of stepped up and seized the moment with his opportunity. So we're improving. We're not the '85 Bears right now or anything like that, but we like the guys we have, and if they will make the same incremental improvements that we've made the first half of the season, go apply those in the second half, then I think we have a chance to be a pretty good group with the ability to be a great group in the future.

Q. Is the defensive improvement where you can see your team making the most strides in the second half?

DABO SWINNEY: Oh, yeah, yeah, absolutely. We've got to continue to improve in the big play category. I thought we did a much better job the other day. We didn't have a couple of the busts that we had been having. They made some big plays, but it really wasn't as much from busts as just not quite executing properly or technique or just getting beat by a guy. But there wasn't guys just not where they were supposed to be or anything like that, not knowing what they were doing.

So just the knowledge, I think, has improved of what we're doing and why, and that's definitely the area that I think we can be most improved in the second half.

We've got a lot of things to improve offensively, as well, but we're a little bit further along, but we've got a few more veteran players over there.

An Interview With:

JIMBO FISHER FLORIDA STATE

JIMBO FISHER: We have practiced very well this week, have been very proud of our kids the way they've responded back to the adversity we faced as far as dropping the game at North Carolina State who played a great second half and

came back in the ballgame. We did not execute as much as we wanted to, and we have to coach them a little better, and we have to play a little better on some things, and then we'll be okay. It's not anything that is a drastic measure, but it was a very hard-fought, tough ballgame that we come down to the last play and North Carolina State was able to make. We had plenty of opportunities in the game to be successful and weren't.

But we're moving on and we're looking forward to Boston College. There's a lot of football left to play. Very proud of our kids, they way they've responded. We've got great leadership on this team, and we're looking forward to playing a very good Boston College team here in Tallahassee this weekend.

Questions?

Q. What did NC State figure out about your defense or what did you learn from how they played you to kind of help your offense going forward?

JIMBO FISHER: Well, I think what they did, second half they got momentum in the game, and I think they just got confidence as we had a couple opportunities on offense to score some points and we didn't, and then they got -- I think they other thing, I think they got field position in the second half. The first half we had them pinned inside their own 20 four or five times and it was very tough as you play as a play caller. I think then as they got out and they got a few passes and the game got down they took more chances and then all of a sudden got some confidence from getting the ball out. (Mike) Glennon did a tremendous job, their linemen did a nice job; their receivers did a nice job of getting open inside on some crossing routes and things, and they played a very good game, and the game went -- like I say, the momentum of the game shifted and they got confidence and were able to push on and make the plays.

Q. Were you shocked at all or surprised at all? Obviously the way you guys were playing on offense, to have that kind of --

JIMBO FISHER: Yeah, I was, and because we had played a really good first half. We had scored four out of six drives. We dropped the ball on the first 3rd down that we had to kick a field goal and we had a bad snap down on a 3rd down -- well, that wasn't in the red zone, that was about the 35-yard line, the first drop on a square-in, but then we'd had a bad snap down

there where we had a chance to have another touchdown which hurt us, and we left them in the game a little bit, and then second half we felt very good about what we were doing.

Just come out and had -- like I said before, it was not any one person, and that's why I said we have to coach them up better at halftime, get them ready to play and be more fundamentally sound. And we have a guy here and a guy here and all of a sudden that's two or three drives, then the momentum of the game shifted and then got back in it, and that's -- unfortunately that's the way ball goes, and they've got some good players.

Q. Chris Thompson had another good game. I know you missed him last year when he was out. Can you talk about the dimension he adds to the offense just with his ability?

JIMBO FISHER: Well, I mean, again, I think consistency which he brings, the leadership, not only just his running, which yeah, he's has great breakaway speed, he has great balance and body control, he's very strong as we know, and he catches the ball very well. All those things you can get him -- we had him in screens, we had him in different ways to get the ball, and he's one of the dynamic guys for our team.

But also in the leadership role and when things do go awry or you need checks out there on the field and guys on blitzes and things like that, he's just such a rock. He's just such a stable, good human being and understands his role and is a total team player. He brings a lot of confidence to the other guys when he's on the field.

Q. The leadership you're talking about, is that important a week after such a disappointing loss?

JIMBO FISHER: Oh, yeah, most definitely, because Chris is a guy who had -- like you said, the world goes on, and he's been through things and they follow his lead a lot. He's definitely one of our leaders and having that strong leadership is critical, and he's definitely one of them.

Q. How do you -- I don't know if you can gauge this about your team or not, but how do you personally react when virtually every person, every talking head and a lot of writers have essentially dismissed your National Championship chances at this point?

JIMBO FISHER: We don't -- I mean this beyond -- it's not a cliché. I think it's a focal point that you can't worry about. We shouldn't have been worried about them if we were even before that. You have to just play one game at a time. It's a 12-game season, and as I say sometimes, as writers and people and fans and different people understand, you make it a three- or four-game season, and it's not. It's a 12-game season. Every game is very important, and I think we learned a valuable lesson.

And hopefully -- I thought we did. We played a great first half, just didn't finish the game. You know, you can't worry about that. There's a lot of ball to be played. You have to go out and you play ball and you have to get better as a team. You have to win the games that are in front of you and take care of your business, and then if those situations fall into place, they fall into place, and I mean that without -- that's not coach talk, that's not cliché. That's the way you have to do it because there's too many distractions and too much clutter, and you have to do it that way.

Q. Second half of the season what are the things that you're looking for your team to improve?

JIMBO FISHER: Well, I think we've got to get back to being able to -- at the end of the game we weren't able to run the football in the last four minutes of the game, which that's been one of our strong points in the first part of the season. We have to make sure we can maintain and do that, keep throwing the football and creating the big plays and our pass protections; I think defensively keep working on our two-minute defense a little bit when people get going like that; and on the punt team we've had two punts blocked which is so uncharacteristic. We have a tremendous special teams coach and we've been -- we have great special teams but we've had that the last two weeks, and those are very critical, and we've got to get that fixed.

Our kicking game, our kicker, Dustin (Hopkins) is really kicking the ball really well now after a few little struggles in the beginning. I'm very proud of where he's come from, our young punter, and we just have to get better overall and just be more consistent and understand the consistency level which -- you get a few young guys at a key position or two, how long a season is and how much preparation and how much of a grind it is.

Q. I want to follow up, you guys play Boston College every year because they're in the division. Looking at them on film, how different are they with Doug Martin, with the offense he's installed this year, and what kind of offensive threat do they pose?

JIMBO FISHER: They're throwing for 311 yards a game. Their back does a very nice job. He's big, he's physical, he can run the ball. Their linemen do a great job.. They're much more explosive and much more consistent and they're putting a bunch of points on the board. I mean, he's done a very nice job.

An Interview With:

RANDY EDSALL MARYLAND

RANDY EDSALL: Well, we're happy we got the win against Wake Forest and thought our kids really competed hard for 60 minutes. The one thing is that we're finishing games, and the other thing I think Perry Hills is doing a good job for us making plays in the fourth quarter when we need him in the three wins that we've had.

We're just looking forward to getting more consistent and getting better each day and going to practice and working hard as we can to improve on a lot of things that we need to improve upon.

We've got a tough one in Virginia this weekend down in Charlottesville.

