

**October 24, 2012**



An interview with:

**FRANK SPAZIANI  
BOSTON COLLEGE**

COACH SPAZIANI: We're coming home, happy to be home after three weeks on the road. We're looking to get in front of our fans and have a good ballgame on Saturday.

With that, questions.

**Q. Frank, I wanted to ask you, passing yards in this conference is up something ridiculous, like 22% over two years ago. I know the game is getting more offense-happy. Is there any rhyme or reason to it in this conference or are we in a golden age of quarterbacks up and down the ACC?**

COACH SPAZIANI: That's an excellent question. I think we have some quarterbacks that are stepping up in the league this year. It certainly plays into your comment about the offenses.

But certainly the skill level of our quarterbacks, and the coaches are obviously very good coaches and understand how to use them. That's what I would attribute it to. Put the quarterbacks in with a good system, and there you go.

**Q. Is it getting to the point where teams realize now the days of counting on winning a game 20-17 is probably out the window for the most part? You need to score a bunch of points pretty much.**

COACH SPAZIANI: Yeah, there's certainly a shift in how offenses are being played right now. Once again, things are cyclical. I think the defenses are a little bit behind in certain aspects.

**Q. It's been a rough year for you. Did you see this coming? Not too much of a surprise to you? Did you feel this could be a**

**tough season? Privately thought this could be a tough year, but I don't want to let on that it's going to be a rough year?**

COACH SPAZIANI: Once again, I think as a head coach you understand exactly what the problems are and you try to manage your way through it. I think anybody that looked at our roster, has looked at it over the last four years, takes a look at it, would understand the challenges that we have.

We haven't been able to manage our way through that. Other people have that, too. Every year is rough. There's always problems and you have to manage your way through it. We just haven't done a very good job of it, to be honest with you.

**Q. How worried are you this may be the last part of the season here as BC's head coach?**

COACH SPAZIANI: How do I feel about it? Nobody sheds more blood, sweat, and tears on Saturday than I do. I know what our situation is, I know what I'm doing, I know the problems I have to work through. That's what I'm worried about. I'm worried about getting the victory on Saturday.

**Q. Coach, you were in about this same position about this time last year. You turned it on, won three of your last five, finished strong. Do you see any signs or hints that something similar could happen this time?**

COACH SPAZIANI: I see a lot of positive. Once again, I see a lot of positive things going on. What's going to happen in the remainder of the games, that's why we play them.

Our players are working hard. We got good coaches. We'll see what happens.

**Q. Does the fact you did turn it around last year help in terms of keeping the players from, I don't want to say packing it in, but...**

COACH SPAZIANI: Once again, that's a common question, it's logical, human nature. But as I've said over and over again, I've been here 16

years and for a lot of good reasons. One of the reasons, our guys come to work every week. They compete. Our motto is, Ever to excel. These guys embrace it.

I see it on the practice field. We practiced well yesterday. Hopefully we'll practice well today, and that's how you transform it into wins.

One week at a time and we'll see what happens.

**Q Coach, this weekend I believe it's Military Appreciation Day at Boston College. Do you have a special feeling about that? Anything personally you have some thoughts about what that means to you?**

COACH SPAZIANI: Well, once again, I think it's the Wounded Warriors and Military Appreciation Day. I think those people that serve our country, defend us, our rights that we have here, deserve our utmost respect. Any tribute we can pay to them, as small as it is, is well deserving. We try to get that message across to our players. I understand it as well as anybody. Hopefully the youth of America will understand it, too.

**Q. Anyone on your team have a military connection that might be pertinent for this weekend?**

COACH SPAZIANI: I believe we do. You caught me a little off guard with that one. We're not focused in on any one individual for sure. But we have people with military backgrounds, yes, guys on our staff.

An interview with:

## DABO SWINNEY CLEMSON

COACH SWINNEY: Good morning.

Obviously for us a short week. Proud of our guys for how they competed last week. It was a big win for us. I'm proud of them for how they've come back in with a quick turnaround Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, in trying to prepare to go on the road, play at Wake Forest.

Good football team. They've competed their tails off in every single game. Always played us very tough. Very well-coached. We'll have to continue to improve as a team and play well,

especially on the road, to have a chance to win up there.

Look forward to heading up that way here in just a little bit. Our guys are getting ready for meetings right now. We'll leave Clemson about 1:50. I'm sure it will be a great game tomorrow night. Look forward to being a part of it.

**Q. Dabo, you suffered some injuries recently in your secondary. Wondering how the depth is looking there for you and if you have to move some players around to help out with that.**

COACH SWINNEY: We're very thin. There's no doubt about that. But it's an opportunity for a couple of those young guys to get maybe their first significant chance. A guy like Cortez Davis, who has been getting better, but has not gotten a lot of reps because there have been a couple of guys in front of him. He's getting a lot of practice time. That's really what he needs to improve. He needs a lot of reps. We're able to give those to him. You could see a guy like him get an opportunity here pretty soon.