Q. J.J. Johnson's play has started to come on a bit. How have you seen him become a better technician and hone his craft more of late?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, it's very easy to say that J.J. was going to perform well because you just see the work ethic that he has and the time and effort that he's put into not only the weight room but studying film, taking notes in the meetings, and then going on the practice field and working every play. Every time he has an opportunity as an individual to get better as a technician, that's really what it's stemmed from. It's just stemmed from him doing those things and

listening to Brian and what he's teaching him. But the credit goes to J.J. for the work ethic and character that he has and then how he prepares in terms of taking notes and then how he goes and practices on the field.

Q. I just got off a teleconference with Bill Lazor, the UVA offensive coordinator, and he had some complimentary things to say about your 3-4. What has been your background with the 3-4, and if you haven't really used it a lot yourself over the years, was it difficult to just turn it over to your defensive coordinator?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, we're not a typical 3-4 defense. You know, we're not the Okie 3-4 two-gap scheme. We say it's a 3-4, but I would say that it's more of a -- it's a hybrid 3-4. You know, the things that Brian (Stewart) brought in here were a lot of the things that I've done in my coaching career, whether it was at Syracuse or Boston College, Jacksonville, those things. And it's just a hybrid, but it's something that we've taken our personnel, and Brian has done a great job along with Greg Gattuso and Lyndon Johnson and Keith Dudzinski and the players.

And again, it's something that we're -- I think we're pretty simple but yet we do enough things that we can cause problems for the opponent. But ultimately it comes down to the players doing their job, and the players are doing a really good job.

Q. If I might ask a somewhat unrelated follow-up, I believe Maryland and Virginia are 115th and 119th in the country in turnover margin. I know Virginia's problems have mostly been an inability to force turnovers. What have been the issues with you and how big a factor will that be in this week's game?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, I think we've turned it over way too much. That's one thing, we've got to have better ball security offensively, and that's something that we've talked about defensively. We're doing a good job in terms of yardage and the rush defense and all that, but we don't; we don't have as many turnovers as we'd like to, and that's something that we work on each and every day.

It's just a matter of sometimes the opportunities are there and sometimes they're not. We hope that we'll have opportunities to create some this weekend. But I think turnovers are always big, but that's the other thing is I think give

credit to our defense because we have been put into some situations this year because of the turnovers, but they've stood tall and have done a good job, and it hasn't hurt us as much as you would think with the -8 in the turnover differential that we've put ourselves in.

Q. You have a lot of freshmen that play prominent roles, Hills and (Stefon) Diggs are two big ones. How many freshmen are you guys playing, and are these all true freshmen, or are any of them red shirt?

RANDY EDSALL: No, we have redshirt freshmen as well as true freshmen playing. I mean, Nigel King is a redshirt freshman who's getting some time at wide receiver; Mike Madaras, left tackle, is a true freshman who's starting; Andrew Zeller is a red shirt freshman starting at left guard; Perry Hills is a true freshman at quarterback. You know, we've played redshirt freshman Brandon Ross at tailback; freshman running back Wes Brown; freshman running back Albert Reid; Stefon (Diggs) is a true freshman.

And then defensively we have Anthony Nixon who's a true freshman who's played; Sean Davis, a true freshman, started, now is a backup playing special teams.

Some of them are redshirt freshmen and some of them are true freshmen. Alvin Hill and Makinton Dorleant are redshirt freshman and freshman, have all contributed.

It's one of those things. Brad Craddock, a true freshman; Nate Renfrow, a redshirt freshman punter. You play the best guys that you have, and due to whatever the reasons are, those are the best guys at those positions, and we play them and it's our job as the coaches to coach them up and get them to play at the highest level possible.

Q. I know just from experience, freshmen tailbacks usually prosper, and special teams guys, a lot of coaches use freshmen on that. But talk about the difficulty or the -- just how odd it is to be playing a true freshman quarterback and true freshmen on the offensive line. That's the two positions that seem really odd.

RANDY EDSALL: Yeah, it is. It is tough. Mike Madaras, our left tackle, is just out of high school, but he's going to get better. But he's the best guy that we have. And then Andrew Zeller is a red shirt freshman and he just started his first

game last week. Again, Sal Conaboy is a guy that's only started about five games and Justin Gilbert was out for a year and a half and Bennett Fulper is a really the only guy that we have.

We understand it, we're not going to probably be as productive as we'd like, but we've just got to keep working the process, and we've just got to keep getting better, and then when you put in a freshman quarterback and then when you know you do that, the other guys on the other side of the ball get paid to coach, too, so they're going to do a lot of things to try to confuse him and blitz him and different looks and everything else.

So as we gain more experience, we'll be more efficient and effective, but it's been tough, but I think we've made progress each and every week, and just proud of the way the way they're hanging in there and just coming to practice each day and working to get better, and that's what we're going to continue to do.

Q. I apologize for asking a second follow-up, but I'm just curious, Brad Craddock didn't show up on a preseason roaster. Is he a recruited player or is he a walk-on?

RANDY EDSALL: No, he was recruited. He's from Australia, so he was a guy that we ended up getting late, and he's come in, and last week -- he's a little bit inconsistent, but he's got a good leg, a 52-yarder and a 49-yarder last week, so that's just something that we've got to continue to work with him.

But pleased with him and what he's done, and then like I said, Nate Renfrow has been a little bit inconsistent, but when he's good, he's very, very good, and when he misses some we're not as good as we want to be. That's what we're fighting, we're fighting inconsistencies and a lack of execution on the basics. With some of these guys, this is their first go-around playing in a high-pressured situation.

Q. Are you pleased with the progress of (A.J.) Hendy coming back around and shaking the rust and where he is right now?

RANDY EDSALL: I think A.J. is getting better each and every week, and again, he's in a backup role right now, and we'll just see how he continues to progress. But he's getting -- he's ready to play, but right now there's some people in front of him that are doing a little bit better job, and he's still coming back off that ankle.

An Interview With:

TOM O'BRIEN NC STATE

TOM O'BRIEN: The off week we're using it hopefully wisely. We have some -- we're banged up, beat up a little bit, going to try to get some guys healthy. But at the same time spend a lot of time trying to get better individually. We'll coach everybody, scout team guys, the guys that are red shirt freshmen that -- or the freshmen we're looking to red shirt, we'll try to get them as much practice time tomorrow as we can and Friday morning as we go forward.

The key to us is trying to get some guys healthy and back. We lost Forrest West for the season probably on Saturday night with a broken ankle, so he and Zach Allen both are now out for the year. Just try to get to be a better football team this week.

Q. Mike Rose obviously came up with a huge blocked punt. What kinds of things have to go right in a situation like that in other parts of that play to enable him to get there and block it?

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, it's a block that we worked on all week. I think Jerry Petercuskie, our special teams coach, thought that we could have the opportunity to get that. When it presented itself -- everybody has to do their job, and first off, the three, four guys inside got off the ball really well, got off really quick, got across the line of scrimmage, and then as they get to that three-man surface there, they got there at the same time, and what happened is he was able to split the two guys. It's ironic because generally that would have been Logan Winkles' spot. Rose is about five inches taller and has a larger wing span, was able to get his hand on the ball, and that ended up being a huge play in the game because it ended up being about a six-yard change of possession in the spot of the ball.

Q. So Rose was actually in for somebody else?

TOM O'BRIEN: Uh-huh, he was a backup in that spot. It's something that everybody practices, but he got his opportunity and made the most of it. He made a great play.

Q. Just looking at your games, I'm struck by the fact that your defense has had some really poor games and then you've had some very good ones, you shut down the best offense in the ACC -- not shut them down but controlled them. Shut them down the second half. Coming off a game where you give up 600 yards, I just wonder, what do you see -- what works sometimes, and is there one specific thing that isn't working a few other times?

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, I think you have to go look at the other side of the football. I mean, one thing that is consistent offensively in the two games we've lost is that we're averaging five turnovers a game in the two games that we've lost, which puts the defense a lot of times in very bad situations. So it's not just part of the defense, it's part of the offense turning the football over, and in those games I think we're penalized 10 penalties a game. On both sides of the ball we haven't been very good.

I think there was -- certainly on Saturday night the ball was not thrown over our heads, which happened in the two games that we lost. We did a much better job in our zone coverages, keeping the ball inside and in front of. Florida State made plays but they're going to make plays against everybody, but there was nothing -- a catch and run that got us in those other two games.

But a lot of it, I think, has to go back to the offense turning the football over and putting them in bad situations.

Q. I've asked earlier this season about Bryan Underwood, but he just keeps making huge catches for you. How does he keep doing that?

TOM O'BRIEN: I don't know. I mean, he keeps getting in positions, because Mike (Glennon) throws to everybody. I mean, Mike -- if there is a favorite guy, it's probably Quintin Payton for him because he's the leading receiver. But whenever it seems that we need a big play, Bryan has been there to make it, and certainly as you said, Saturday night, getting open there and holding onto the ball even after he was hit late was a great job by him.

Q. Not to mention the fact that it looked like Mike (Glennon) threw it about 100 miles an hour.

TOM O'BRIEN: No, I don't think he did. I mean, he would have a year ago. He would have thrown it that fast a year ago. But that ball was

pretty much under control. I think Michael did a great job Saturday night. I mean, the difference between a year ago playing Florida State to Saturday night was night and day.

Last year he took sacks, didn't get rid of the ball on time. I think he knew that he was much better on time, didn't take sacks, threw the ball away, kept himself and us out of long yardage situations with the exception of one time when he did take a sack.

And then he made three straight 4th down conversions there on that last drive: 4th and 2, 4th and 10 and 4th and goal at the 2- or 3-yard line. He did a great job and everybody did a great job on offense.

Q. What is it that enables a quarterback to -- it's almost like he's flipped a switch or something. Is it an accumulation of just experience and learning that enables him to just make those kinds of adjustments?

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, I think experience has a lot to do with it and having played and played in games. Second time around playing a Florida State team that certainly has great defensive ends on the rush. They get a good push, they keep rotating four, six guys in the middle of the defense at the same time.

So it was a learning experience. He went back and studied the tapes from last year. One thing that he and Coach (Dana) Bible, point of emphasis this week going into the game is you can't hold the ball forever. You've got to get the ball out, you've got to make a decision, you have to throw it. As the game progressed, it started -- everything that he was coached to do was working, so he continued to do it.

Q. I was just wondering, kind of the emotional ups and downs your guys have faced the last two weeks with the loss to Miami and then going into a win as emotional as the Florida State, are you kind of worried about the toll that will take on them for the rest of the season, the kind of roller coaster?

TOM O'BRIEN: I would be if we had to play this weekend, but thank goodness we don't. Hopefully we can get off that and be solid the rest of the way. Certainly you would like to think that this win will give us a lot of confidence, but we've got six conference games left. Each game we treat as we're playing for the Conference

Championship. We've put ourselves back into the race by beating Florida State.

I think that we can be, with our senior leadership, hopefully not be so up and down.

An Interview With:

JIM GROBE WAKE FOREST

JIM GROBE: We do need an open date. It'll be good not to play this weekend. We're a little banged up and need to get some kids healthy. We've had a couple really tough weeks back to back, games that we had a chance late and didn't get it done. A little bit for us recovering physically but also trying to get our spirits up a little bit.

Q. Obviously T.D. (Terence Davis) stepped up and played well for you guys. I know you were hoping to get someone to step up. Give me your thoughts on the way Terence (Davis) has stepped up since then and I guess your overall take on the wide receivers right now.

JIM GROBE: Well, Terence played really well Saturday, and we needed him to do that. We tried to plug him in kind of into Camp's role a little bit and intentionally tried to get him the football a little bit more. Maybe didn't get it to him enough.

But this is his last year, and I felt really bad for him early season because he's had both of his shoulders separated, and he's really not been able to practice a lot. Last week was the first full really week of practice that he got where he really felt good, and it showed Saturday. So hopefully going forward he'll continue to improve and help us.

Q. Do you still feel like that's an area where you feel you need to see some guys step up because it was pretty much him shouldering the brunt like Camp has?

JIM GROBE: Yeah, I think so. Brandon Terry made a couple nice catches. I was disappointed, Sherman Ragland was hurt during the week last week and didn't have a very good week of practice and then dropped a couple balls early in the game and couldn't play anymore. I think he's got a hip flexor that's been giving him problems. So that was disappointing.

You know, really need to have more than one guy. I think with Terence we feel like we've got a kid that's a good player that can help us. We probably need to get Brandon Terry more involved, and I think certainly our hope is that Sherman Ragland will start to come on because we think he's got some special ability, but like I said, he was banged up most of last week and didn't play most of the game on Saturday after the first quarter, I think.

So yeah, it would be really, really important for us to have somebody in that group start playing a little better.

Q. I know you've had one of the great kickers in ACC history a few years ago, Sam Swank, and I was just reading about the game Saturday, and obviously the fact their freshman guy kicked two long ones was a big difference in the game. Can you talk about that placekicking and where you are with that? I know you guys missed a couple against Duke that might have made an impact. Just talk about the importance of a placekicker and what you're getting from that position.

JIM GROBE: Well, it's critical, really. You know, the situation we had this past Saturday against Maryland we had two very makeable field goals, had the wind at our back, the distance was no problem at all, and pushed one right and pulled one left. The first one we didn't hit very good, the second one we hit really good but just didn't get it through. As you said, they made a couple, and that was really the difference. We lost 19-14, and of course you make a couple field goals it's easy to figure out what the final is.

I think it's a little tougher than people think, though. It's not -- kicking is kind of streaky. Kickers, when they're confident, they tend to make them. When they're younger there's maybe not as much pressure. I think sometimes when you get older you know there's a little more expectation on you. So I think it's a tough job. I don't think it's easy. But certainly we need to kick field goals better.

I think for us we've always been a team that's tried to take people four quarters. We had Sam Swank, we won a bunch of games on field goals, and we need to get back to that, and so far we haven't done a good job kicking field goals. But it's a huge part of the game, especially when you're going to be in tight games most of the time.

Q. Do you have to change the way you coach because of the field goal kicking? I know Penn State this past week, one of the key things of the game was they just decided they weren't going to kick field goals, and several times passed up field goal opportunities to gamble on 4th down. Does it reach a point where you start coaching that way?

JIM GROBE: Well, I think it can, and we've done that some off and on in my career. I think a big part of it is how good is the defense you're going against and how big a gamble is it. I think if you're doing really well offensively, you're moving the ball well, you may feel like you've got a better chance of keeping the sticks moving and making a 1st down or scoring a touchdown than you do kicking a field goal. But if your offense has not been real productive and you're going against a really good defense, you've got to try to get points when you can.