We have (Xavier) Brewer, Garry Peters that will start at corners. Doesn't look like (Bashaud) Breeland is going to be able to go. We were hopeful he would be able to go today. He has some type of abdominal strain, but still not quite well enough. We were hoping he'd be better today. He's going to be out.

Yeah, we're in dire straits right now as far as if we were to get somebody else injured. If everybody stays healthy, the guys we got, we'll be okay. Get another injury, we'll have to start looking at all options.

We've taken a guy like Adam Humphries, who is one of our best wideouts, but he's played a lot of DB in his background as well, we worked him a little bit this week as an emergency situation. He certainly understands DB, played his whole career, we just have to keep it simple in what we ask him to do. No doubt athletically he can get the job done.

That's where we are. Obviously we get Breeland back soon. Of course, Darius (Robinson) is out for the year. We keep bringing these other guys along.

**Q. Coach, I wondered, last year's game came down to the wire. You had to come from way behind. Does that help you prepare, the**

**memory of that game, how tough it was for you?**

COACH SWINNEY: I mean, not really. These guys have great respect for Wake, the ones that have been in this program. As good of a coached team as there is out there. They always played hard, play us tough.

Our guys are focused on this team, this team tomorrow night, nothing about last year. But they certainly understand, the ones who were here last year, we got down 14 points and had to battle hard to get back in this thing. Gave up a punt return for a touchdown, had to make a game-winning kick to win it at home.

There's no question, they have a lot of respect for Wake Forest, as we should.

**Q. Thursday, and I know most of this predates you, Clemson hasn't had much luck on Thursday night. Any reason for that?**

COACH SWINNEY: Well, I don't know (laughter). We're hoping to change that. There's a lot of things we haven't done here in a while that we've been able to accomplish over the last three years. Hopefully we can start changing that trend.

You got to take the good with the bad with the tradition of your program. It is what it is. We won the national championship, won this conference more than anybody. We like to talk about that. We also have been pathetic on Thursday nights. I was only the head coach in one of those games, Georgia Tech, my first year, it's still all ours, our tradition. We've got to change that standard.

There's a lot of things, again, prior to us getting this program going we hadn't done. We've been able to change a lot of those things over the last three years, and hopefully this is one other thing we are changing. Whenever we play on Thursday nights, we play a little bit better.

One of the reasons we probably don't have quite as good a record is most of them have all been on the road for whatever reason. Clemson, I don't think we've had maybe one or two on Thursday nights at home. I have never been part of a Thursday night at home and I've been here for 10 years. It's an interesting situation from that standpoint.

So it's tough to win on the road. Probably been some pretty good teams they played, as well. Hopefully we can start a new trend tomorrow night and start winning on Thursday nights. I don't think they line the field differently or anything like that (smiling).

**Q. Coach, you're seven games into this season. What do you think is the identity of your football team?**

COACH SWINNEY: Blue-collar, improving, a team that's focused on trying to get better. I think we've got a team that's competitive, a team that responds to adversity and the situation that presents itself.

I like these guys. Good leadership. That's where we are right now, kind of a work in progress.

**Q. What have you learned most about your team since that Florida State game?**

COACH SWINNEY: Well, again, we got good players. They play hard. They handle adversity. The Florida State game, we played our tails off, got the lead for most of the game, had opportunities to close the door in all three phases and just couldn't get it closed.

You have to give Florida State credit for that. They kind of kicked it back open as we were shutting it. They made plays on offense, huge plays in special teams, plays on defense in that fourth quarter, turned everything around.

It's tough. But what do you do from that point? These guys have been about the right things. They went back to work, realized that we have to keep getting better, it's a long season, and they responded.

The last three weeks, I see our team really improving. That's what we got to continue to do.

We got a good group of guys. They're fun to coach. They want to be good. They want to win. I think they really have bought into it's really about Clemson, it's about how we play, prepare, execute, type of energy and enthusiasm that we play with.

Again, good bunch to be around every day, and hopefully we can just stay focused on the task at hand and just try to be the best we can be.

**Q. Wake Forest has not given up 20 points in either of their last two games. Is that because of the opponents they played or are they playing better defense?**

COACH SWINNEY: They do a great job on defense. They're a little bit different. They're an odd front most of the time, really good in the secondary. They're active at linebacker. Up front, that No. 50, the little nose guard they got, he is the heart and soul of their defense. There's a lot of

movement. They bring pressure. They just do a good job of executing their scheme.

Like I said earlier, they are well-coached. They know what they're doing. They rarely beat themselves. They do an excellent job of taking care of the football and creating turnovers. That's been a big key for them.

An interview with:

## **JIMBO FISHER FLORIDA STATE**

COACH FISHER: Looking forward to a very big game versus Duke this weekend. Duke has done a great job this season. Have a very dynamic passing attack, done a super job on defense. Have an excellent punter and kicker. It will be a huge challenge for us this weekend. We'll have to bring our A game.

Coach Cutcliffe has done a tremendous job with those guys. He has them playing tremendous football. They are very sound, very good players, dynamic explosion on offense, defense, cause a lot of problems, different blitz packages, pressures. Do a great job in special teams.

Happy to get a great road win. Proud of our team, getting over adversity in the beginning. Playing behind, playing solid football throughout the rest of the game, overcame a lot of things in the rest of the game. Typical rivalry game. Something was always different. That's the way rivalry games are. Very fortunate to come out on top.

Very proud of our kids. I think we got better in the game in a lot of phases. We must continue to get better again this week when we play Duke because, like I say, I think Duke has had an outstanding season, done a great job, has excellent players and are coached extremely well. We have to be on top of our toes.

Very proud of the way our kids are practicing this weekend and looking forward to playing Duke this weekend.

**Q. Coach, the big news this week is the loss of Chris Thompson. How much of the offensive playbook will change with him being out of the lineup?**

COACH FISHER: None of it will. Our young guys have adapted. (James) Wilder has played a bunch, (Devonta) Freeman started almost all of last year. There will be no changes in what we do or how we do it.

**Q. Obviously Duke is also riding a major high, being bowl eligible for the first time since '94. In your opinion, what player on their roster has made the biggest impact on their team this year?**

COACH FISHER: I don't know if you can say any one. The quarterback is outstanding, two receivers do a superb job. One of the quiet guys on their team is their punter, 45-yard net average, freshman, 12 returns all year against him, does a tremendous job.

Their turn around defense, they're very smart how they play defense, great leverage on the ball, very well coached, picks up the blitz packages. I don't know if you can say any one player. I think that's why they're bowl eligible. It's not just one player. I think it's they're whole team. They are a very sound team.

**Q. When you look at the passing numbers in the year, do you think it's more of a by-product that so many teams have junior and senior quarterbacks or is this just part of where the games going now with more points, yards across the board?**

COACH FISHER: Both. I really do. Look at the NFL. It's the way it's spread out. I think the kids are getting developed better at quarterback across the country right now because now that football has taken on all the seven-on-seven things, kind of like AAU basketball has. The kids are more developed. When they get to college, they can adapt better.

There's more athletes playing. Everybody has skill guys. Everybody wants to put you in space. I think it's a by-product of the way it goes. Advancement of the game. It's just kind of a trend in the way things are going.

But experience does matter at the quarterback position. I think having an experienced quarterback is making a big difference too.

**Q. When you talk about seven-on-seven, the emphasis on that is primarily offense, it would seem. Are there**

**elements of the game that are being ignored or is there balance?**

COACH FISHER: No, I don't think it's being ignored. Teams still run the ball. Defensive players get to play that all the time. Skilled players at linebackers, DB. They're all developing because they're playing against that year-round, seeing it.

Teams still run the ball. They're tired of trying to knock out all the big guys, spreading out. That's what you want in the running game anyway.

I don't think any elements are being ignored. It's just you have more athletes. In football, even when you wad them up, you're trying to block and create a hole. You're trying to create space. They're just doing it in different ways.

**Q. Obviously when you have your star defensive end get hurt, you had the depth to deal with that situation. Do you feel as confident, less confident in terms of the depth at running back?**

COACH FISHER: No, I feel very confident. Freeman played all last year. Wilder had some big games for us in big-time situations. Lonnie Pryor, he's still back there. We feel very confident in the tailback situation.

Freeman played almost the whole season last year. Wilder had a tremendous year, played a lot last year. We feel comfortable in the depth at that situation.

**Q. When you look at the Duke film, what jumps out at you?**

COACH FISHER: I think they're playing with a lot of confidence. I think they're better offensively. The quarterback is even better than he was. We thought last year he was a tremendous player. The receivers, Vernon and those guys are all doing a good job of getting open. They ran the ball last game for 200 yards.

Defensively they're mixing up blitzes. Very sound in what they do. Create great leverage on the ball. They're pressing, they're off, doing great things.

Special teams, I said it before, their punter, net 45 yards a punt, you're changing field position. Making guys go the long way, not giving up big plays on defense, being sound on the run, making you beat them. They're playing better overall as a team and have better confidence.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about the running. Up until the game with North**



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**Carolina, when you watched tapes, they haven't run the ball really well. What changed in that game against a good defensive front?**

COACH FISHER: Here is the thing, they were always committed to running. They always still ran the ball. Maybe their numbers weren't as good. Maybe they were focusing on the passing game, but all of a sudden those runs start coming out. I think their ability to throw the ball has created the ability to run. People always think you got to run to throw, but you can throw to run.

I think their passing game, the things they create, makes it very hard to not load up on pass things. All of a sudden they're pounding that ball. Coach Cutcliffe, their offensive coordinator, they got great coaches. They've all been around and know how to manipulate things. I think the pass is setting up the run and now they're getting balance.

**Q. All the talk is the two division leaders, which I don't think anybody pre-season would have predicted. They might have predicted you might be leading the Atlantic, but Duke. You played them last year, handled them very easily in Durham. Do you see any signs they could do this this year?**

COACH FISHER: I mean, it does not surprise me. Last year in our game, even though the score was what it was, they played good football. We had some big plays in the game. You get a quarterback and receivers like that, now you're punting the ball, doing a great job on D, it doesn't surprise me at all.