I think most people at this level have the ability to kick field goals. It's not that your kicker doesn't have the ability to make field goals; it's just a matter of whether they're confident enough to make them on a consistent basis. And so that's the problem you've got as a coach. If you know you've got three points sitting out there if you make a good snap and hold and kick and your chances are not very good to get a 1st down, I think you've got to kick the ball. But I think if your offense is rolling and you feel like the defense you're going against is not as much of a challenge, then I think you may be better off just going for it than taking a chance and missing the field goal if you haven't been very consistent.

Q. At the end of the game, Tanner (Price) just didn't have time to get passes off. Where is the offensive line at this point in the season, and is that something that -- obviously you need significant improvement there for the second half.

JIM GROBE: Yeah, we've got issues, there's no question. We went into the season feeling like we'd have five pretty good guys up front. Thought if we could keep guys healthy we would be actually pretty good, even better than competitive. But right away, second practice, Steven Chase tears his ACL, and then in the game Saturday early in the game, Antonio Ford broke his leg, and he's our best offensive lineman not counting Garrick Williams. Our center is playing pretty good, our senior center is playing pretty

good, and we thought he would. But the other four, Steven Chase and Antonio Ford are arguably our two best offensive linemen.

Steven is coming back now trying to play with that ACL, and really for a guy with an ACL is hanging in there pretty good. But losing Antonio was a problem, and mainly because we had kind of repped five guys all week and really hoped to keep those five on the field, and so as soon as Antonio goes down, now we're putting in, kind of moving guys around, putting young guys back out there again.

Problem with Antonio, he won't be in this season. We're hopeful that -- or back this season. We're hopeful that Steven Chase will continue to come on. I've never had a kid play with an ACL up front, but I think as the year goes on, I think he'll help us there. But we've got problems. We have got depth problems and we've got some young guys playing. We've got one guy, Whit Barnes, that we're really playing out of position. He's a center and we've got him playing guard.

I think we'll try to over the next week and a half try to get our best five guys in there and hopefully they can give us the lion's share if not all the snaps when we go up to Virginia.

Q. Nikita (Whitlock) had his best game in a long time. Has that sort of been what you've been expecting from him this fall? I know he's had the injuries, but looks like he's back to his normal self.

JIM GROBE: Yeah, absolutely. You know, he had a little bit of a tweaked hamstring in August and really didn't start the season real well, and about halfway into the North Carolina game had a high ankle sprain, actually tore a ligament in his ankle and showed some toughness to me, came back against Duke and showed me some grit and kind of determination that you expect out of him.

But he was just okay; didn't shoot the lights out. But Saturday he looked like the old Nikita Whitlock. He made a bunch of bonus points and had some tackles for loss and a sack and stuff like that. You know, that's what we had hoped to have gotten in the first six games. We only got it in last Saturday's game, but hopefully going forward we can get more production out of him. We really need him, and I think he looked like the old Nikita to me, which is exciting for us.

Q. And how helpful was that to be able to move guys like Hasan (Hazime) and Tylor (Harris) back to their more natural positions at defensive end?

JIM GROBE: Well, I think it helps our defense and certainly helps them. I think both of those kids are defensive ends, and we've been moving both of them actually inside to the nose guard position with Nikita being gone. I think we would hopefully keep Nikita healthy the rest of the year and he'll get the lion's share of the snaps. The good thing is going forward that both of those kids have a little bit of experience down inside, so if Nikita needed a break or if he were to get banged up a little bit we can still slide either one of those guys down inside and be okay.

I think going forward if we can keep Nikita healthy, it's going to be not only good for Tylor and Hasan but good for our defense.

An interview with:

PAUL JOHNSON GEORGIA TECH

COACH JOHNSON: Good morning. I think the bye week comes at a great time for us. Certainly the first half of the season hadn't gone as we would have hoped or expected. I think it gives us a chance to heal up a little bit, regroup, and come back to see if we can't play a little better this last half of the season.

So we're looking forward to doing that. Coming off another tough game against Clemson who is a very good football team, but like every conference game we've had this year, it's been a close game. Ahead in the fourth quarter, and didn't turn out the way we would have liked.

Q. Coach, evaluating the team at the midway point the offense has actually statistically been as good as it's ever been at Georgia Tech. Obviously the problems are on defense. What are you trying to change in the off week and get the defense back to snuff?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, I think that clearly we've got to do some fundamental things better, but it was apparent to me our guys were having a hard time doing what we were asking them to do. We've got to minimize.



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I think we had 47 missed assignments in the Clemson game. Some of the stuff that we were trying to do was good stuff if you can do it, but we were having a hard time doing it. So we've got to get back to basics. Get back to where we're playing fast over there, and everybody knows what their assignments are and we can work from that standpoint. But it's got to be better.

Q. You run an offense that's different from what other people see. Does that make it harder for your defense in terms of in the preseason and off-season? They practiced against the defense that's not like one they'll see a lot in the regular season?

COACH JOHNSON: I don't know. I mean, I don't think so. I've been doing it for a long time, and we've had some really good defenses. You could say that about every team, couldn't you? Does Clemson practice against the offense they see every week, or just in our state, Georgia's a pro set offense, so when they play a spread team, do they get to practice against that the whole camp? You don't practice against yourself.

To me, if you're playing, you've got four receivers. We run pass scale, we run inside fits, we scout, we run the tight end. We do whatever. So I don't think that's as big an issue as maybe some people might. But, again, that's just my opinion.

Q. You mentioned that defensively one of the things you'd like to do is start playing faster on that side together. Is that just a matter of maybe simplifying the schemes a little bit or how do you do that?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, I think you eliminate as many calls as you can. When you've got emotions, and a guy can create three different calls and changes the scenario of what you're doing and those kind of things, our guys have struggled to do it. I think you get back to some basics and some simplicity.

It's always been my thought process that you can turn a 4.6 guy into a 4.9 guy really fast if he has to think all the time. There is no way you can play without thinking some, but it also has to be some ability to put your hand down and put the guy in front of you and play. So that's kind of what I'm talking about.

Q. Do you like the group of guys in terms of their athletic ability?

COACH JOHNSON: I think so. I think we've got certainly -- I think we should have played better than we have. I can say that about the offense too. We could play better than we've played, clearly, so could special teams. But the weakest link right now has been there, and it didn't seem to be getting better. In fact, it seemed to be going the other way.

Q. Obviously, you made a pretty radical move this week. Is that something that came to you several weeks ago or was that relatively recent a consideration?

COACH JOHNSON: I don't know how radical it was. I mean, the guy had been here for two and a half years, so I'm not sure it was really radical. It just came to the fact that we weren't playing very well. We played football for a long time here at Georgia Tech, and managed to give up 40 points in three consecutive games for the first time in the history of Georgia Tech football.

Statistically, we were 107 or 108 in the country on third downs, 91st in scoring. Any way you look at it, it wasn't good. So you could either keep doing the same things. And I think that Al Groh is a very smart man. He's a good man, and a smart guy, but clearly it wasn't working for us.

So you either keep doing the same things. He has a system, and he runs his system. Well, his system was not working for us, so we have to try to change. The definition of futility would be keep doing the same thing over and over again, and expect different results. It wasn't working.

Q. So your decision has been coming for a while or was it relatively in the last week?

COACH JOHNSON: No, it wasn't one game. It wasn't last week. I think it would have been an ongoing process in the last half of last year. If you look, I think, to the last 12 games, if you take out the Presbyterian game or whatever, we had given up over 30 points in eight of those games. We just have to play better than that.