Any time a team has a great quarterback, they have confidence in what they're doing.

**Q. Jimbo, I see you're moving Tyler (Hunter) back to handle punt returns. Any other personnel changes you're making for Saturday night?**

COACH FISHER: No. He's done it all year, too. Probably eight to ten all year. We had co-returners for a while. We let Rashad (Greene) have it, now Tyler will have it just for a little bit. But no other changes.

An interview with:

**RANDY EDSALL  
MARYLAND**

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COACH EDSALL: Thanks, Mike.

Well, we got Boston College this weekend up there, a team that you see them, they're playing very, very hard. We've got to make sure that we have a good week of practice. We know it's going to be a very difficult road test for us, but looking forward to the opportunity.

**Q. Coach, how has Darin Drakeford improved as a player this year?**

COACH EDSALL: Drake is having a very good year, playing extremely well for us. I've just seen a guy whose game has gotten better from last year to this year. I see a guy that is really understanding the game even better in terms of how people are going to try to attack you, the schemes that he's going to see.

He's just playing with great passion, enthusiasm. The technique in his pass-rush is getting a lot better. Again, we just need to have him out there playing that way, continue to have his leadership that he's given us.

**Q. I wanted to ask about C.J. (Brown) a little bit. I know since his injury back in August, he's still been around, done a lot of stuff with you guys. I'm curious how much of an influence he's been on this team and how he's kind of coped with his situation behind the scenes?**

COACH EDSALL: He's done a tremendous job for us. Again, he's one of our captains. He's in on all the meetings with the quarterbacks, helping those guys out, then on the headset on the sidelines during practice. He's not out at practice. He's getting his academic stuff done because we don't want him standing around for two hours at practice. But all the meetings, just been very, very helpful. Been around the guys, encouraging them. Nothing but great things for him in terms of his contribution to our team, even though he's not out there playing.

**Q. Randy, with this latest quarterback injury you have to deal with, how does this influence your thinking about the position going forward? How do you feel about the depth you have at that position?**

COACH EDSALL: I feel good about our situation. I think that Devin (Burns) and Caleb (Rowe) are very capable quarterbacks. They'll be able to go out and execute the plan we have in place as we go into this week.



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Then you have Brian McMahon and Shawn Petty who were high school quarterbacks, now we're working to get them ready as a third. That's who we have. Like I said, I feel good about it. We'll keep coaching those guys up, getting those younger guys better.

I have a tremendous amount of confidence in Devin and Caleb.

**Q. Which guy starts and then you bring in the other guy?**

COACH EDSALL: We'll just continue to go through practice, evaluate the situation, then make a determination either tomorrow after practice or as we go into the game on Saturday.

**Q. The way you play on offense, does that change because of the latest injury or do you feel you can do what you've been doing with a different guy taking snaps?**

COACH EDSALL: I'm confident that our guys can do whatever we call upon them to do in terms of the scheme of what gives us the best chance to move the ball and score points.

**Q. Going back to C.J., he's served as a mentor for Perry. Do you see that role increasing with the fact they basically have the same injury and C.J. can help him get through the rehab process, the pain?**

COACH EDSALL: I'm sure he will. We would want him to do that. In terms of what he's experienced with the surgery, Perry's injury wasn't as severe as C.J.'s. But handling the mental part of it, how to get through it, how to cope with it, the intensity you need to have in rehab, I think C.J. will be a great mentor for Perry as he goes through that process, as well.

**Q. C.J.'s rehab, as far as a medical hardship, is that something you are starting to formulate paperwork for that?**

COACH EDSALL: His rehab is going as planned. Trainers are happy with where he's at right now.

We'll sit down once the season is over and discuss that situation. But I know that he's in the process now of working to try to get into grad school. Like I said, when we have a little bit more time when the season is over, I'll sit down with C.J. and we'll have those discussions.

**Q. With so many young players playing, how do you have to manage their psyche? I'm specifically thinking of Brad Craddock, who has done some good things for you this year, but had a bad moment last week. How do you prevent a young player when things go wrong losing confidence?**

COACH EDSALL: I think what you do is you just talk them through it, tell them, The next time you get that opportunity, you'll put it through the uprights or you'll make it happen.

It's one of those things, I think you got to know the individual, too. If you've seen how they react to adversity, you know how to kind of handle them a little bit better.

Usually for a guy coming in who might experience adversity for the first time, again, I think you have to handle them each differently in terms of their psyche, their emotions.

But again, Brad's a competitor. That's one thing I do know. Brad is usually the type of guy, if you show him what happened, then he'll go to work to correct it. That's what we'll do with him. You just let him know you have a tremendous amount of confidence in him.

Like I said, on Sunday we went back out there, put the ball at the same place and he drills it.

Again, what we'll try to do is make sure sometimes in practice is put him more into those type of pressure situations, have him kick the ball, and I'm sure he'll do well.

**Q. Has he played football a long time?**

COACH EDSALL: No, not really. It's totally different football over there. Australian Rules is very different than American football. Again, Brad was more of a punter than a place kicker. He did them both. But that was something that as he came over, we looked at him more as a punter first. Then when we had the situation we had with our place kicker, he's gotten extremely better. We just have to work on some technical things with him.

An interview with:

## **TOM O'BRIEN NC STATE**

COACH O'BRIEN: Certainly this is a special game for NC State. We've been working hard this week trying to put ourselves in the best



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possible position so we can go over to Chapel Hill and win a football game. They're undefeated at home. They do a great job, 4-0, when they're playing in Chapel Hill.

Big challenge for us, but our kids are excited about the opportunity to go see how we match up with them.

**Q. Coach, last weekend you got not only your weekly touchdown for Bryan Underwood, but he had a really good game overall. What are his best attributes as a wideout?**

COACH O'BRIEN: I think he has excellent speed. I think he's learning each and every week. He's really committed on the practice field to getting better. He has a good skill set, good hands. With Troy Walters coming in as his position coach, I think he kind of identifies with Troy a little bit. Troy won the Biletnikoff award and has a tremendous work ethic as a player himself.

I think he's helped our wideouts and specifically Bryan to help make him a better football player.

**Q. Bryan told me when he came in, took that redshirt season, he could tell right away he was not ready to play. How have you seen him improve since that redshirt year?**

COACH O'BRIEN: Well, as we said, last year he had a couple flashes, had a good game against Virginia when the two guys in front of him went down and didn't play. So I think he got a little bit of confidence there.

But I think as the season has progressed here, his role has been expanded a little bit more, he's gained confidence each and every week. More importantly, I think Michael Glennon has a lot of confidence in him.

**Q. Tom, obviously your defense played well the last couple weeks. What is the reason for that? Doing anything better in recent weeks than against Miami? What has been the key to that?**

COACH O'BRIEN: Well, I think it still comes down to we've won five football games, we've turned the ball over four times in offense that way, have not given up half as many big plays as we did in our two losses. The two losses we had, we turned the ball over 10 times and a lot of times put our defense in a bad position. We gave up a

lot of big plays in those two games.

We've been much better on offense, which in turn helps the defense.

**Q. Do you look at the film of Carolina against Miami or Duke and say, Here is how we have to slow down this offense?**

COACH O'BRIEN: Certainly we go back and look at everybody, how they play, what their schemes are. It still has to fit what our personnel do, what we've taught our kids, how Coach (Jon) Tenuta, Coach (Mike) Archer, (Keith) Willis and (Mike) Reed believe in how we have to play.

Carolina, they have a good scheme. Larry has done a great job. He believes in the system, makes the system work. That's what all good coaches do.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about your other receiver, Quintin Payton. Seems they're developing a nice chemistry with Mike. What have you seen from him as your leading receiver this year?**

COACH O'BRIEN: That's absolutely right. He was the most experienced guy we had coming back from last year. From the start, he was the guy Mike felt most comfortable with. He continues to make big plays. Certainly none bigger than the fourth-down catch before the touchdown at Florida State.

There's a little bit of chemistry. As we talked about at the start of the year with all the new wide receivers, it was going to take some time. Everybody had to get on the same page. I go back to Coach Walters coming in. I think that was a good part on our part, to hire a wide receiver coach to help these young guys progress at the rate they're progressing, because certainly we have a guy that can throw the football to them.

**Q. Coach, the linebackers coming in this year were kind of an unproven group. I was curious how you think they've performed so far.**

COACH O'BRIEN: Haven't been as consistent as we would have liked. I think that's part of the inexperience factor. Some pressed into action probably a little bit before we really wanted to play them.

I think with Coach Tenuta, working with them each and every week, they seem to be getting better and better. In fact I heard him say some good things in practice today to one of the linebackers, so hopefully we're getting better.

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**Q. Rickey Dowdy, seems like he gets at least a tackle for loss every game.**

COACH O'BRIEN: I think the way the scheme is set up, between Coach Archer and Coach Tenuta, the scheme is set up that linebackers have to be successful in this scheme to have success on defense.

He stepped into the spot that Terrell Manning has played the last couple years, been a leader. It's a position we have to get production out of. Rickey has gotten better each and every week.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about the difficulty in containing (UNC's Giovani) Bernard, the problems he presents to the defense. He catches passes, returns kicks. How big a part of your game plan is containing him?**

COACH O'BRIEN: Well, I think if you're going to have any chance against North Carolina, he's the number one guy. As you said, the thing where they use him, and he's really explosive, is in the return game. That's been a concern, certainly been a concern for us the last three weeks, playing Miami, Florida State, then playing (Stefon) Diggs up at Maryland. So we've gotten a lot of good practice. Hopefully it will pay dividends for us.

They've moved him around. They can hand him the ball, they can throw him the ball. Anytime you're multi-dimensional, that causes problems for the defense. The defense wants you to be one-dimensional, the best should force you to be that way. Any time you have someone as talented as him, it puts great stress on the defense.