In my opinion, we need to see if we can. Maybe we won't be able, to but I feel like we will. I think we can play better than that. Ultimately, I'm responsible for it, so I have to do what I feel like gives us the best chance to win.

Q. Are you committed to sticking with that three-four alignment this year and in the future, or do you want to get out of that?

COACH JOHNSON: No, I think that we're not going to radically change everything that we were doing over there. I don't think you can. But we're going to try to simplify, and we're probably not going to two-gap as much. Clearly our guys struggled with that. They didn't have much success with it.

So, you know, we'll get back to some more conventional, basic stuff, but we're not going to change. You can't right now. My general philosophy is whoever you hire that has a system, you let them run their system, and that's what we did here. But when it's clear that the system's not working for you, and, again, Al Groh's a very smart man and a good man. He's a good football coach. But it was not working for us, so that's why we made the change.

Q. Would you anticipate, obviously, having gotten to this point, but would you like to be out of the three-four next year or down the line?

COACH JOHNSON: No, I don't think it's the 3-4. To me, the biggest difference we were doing is we were two-gapping a lot more than anybody else in the country, bottom line. There are not very many teams in college that do that. I knew that when we went to that system, but it became apparent to me that we were struggling with it. We did not have the personnel to do what we were doing. Now do we have the personnel to do something else? We're going to find out.

An interview with:

LARRY FEDORA NORTH CAROLINA

COACH FEDORA: We're excited about getting on the road and going down to Miami and playing a good, young Miami football team that right now is undefeated in conference play. We know that we'll have our work cut out for us, and we'll have to play a complete game.

Q. I wondered when were you first exposed to a no-huddle offense, and where did you first try to implement that? Did you get some resistance at all from your coach at the time when you came to him and wanted to go to that?

COACH FEDORA: Well, gosh, the earliest that I can remember being exposed to it was just watching football as a kid. When teams went to their two-minute or last drive of a game, those type situations. So that was the first time I got interested in it. As an assistant coach, everybody has a part of it in their system because from when you went to two-minute, you had to be able to do something.

When I had the opportunity the first year as a coordinator at Middle Tennessee State, Andy McCollum was the head coach and asked me to be the coordinator, and I made the decision at that time we were going to be a no-huddle team. He didn't question it. He was hiring me to put in a system and to run an offense, so that's what I did.

Q. You've obviously got some skill players with tremendous talent. But in order to give them the opportunities they've had, your offensive line seems to be playing extremely well. Can you talk a little about that group and the job they've done?

COACH FEDORA: Yeah, I think if anybody talked to Gio (Bernard) this past week, he gave all the credit to the offensive line, and these guys have been very consistent for us throughout the year some better than others at times. But as a unit, we've been pretty consistent. We've kept people off the quarterback. We've kept him up right as much as possible, and they've done a good job in the running game.

So I think that those guys have probably been the most consistent group on our football team at this point. I think that's why you're seeing the results that you do.

Q. Jonathan Cooper, can you assess the kind of season he's had to this point?

COACH FEDORA: Well, Jonathan's a tremendous player. I can't imagine there being that many guards in the country with his kind of skill level. I've never had one, actually. So he's a very talented young man that believes in the goals of the team and truly wants the team to be successful. He's your typical offensive lineman. He doesn't talk about himself. It's not about him. It's about the team, and it's about seeing success as an offense and what they do, what we do as a team.

Q. What are the skills that he has that you like so much?

COACH FEDORA: Well, he's a 300-plus pounder that can really run, has great feet. I mean, he has phenomenal feet. He's got feet as good as tight ends out there. So he can stay on blocks. He can pull. He can move. He's very intelligent. He can pass block with the best of them. There is really not anything he can't do up front.

Q. Going down to Miami this time of year is a little different than some of the other places in the league being that it's probably going to be in the mid to upper 80s in the game. Just your thoughts how critical it will be to have that depth at running back with (Romar) Morris, (A.J.) Blue and Bernard, and your thoughts on wearing Miami down even though they're used to that temperature and playing in those games in the east?

COACH FEDORA: Yeah, we really don't play a whole lot of attention to the weather. That's one of the reasons we do it is because we want to be mentally tougher and not let the weather play a factor in the game, because we don't control it. We don't know if it's going to be warm one game, snowing the next, raining one game, dry the next. So we try to totally focus out on that. That starts with our philosophy back in camp. We never talk about it.

But having the depth at all of our positions is very important. But very, very important at running back to keep those guys fresh. And yes, that is part of what we try to do is we try to be in great physical conditioning with the tempo of what we do offensively and defensively, and know that we think it's going to play a factor in the third and fourth quarter on teams.

Q. Your offense seems to be rolling here the last couple of weeks. You've gotten off to better starts than you had previously. Just wondering if you feel like the players now have that confidence and that buy-in because you've got the results to go with your effort?

COACH FEDORA: I think the biggest thing for them is just your offensive linemen alone. For all during camp and during every practice, we are really trying to go fast. We are on their rear ends all the time about our tempo. For them, probably the majority of that has been, wow, this is

really hard and I'm tired but now you even see it in games. They're wanting to go fast. They see what's happening to a defensive line or a defensive front. They see the benefits from it. Now it's not so much in practice.

We don't have to talk about it a lot. Our guys understand what we want to do and why we want to do it. They also understand what it does to a defense because they can see what's happened in the third and fourth quarters in the games we've played.

Q. Is a five or six-game mark about the time you usually see that happen with a team when you're installing this kind of offense?

COACH FEDORA: I don't know. I've never counted them up and kept track of it. I just think knowing that we've had some guys that could do some things with the balls in their hands once the light did come on, once we started feeling a rhythm, they would see some success.

I will tell you this: We're far from being where we're going to be. If that makes sense. We're not -- I know we've had some success in the last couple of weeks, but we're not even close to our potential. You can go back in this last game, and wow. You look at it and go, golly, that's not very good.

So I know that we can get a lot better and will be a lot better in the future. The best thing about it is our team has improved each week.

Q. How quickly has this team picked up your offensive style compared to the other places you've been?

COACH FEDORA: I think the guys have picked it up. The difference here and everywhere else has been that these guys really are hungry and eager to have something, to have something to hold on to, to have some substance. Just because of what's gone on in the last two years with these guys and there being so much unknown and who is going to be our coach and what we're doing, all those things.

So I think they've been very, very eager and very accepting of the fact that we're bringing in this offense and, okay, Coach, let's go. Let's learn it as quickly as possible and let's go. That's what they've done. So you may say they've learned it a little quicker than the other teams, and part of that has to be with the skill level of the guys we have.

An interview with:

MIKE LONDON VIRGINIA

COACH LONDON: Good afternoon. Yes, a game against our cross-state rival, cross-boarder rival. A lot of young men on our team are from the Maryland area. We've recruited, since they're so close in proximity, we've recruited against them, and it makes for more of an exciting opportunity for these kids that are from that area and having a chance to play.

So we're excited about preparing for a Maryland team that's really been playing well, that's a really good defense. Coach has them playing well and playing hard. But it's Virginia's homecoming, and we're looking forward to playing and putting a four-quarter game together.

Q. Watching the game Saturday was a very different game in the second half. Was it something they did differently or something you guys failed to do that changed it that dramatically?

COACH LONDON: I think it might have been a little bit of that and some other combination. One of the things coming out of that game, which is painfully evident to us, is our need to play more people. Our need to play particularly up front in the front side defensively.