**Q. Up-tempo spread. How difficult is that?**

COACH O'BRIEN: It's difficult because the pace of the play. You have to get used to it. You practice the best you can. It's almost playing the wishbone. You can't simulate exactly the speed or the precision with which it comes at you.

So that's always a concern. It's one of those things, the initial shock of it, especially in the first quarter, takes hold, and you just hope you can withstand and catch up to it as the game goes on.

An interview with:

## COACH GROBE Wake Forest

COACH GROBE: We were very fortunate to get a win against Virginia this past weekend. Always good to get a win. Wins are tougher and tougher it seems like to get each week. To win on the road was really good for us.

I thought our kids played really, really hard. I thought Virginia's kids played hard. It was a great game. We were fortunate to come away with the win.

We're excited to be playing a great Clemson team on Thursday night. I think it will be exciting for us. We know we got our work cut out for us. We're going to take a step up talent-wise. This is a very talented Clemson team. Dabo (Swinney) and his staff do a great job coaching. We know it's going to be a tough challenge for us.

**Q. Your last couple of games here, your third-down conversion rate on offense has been pretty bad actually I guess is the best way to put it. What do you think the problems are on third down?**

COACH GROBE: Well, I think we converted one at Virginia, so we got one-third down at Virginia.

More than anything else, for us, it's what you do on first and second down. I think our problem has been in third-down situations we have had some short-yardage situations. I think our offensive line is pretty depleted right now as far as guys that we feel like are capable of getting the job done.

I think we got a shot up front if we can keep things mixed up and keep people off balance a little bit. But the situation we get into is when we're in third-and-long situations and they know we're going to throw the football, it's been hard for us to protect in those situations.

Then I think even in some of our short-yardage situations, we've probably been not as successful there because people feel like, hey, this is a time to go run the football, so they kind of cram it in there. It's just been hard for us.

I think our biggest issue is up front, having consistency blocking people, whether it's in the run game or the throw game, pass protection.

I think the key for us is to try to be in situations where we've got people in a guessing mode where they're not convinced we're going to run it or throw it. If we get into too many situations on third down where it's pretty obvious what we're going to try to do, that makes it harder on us.

**Q. Does all that kind of figure into Tanner's (Price) completion percentage the last couple weeks, down considerably? Does that factor into the way he's playing the ball?**

COACH GROBE: I think so. I think if we get into too many situations where they know we're going to throw the football, that gives people a chance to heat us up. We've had some issues with our wide receivers running the right routes. We've had a bad combination with the offensive line and the wide receivers. We've had too many key guys out at the same time.

What's happened is we're not catching the ball as well from our wide receivers and at times we're not running the routes the way we need to. With a little bit less protection up front from time to time, it puts Tanner in a real bind.

To be honest, Tanner has to play better. He has had some throws he should have made that he didn't make. I think if you combine the protection and the inexperience that we've been playing with at wide receiver, and if Tanner misfires, you have too many things going wrong.

We need as an offensive unit to get better protection, run better routes, catch the football, then Tanner has to step up a little bit, too. It's not all on the receivers and the offensive line, at times Tanner has to play a little better.

**Q. Jim, obviously your defense has been playing well of late. How much of that do you think was the opponents and how much do you say we've been playing good defense?**

COACH GROBE: That's our problem more than anything else. Clemson is so talented. They have a handful of really dangerous players. It's not one guy.

So many times offensively, like at Maryland, the (Stefon) Diggs kid is special. He made a couple huge plays that pretty much got us. That's what happens. A lot of the teams that we're playing have a good player, a couple good players. This is a Clemson team that has so many good players.

I think we have improved a little bit

defensively, and I think part of that is we get a little more healthy defensively. But we haven't faced anybody as explosive as this Clemson offense.

**Q. What do you like about the way your defense is playing the last few weeks that you need to carry over?**

COACH GROBE: I think most people would look at Clemson and feel the same way. They're going to be a hard team to outscore if you're not playing good defense. I think this is a group you hope to hang in there.

They're going to have their yards, their big plays, score points. You know that's going to happen. I think you just got to keep playing hard for four quarters. That's what we've been able to do.

I thought we played pretty hard defensively against Duke, Maryland and Virginia. At times didn't get a lot of help from the offensive side of the ball. For us to play really good defensively Thursday night, we have to have some help from the offense. Our offense has to make some first downs. We have to throw and catch better. If we don't, it's going to be tough for our defense to do it by themselves.

I think our challenge is greater with Clemson Thursday night defensively, and nothing would help our defense more than if our offense could be more productive.

**Q. Speaking of that, I saw earlier this week there might be a chance that Camp (Michael Campanaro) can play on Thursday. Can you update on that?**

COACH GROBE: Yeah, I think he's going to play. We didn't do much with him. I really was just laughing about it a couple days ago. We started him out catching tennis balls. I didn't know if he could catch a football because his hand is still pretty tender.

But last night he looked so much better. We put him in practice. We were still careful with him. We tried not to do too much with him. He didn't seem to have any problems. I think they've got the padding right. He caught the ball well last night.