You play with that aggressiveness and enthusiasm and you spend all that, then you've got all these young guys that are still looking to get extended reps in the game. Then you come out in the third and fourth quarter, and when you have to turn the gas on, it's not particularly there. So you go back and look at opportunities like a Michael Moore or David Dean, guys we've committed Michael Moore to playing. David Dean doesn't have a redshirt year anymore. Chris Brathwaite has selected reps in the game, Eli Harold.

So I've committed this part of the season, this second half of the season to get guys game experience. Because the only way young players don't get game experience is playing them in the games and not trying to hang on with more experienced players that are in there because, eventually, they get worn out here a little bit. So we've addressed that. Some other technique things we've talked about, and hopefully the opportunity where we've exported some of these young players to get out and provide some energy.

Q. Can you evaluate the job Phillip Sims did at quarterback. Were you happy with his decisions?

COACH LONDON: First college start in his career. A lot has been said about he was a great player out of high school and in Alabama and things like that, starting his first game. There were some positives and some things that Phillip has to work on. Almost throwing for 300 yards, that's a positive, distributing the ball, but having two turnovers, that's a negative, particularly when we're not getting turnovers. We can't afford to give turnovers.

So I know there are some throws that he wished he would have had back. I found out after the game he made a comment that it was his fault that we lost the game. You admire a guy that wants to take everything on his shoulders, but at the same time there are other people that contributed to not executing and not doing what we needed to do.

So going into Game 2 here, second time we start with the plan more crafted towards what he can do, his abilities, and we expect a positive outcome in response. Phillip expects that also.

Q. Can you give your thoughts on the play of receiver Darius Jennings and the role he's developed in this UVA offense as only a sophomore?

COACH LONDON: Yeah, I tell you, with Tim Smith kind of in and out with his injuries, Darius as a true sophomore has basically become -- he's been playing extensively -- has become kind of the guy. Even with all that being said, having played last year and having played this year, there is some experience that he has, but there are still some things that obviously players that the longer they play, the more experience they get, the more understanding of the game they have.

But Darius has proven that he's got some big playability going from last year and a couple of catches this year. Hoping that he really blossoms and takes that role that we're missing right now with Timmy being out. Take the role of being the leader in the huddle as well as the guy that can be a go-to guy on the field.

He's taking pride in accepting that. But it takes those opportunities in games to be involved in doing that. But Darius is an outstanding young man that is working hard to be a team leader and be vocal. Sometimes those sophomores don't want to say anything. They're looking around. But

we need guys that have gone in games and done things and contributed and produced to have the feeling that there is a stake in what they say and what they do, And Darius is one of them.

Q. On the subject of younger players and veteran players how are you -- what kind of break down do you have on special teams? It appears on your kick returns; punt returns and kickoff returns that you're not getting a lot of blocking. Is that a lot of younger players? At some point do you look to put more veterans out there?

COACH LONDON: I think that where we're now you look and evaluate what you're doing on offense, defense, how you're doing, and particularly who is doing it. One of the commitments when you play young players is obviously to get them three or four phases of your special teams unit. That's kind of how our now starting safeties, Anthony Harris and Brandon Phelps, how they came in and played. If you look at some of their guys now, you see them in Kwontie Moore, Demeitre Brim.

But as I said, you look now and say, listen, we have to make sure we have to have success in special teams area, particularly since it's one play football. The other day we tried to address the who, to put people in there that have gone in games, played in games and could give us an opportunity to return the ball or set up a block because of game experience. So it's a mixture of some young guys, but at the same time, having to put personnel out on the field that's gone in games and done things in games.

So as you look at it and self-evaluate what you do, you have to make those type of corrections and those type of substitutions as far as personnel-wise to bolster what started out, particularly in the kickoff return, to be a good unit for us.

Q. When you look at Maryland on film this year and what is the biggest area of improvement you've seen compared to when you played them last year in College Park? To that end, what do you think of the job that Randy's done there from year one to year two?

COACH LONDON: You look at the film, and obviously they're playing a lot of young players too. But you see schematically, offensively in terms of spreading the ball out, they've utilized a

dynamic player like Stefon Diggs. Their quarterback is very efficient, even though he's a young player. Brian Stewart defensively bringing the system from the Cowboys, changed up what they do, who they move around and the emphasis that they have on their linebacker play has been very improved.

They're playing with a level of confidence. That's important when you have a young team that's playing with a level of confidence and you can see that. It's very evident on film. You hope for longevity in this profession, but you know that you evaluate it from year to year, and as things go on, and you look at Coach Edsall's case right now, there is an improvement, and you see his team playing with that high level and that energy. So I think that's probably the biggest thing that you notice.

An interview with:

FRANK BEAMER VIRGINIA TECH

COACH BEAMER: I'm really impressed with this Duke football team. Very well-coached, and playing good football. Really using a couple of different quarterbacks, actually three. They do different things so that complicates things for you defensively. Then defensively they played very hard and were well-coached. So we've got our work cut out again this week.

Q. UNC's offense, are they doing anything uniquely in style or is there success against you and others, was it just about their talent level there?

COACH BEAMER: Well, I think they've got a good plan. I don't think there is any question about that. They've got good people. 26 (Giovani Bernard) is a special back, and the receiver is big and tall and they can go get it. They've got an experienced offensive line. I think it's a combination of good planning and good people.

Q. If you look back at your time at Virginia Tech, you had a struggle early on before you turned the program around. I was wondering how you knew when it turned and I guess the reason I'm asking is because I'm wondering if Duke has made a turn in its program as well?

COACH BEAMER: Yeah, I think Duke is very impressive. You look at them, and they've got a lot of good players. Like I said, I think they're extremely well-coached. It takes time. Dave Cutcliffe has done a good job there. His staff has done a good job, and I give them all the credit.

Q. How do you know from your own situation, how did you know when you got your program turned around?

COACH BEAMER: Well, probably when we got eligible for that first Independence Bowl. That was something that had not happened before, so I think that's probably when we knew it.

Q. I just want to know a little about Sean Renfree, the quarterback. When you watch him, what do you see from the guy that's been the main starter before getting hurt. What will you see from him?

COACH BEAMER: A big, tall guy that can really throw it. He's really accurate. He's a red-shirt senior. He's been around. He knows where he's going with the football, 72% completion percentage, so that's strong right there.

Q. And Tariq Edwards for you, what do you anticipate his role being this week? Will getting him back help your defense, do you think?

COACH BEAMER: Well, yeah. We'll see how practice goes for him this week, then determine his role. But he was an excellent player last year. He was one of our more talented guys and better players on defense, so it will be good to get him back out there.

Q. We were asking some of the defensive guys yesterday about you guys start out with a lot of intensity in practice. As you look at the intensity through the six games, how would you grade that and where do you think you are from the intensity standpoint overall?

COACH BEAMER: We have a bunch of players that want to be successful, work to be successful, and want to be successful. We've got to help them and make sure we take care of the little things and the details because those details, if you don't take care of them, it can cause long plays, and cause inconsistency in your offense and inconsistency in your special teams. So that's what we're working on right now.

Q. With David Wang, he was hobbling around so much on Saturday. He still played. Has he been able to do much this week?

COACH BEAMER: He didn't practice yesterday. We'll put out the report on Thursday as to what his status is.

Q. You mentioned one of the reasons for the offense's success at North Carolina is their offensive line. Can you just talk about their ability as a unit, and also particularly their left guard, Cooper?

COACH BEAMER: Yeah, the offensive line, I think has protected Logan very well. We drew it too many times the other day. The game situation dictated that, but I think overall they've protected him well. We've got to be a little more balanced in our offense. I think that is the key thing for us right now is to get more balance.

Q. I'm sorry. I didn't make that clear on my question. I was actually asking about North Carolina's offensive line. And particularly their left guard, Jonathan Cooper?

COACH BEAMER: Oh yeah, they're a veteran group of guys. They've been around, and that is one place you want to experience is your offensive line. I'm very impressed with them, and I'm very impressed with Cooper. They get things done very well. Then you put a back behind those guys, and they've got three of them, really. But you put a guy that can make you miss, and you've got something really good going.

An interview with:

DAVID CUTCLIFFE DUKE

COACH CUTCLIFFE: This is a huge challenge for us. Any time we've gone to Blacksburg, it's been hard for us. They are a physical team. I think it's one of the better programs in the country I've said it time and time again that Coach Beamer is the top football coach in the country. He has all of our respect, and they have got weapons, they've got physical strength. You better strap it on when you play a Virginia Tech football team. I'm glad we've got a few guys on our team that have been up there. They

understand Virginia Tech football, and they understand the challenge it's going to be. But I know we're -- I'm sure we're looking forward to it, but we're very realistic in knowing how big a challenge this is to match up with them physically.

Q. The fact that you guys have multiple quarterbacks in the game plan and in the fold, how much pressure do you think that puts on Tech defensively during the week as they prepare?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: I don't know that we're really much different with the two guys. We're still trying to work through this thing to figure out is Sean healthy enough and how he's responded. He's practicing more than he did last week, but we're going to have to let the week play itself out.

But we're really not very different. We're having to work with both of them, and we can't teach two different offenses for everybody else. It's not that much difference, I don't think, for them.

Q. When you look at Virginia Tech on film defensively, obviously they still have the athletes to be good there, but the numbers aren't there. They haven't been a great defense this season. What do you see when you watch them? Do you feel like it's a group that will get it together?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Yeah, I think they're outstanding athletically. They've got a few new faces in the secondary, and there's always some growing pains with that. They've got a tremendous front. They play hard, like they always do. They make you execute. They've run into a couple of hornets' nests.

North Carolina can score points on anyone. When (Giovani) Bernard's healthy, and that offensive front they have, that's difficult. That's going to be difficult for anybody, difficult for us.

Cincinnati is a really good football team. No doubts about that. So you just kind of look at every circumstance. What I do know is Virginia Tech is undefeated at home. They have good football players, a great deal of pride in their program, and nobody will play harder. So we expect to fight like crazy to be in it, and that's kind of the way it's always been with us and Virginia Tech.

Q. You guys have gotten a lot of publicity for the hot start and being in contention for a Bowl game. What would a win on the road over Virginia Tech mean for your program?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, obviously to these kids and I've said this here all week, you can't hide the fact that they're hungry for postseason play. Why wouldn't they be. It's one of the dreams of a college player so that would impact them in a big way. They would be excited about that. I'd be excited about another ACC win. And an ACC road win doesn't come easy. So there are a lot of carrots out there to be earned, and we'll have to play really well to reach that point.

Q. As you built this team from '08 on, what did you try to get better at? What areas did you target, whether stronger, faster, bigger?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Kind of all of them to be honest with you. I am a big believer that people have to move their feet to play football. So ours was quickness, athleticism, certainly speed. I stated that the day I got the job. That is my background. I don't like linemen that can't move their feet. We've got some pretty athletic linemen. We've had to take into effect, and we've really worked hard at getting stronger and changed our approach this summer with those linemen. I think that helped us. They got a lot stronger and ran a little less. They're real good athletes for the most part. It was a combination.

After we came in here, the biggest challenge we thought we faced was the level of conditioning. We've worked really hard at that. That's not an overnight process. Our team now can play 60 minutes. We feel like we've gotten our guys in a program and a mode where we're conditioned enough to have a chance to play 60 minutes, which to be honest with you, it's one of the bigger things with me because we have to be a team to play 60 minutes to win. We're not going to be good enough to not do it any other way.

Q. I know three years ago this team got to 5-3 and was one win away from that sixth win and lost out. Do the players on the team that were on that team kind of have that in their minds now that you guys are in the same position again? How has that factored with them?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: No, not really. That was a disappointing year. To end up 5-7, we had a good team. That is a distant memory for these guys. I think their approach right now is they're liking competing and believing they have a chance to compete. I don't think anybody's looking back behind us at all.

Q. Can you just talk a little bit about Conner Vernon and what he was like in high school and what he's accomplished at Duke over the past four years?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, Conner was a big-time play maker in high school we had him in camp. I think the thing that shocked me was not only how fast he was, but his ability to accelerate. He can change gears well and quickly and go get a ball. Even on his digs in the middle of the field, he can accelerate and go get a football, and his strength level is good as a high school player. All of that has improved. Because of that, he ends up the leading receiver in the history of this league.

His ratio -- when he gets an opportunity, he catches it. He doesn't miss many opportunities, so that ratio is really high you throw it in his direction, and generally he has a good chance of a completion. He's a very, very bright young man. He uses his mind as well as his body. He is just a super young man, and we couldn't be more proud of someone being a record holder. He's the kind of guy that you want in a conference holding one of your records. He is a great student-athlete, and a great person.

Q. When you look the job five years ago, what was the initial obstacle you ran into in terms of enacting a culture change in a program that hadn't won in a while? What was the biggest challenge at first?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, just creating any kind of expectation of success. That wasn't just on the field. Everything. Everything that a Duke football player had to be done was with excellence. Our foundation became quickly disciplined in conditioning.

You're not going to believe this number, but this is a fact. As a team, I thought we were the softest, baddest football team I'd ever seen. Collectively, that team from January to reporting day lost 497 pounds. Just a work ethic, just a mentality. My roots are if you're going to play football, you're going to play it one way. That's just

a way of life where I come from, and it just didn't exist.

I want them to do everything well. We've improved our grade point average and that's at Duke. We've done all of those things, but football wasn't important enough to us. If you're a major college football player, you're going to make some sacrifices. And I think we're there now because these guys know no other way. These guys we have here now know our way. We are a fairly well conditioned, strong football team, which gives us a chance each week.

Q. In terms of I was talking to a few players this week that said on campus, more people are noticing what you guys are doing. Is there a sense of where you guys have been or are you welcoming all newcomers who are noticing Duke for the first time in a while on the football field?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: I love them. We're embracing all of our students and all of our people. I can't blame them for disappearing from the history that we have. There have been a lot classes graduating here that may not have seen but one or two home victories while they were in school. When we came in the previous -- we started in the 2008 season, the last home victory was in September of 2005.

People don't understand where it was, so I don't blame those people. What I did tell the players yesterday is that right now is not a great time to be listening to your friends, especially the new ones. You better listen more to what your enemies have to say about you, because you're going to probably find more reality in that and what you do than what your friends tell you are.

We're the same hard-working group of people that have to prove ourselves each week. We really don't have them. It's not going to change. We're not going to have any other avenue or path to take. So I love it. Our crowd Saturday was a great crowd. They were a football crowd. They knew when and how to cheer. They were into it. They made a difference in the second half, and I felt it I've been around that kind of crowd all my life, and I was very appreciative. I've said that numerous times since that game, they've made a significant difference, and it makes you look forward -- I know the players are looking forward to getting back to Wallace Way, and it hadn't been that way, so that's a great thing. We welcome all newcomers.