I think he's going to play. How much he plays and how well he plays is yet to be determined. But I think if we get him out there, he knocks the rust off pretty quick, starts playing good, we'd be more apt to give him more work. I would say he'll definitely play tomorrow night.

**Q. Is he going to have to wear extra padding in his glove then?**

COACH GROBE: He is. He is. They padded him up a couple of nights ago. He was still a little bit sore. They added a little bit more padding last night. It's a fine line. We want to protect him. That's our number one concern. But I think also he has to be effective.

It seemed like last night he was having not too many issues catching the football. We just haven't given him a lot of reps. That's the issue that I've got. I think physically he's going to be okay, but he just hasn't done a lot over the past three weeks. How quickly he can come back and get back to running the routes, catching the football, all those kind of things, we'll find out tomorrow night at 7:30, but we are going to play him.

**Q. Coach, Whitlock got set back a little bit earlier in the season. Have you seen signs he's coming out of it or if he still has a ways to go to be back?**

COACH GROBE: I think he's rolling now. He's full speed. He's been a little bit sick this week. Some of our kids have had a little bit of a virus.

He should be fine tomorrow night. We tried to bring him back against Duke. He was not very effective. I don't know if he had any tackles or bonus points. He played, but it was his first time back and he was still taped up heavily, kind of limping around. Against Maryland, he was back. He had a bunch of bonus points, made a bunch of tackles, played really well. Played really well this last Saturday against Virginia.

I would say, from what I can tell, he's getting his stamina back. That's a problem. When you've been out a while, being in condition, being able to play after play is a problem. I would say Nikita is full speed and ready to roll.

**Q. You mentioned defense, and they really did play well in the two road games. Can you talk about the young players that had to step up in light of the personnel issues?**

COACH GROBE: The thing that we have to have is we have to have Nikita play really, really well. We have finally got Merrill Noel healthy. At the other corner, Kevin Johnson is playing pretty good for us. One of the moves we had to make because of the injuries, we had to bump one of our

corners into safety, Chibuikem Okoro. He was playing on the corner, rotating between K.J. and Bud. We bumped him into safety. That's been really good for us.

A.J. Marshall has been playing a little bit better in there, doing a good job getting us lined up. I think defensive fronts are healthy now. We've got Zach Thompson healthy, Nikita Whitlock healthy. A real blessing for us has been Hasan Hazime, who graduated at Akron and came in here in the graduate program. He's been really, really good for us.

Then our outside linebacker play has been a little bit better. We've got Joey Ehrmann playing pretty good now. I think a lot of other guys have stepped up.

But the thing that you have to have, you have to have your play-makers, veteran guys, play their best football, then your younger guys don't have as much pressure on them. I think that's the key for us defensively. We've been pretty banged up. We're starting to get a little bit healthy. I'm not saying we're where we need to be. We're going to face the biggest challenge we have had all year and probably will have all year on Thursday night. Those kids are playing pretty good together. We usually play pretty hard, but we started playing a little bit better fundamentally.

An interview with:

## **PAUL JOHNSON GEORGIA TECH**

COACH JOHNSON: Certainly we've got our hands full this week. No question about that in a quality BYU team. I think their record is very deceiving. They've lost three games to top 25 teams, two to Top 10 teams. Defensively they rank in the Top 10 in most every category, so it's an experienced team, a lot of juniors and seniors they have especially defensively. And it will be a big challenge for us to try to string together a couple wins in a row here.

**Q. Your first game after you made some changes you talked to us about defense. You held Boston College, I know it's not the greatest offensive team in the world, but you**

**held them a touchdown a hundred some yards below their averages. Can you talk about the changes on defense and how well you think it worked?**

COACH JOHNSON: Well, I think that there were a couple factors. We played better on third down. That was the big thing. Offensively we held the ball for 41 minutes. That will help too. But I thought our defensive coaches did a good job keeping things simple and letting guys play.

We were fortunate we were a little better on third downs. We gave up a couple of big pass plays and Boston College dropped some balls that helped us. But it's going to be a work in progress.

**Q. Not to change the subject, but being from Durham, I have to ask about Vad Lee and the fact he played a significant part of the game. Is that just part of the game plan to give him more work or is there a reason I'm not aware of?**

COACH JOHNSON: No, it was part of the plan. He had a good week of practice, and he's done that whenever he does that and he's dialed in and focused, he's got a lot of ability and talent. We think he's going to be a really good player. So he earned the playing time and played really well, especially in the first half he played well.

**Q. Do you feel better about your defense after the changes coming off last week or how much of that was just playing who you played? Do you think we need to do better or keep that up this week?**

COACH JOHNSON: Well, you never know. Certainly I feel better about the direction we're going, but it's a fluid, moving thing. You have to play better. You have to play harder. We had a few mental assignments or mental errors because it was really simple. We're going to have to add some things to it, and grow as we go along here. So we'll see. The proof will be in the pudding at the end.

**Q. When you watch BYU's defense on film, what jumps out as the challenges that they're going to pose for your offense this week?**

COACH JOHNSON: They're very physical. They run the ball. They're well coached. Up until the only two teams that have gotten 300 yards of offense on them are the two teams that

are ranked in the Top 10. So they play well together as a team, and they've been really good against the run.