Q. I was impressed with your game this past Saturday at the restraint your kickoff return guys were showing, not taking the ball out of the end zone when every week you see players taking it one or two yards deep and getting tackled inside the 20. What is your rule of thumb there? When you heard the new rules that you tried to take advantage of, did you think it might provide an advantage for you?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Yeah, I've paid a lot of attention to the new rule, and we did a lot of work on this in spring practice and in camp. Really I go into every game with a plan and if I see a kicker that has hang time and a unit that can run, we're not bringing anything out of the end zone. I see the same thing you see, and I'm seeing it on tape.

I'm seeing knuckleheads coming out three yards back in the end zone and getting tackled at the 12. It's not ideal. What we ideally like to do is we've got a freshman kicker, and he's going to get better and better at putting it where we want it. If we can put the ball where we want it, and put it at the 1, or 2 or 3-yard line, we think we can tackle you inside the 20. Why would we give you the ball on the 25-yard line?

So we work very hard at that point of the game, because when you're kicking off, it's either at the beginning of either half or you've just scored. How great an advantage is it to go back-to-back if you can pin somebody at the 12-yard line, go out there, play great defense, go three-and-out and put a score back on top of that. You can take a team out of a game.

So I think it's a big rule. We made a big, big deal about it. But our return men have strict orders one way or the other. I don't even like them catching it if they know it's deep, because there is no reason. The only thing that can happen if you catch one in the end zone and drop it, it's a live ball. People don't know that. So if I put them in a spot and it's over their head, just leave it alone and leave it at that.

An interview with:

AL GOLDEN MIAMI

COACH GOLDEN: We're back home. Had to play what I think is the hottest teams in our conference in North Carolina. Explosive on offense, averaging 44 points a game and nearly 500 yards. The offensive line is excellent, veterans. I think they've only given up four sacks. They have everything you're looking for in a tight end running back and wide receiver. I think, obviously, (Giovani) Bernard coming back has added kind of a boost for North Carolina. But A.J. Blue, the other running back that plays is excellent as well.

I think their quarterback is doing a nice job now. His touchdown-interception ratio is tremendous, and he's really confident right now.

On defense, athletic, fast, very strong up front, taking the ball away, being disruptive with tackles for loss and keeping opponents under 18 points a game and this is the most compete special teams unit that I've seen on film so far. So great challenge for us from not only for a Coastal Division rival, but somebody that's playing really well right now.

Q. Coming off that Notre Dame game, what is the emphasis for your defense in terms of how to improve and stop that high-powered offense of Carolina?

COACH GOLDEN: Just to move forward. We're really not a defense right now that's focused on other people as much as we are just trying to improve ourselves and execute ourselves. We're hoping for some continuity now in terms of our lineups. We have some guys growing up. We really don't have too many guys that haven't been exposed to a college game now or this level of competition.

We need guys to step up and play well. And clearly if we're not good on third downs in the red zone against this team, it's not good. So that's one of the emphasis for sure.

Q. You talked last week about all the big concerns the Notre Dame defense posed for you. How much do you just write last week off that we were playing such a good defense.

Or how much are you saying we need to fix this or fix that to get better on offense this week?

COACH GOLDEN: Well, we do. I think North Carolina's playing as good as any team we've played so far in all three phases. They're explosive on offense, can score in a hurry, also have the running game in balance. They're disruptive on defense, and can take the ball away in their returning kicks and punts. They have great coverage from their special teams. This is a come pleat team, that's playing really well, with a lot of confidence right now.

Q. We haven't had a chance to talk to you since your AD resigned and now you're looking for your third AD in four years. How important is it for the program to get stability up at the time, something that Miami has had in the past?

COACH GOLDEN: Yeah, we need that. I don't think there is any question. One of the characteristics we should be looking for is someone that wants to be a part of the South Florida community and be part of the Miami community and be here for a long time. It's important to all of the coaches, not just me, but guys like Jim Morris who have been here for a long time, and Katie Meier, and all of the coaches on our staff. So it's critical that we find someone that wants to be here.

Q. As a coach, is it concerning that you've had so much turnover here in the last couple of years?

COACH GOLDEN: No, it's not concerning at all. Shawn is a good friend and a great AD. He did what he thought was best for his family, and clearly that's different from how I feel or how Katie Meier feels or how Jim Larranaga feels. We want to be here at Miami, and we want to build this program.

Certainly from a football standpoint, I'm excited because we are playing so many young guys. So right now the message for our team is invest, because we have so many guys that are going to be with us for a long time.

Q. I'm sure you've got a hundred other things on your mind earlier this week, but one of your mentors, Al Groh, was let go at Georgia Tech. Is it an awkward situation for you to know how to respond or when to respond or if you want to respond or call Al or whatever?

COACH GOLDEN: Yeah, I just think, again, you guys are involved in the stuff as it comes out. We're so engrossed in North Carolina, that I couldn't even -- I heard about it really quickly yesterday or last night. I was shocked. I don't think there is any question everybody knows how I feel about Coach and what he's meant to my career and the opportunities that he afforded me.

But I'm not there. I don't know what's transpired. I know, Al, if he wants to continue to coach, he'll bounce back. He's an excellent coach.

From my standpoint, I think it's important to give him some time, and I'll reach out to he and Ann. As I told him before the game, I'm grateful and thankful for all he's done for me and our family.

Q. When you prepare for North Carolina, one of the things that Coach Fedora talks about a lot is the tempo on offense, the pass tempo. How difficult is that to prepare for? How much of that is a focus on your preparation?

COACH GOLDEN: Yeah, it's tough to prepare for. It's hard to replicate that when you're trying to look at a card. I think the thing that's making it all run is Carolina's in good on condition right now. The other thing Coach would say is his trigger man is doing a great job with distributing the ball, with (Sean) Tapley and (Erik) Highsmith and (Quinshad) Davis, and they have all the wideouts.

I know there are other guys there too, but those guys jump out at you. (Bryn) Renner's throwing it well, and then they have Bernard and Blue, and that's why they have the answers on offense.

Q. You guys have won a few shootouts. Could we be looking for another one Saturday?

COACH GOLDEN: You guys can look for it, I looked the other way. We're the Cardiac Kings right now. We're just trying to win. I don't know what's going to transpire. But if you're year is any indication, here's what we do know. We know we don't know what's going to transpire.

Q. What does the film reveal about their offensive line and how it functions?

COACH GOLDEN: Number one, I don't want to short change anybody, because all of the offensive linemen starting five are excellent in their own ways. But the two guys that jump out is (Jonathan) Cooper at left guard, this guy is as

good as anybody and (Brennan) Williams at right tackle. Those guys are as good as anybody at their position in the game and they play like it. They're active, they can run. They're knee benders and can play with leverage. Very talented young men. Excellent offensive line in terms of experience. I think they go three seniors, a junior and a sophomore, and long and strong and obviously athletic.

Q. I was going to ask you about Cooper, but you beat me to the punch there.

COACH GOLDEN: He is good. Lot of respect for the way he plays. The other guys as well. It's a veteran line. I don't want to short change (James) Hurst and (Russell) Bodine and (Travis) Bond and all those guys. They're good football players.

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