**Q. Where do you see Tevin (Washington) has having improved this year? What areas do you think he's maybe a better quarterback than last year?**

COACH JOHNSON: He's completing a high percentage of his passes. I think he's just more confident in what he's doing and understanding the things going on just like you would expect from anybody that's played as long as he has. So those would be the big areas, I think.

**Q. He still has room to grow, I would assume. Where would you like to see him?**

COACH JOHNSON: I think everybody always has some room to grow. Maybe be a little more consistent, for a guy with that much experience, really cut down -- he hasn't had a ton of errors, they've just come at inopportune times, and we really need to cut down on that for a guy that's played as much as he has.

An interview with:

## LARRY FEDORA NORTH CAROLINA

COACH FEDORA: We're really excited about hosting one of our rivals this week at Kenan Stadium, and we're looking forward to it. We know it will be a heck of a battle, and I'm sure that they will be a well-prepared team, and it will be a heck of a game.

**Q. Mike Glennon is a quarterback that throws to a lot of different receivers, and over half of his touchdown passes have gone to Bryan Underwood. Just wonder what you see in Underwood that he has that knack for getting in the end zone like that?**

COACH FEDORA: Yeah, I think first of all, he's a good player, and he understands how to get open. I think Glennon finds him. He's a guy that a lot of times what happens with the quarterback and a certain receiver, a quarterback gets into a comfort zone with the receiver, and if things break

down or if things are tight and not sure, that's the guy he goes to. I think Underwood has developed that confidence level with Glennon based on that alone. If things aren't right and he knows he can find him, he's going to get the ball to him and he's going to make the play.

**Q. Does he seem to have -- what is your -- it's hard to see on film, I know. But what is your evaluation of the speed he has?**

COACH FEDORA: He can run. He can run. All of their receivers have good speed. And Glennon can spin the ball really well now. It comes out of his hands, and he can make any throw on the field. I'll put it like that.

**Q. We heard from some of your players this week that there is red up in the locker room. Just wondering where you got the idea from or if you made a trip to Party City or something to get them?**

COACH FEDORA: No, it was just something, again, to get our guys refocused on this next week and the task at hand coming off of a pretty frustrating loss. We needed to refocus immediately. So just decided to do that on my own. Had it done, and that hopefully caught everybody's eye immediately.

**Q. Were you in there initially when they walked in there and saw it?**

COACH FEDORA: No, I wasn't.

**Q. What did that Duke game tell you that "we need to fix this or fix that" in time for the next game?**

COACH FEDORA: It told me we need to learn how to finish as a football team, and that is something that we're constantly working on. We had plenty of opportunities to win the football game. Then on the other hand it also told me that we need to start faster than that. We can't sit around waiting for something to happen. We've got to make something happen.

**Q. Easy enough things to fix?**

COACH FEDORA: Oh, yeah. Definitely things that can be fixed, yeah. It's not throw your hands up and say, well, that's just who we are. We can't do anything about it. No, we will definitely have made some adjustments and hopefully those things will help us in the future.

**Q. I was just noticing that Eric Ebron has set the single season record for Carolina for tight ends. Can you talk about him, what he does well, and how he figures in your offense?**

COACH FEDORA: Well, he does a very nice job at the point of attack, first of all. Second of all, he has wide receiver-like skills. We can split him out. He can run a route like a wide receiver. He does a great job of using leverage, breaking down a DB and getting himself open. He's got a big body, and he's got great hands. So he's a guy that you can do a lot of different things well.

I don't know how many balls he's caught at this point, but I'm sure there are going to be quite a few more that come his way over the second half of the season.

**Q. Back when I know the spread offense is kind of the popular thing. Back when they first came out, people didn't use tight ends in them. Can you talk about the evolution of that? It obviously plays a big role in your version of the spread.**

COACH FEDORA: Yeah, the first time that I started using it pretty effectively was at the University of Florida back then. We had two there that went on and played in the NFL. And both of those guys are close to being the leading receivers on the team. Then moving on with Brandon Pettigrew, who was catching 50 balls a year and doing the same thing. It's something we've been doing for a while.

We had the one kid that was a fourth round draft pick at Southern Miss who was also a lot like Eric. Very athletic, probably not as physical at the point of attack as Eric. So the tight end has been a big part of this offense and what we try to do. The mismatch that it creates when you find an athlete of that size, you're able to create quite a few opportunities for big plays.

**Q. Can you talk about the type of atmosphere you expect on Saturday. N.C. State fans are trying to get whatever loose tickets there are out there. But is it liable to be a pretty intense atmosphere, lot of recruits talk about that and what you're hope to go see from there?**

COACH FEDORA: I think it will be a great atmosphere Saturday. I really do. Our fans will be excited. I'm sure they'll have some fans here. It's a typical rivalry game it's one of the great things about college football is the passion that the fans have in a rivalry.

I think it will be a tremendous atmosphere. I think it's one of the reasons you play the game as a young man is for games like this. That's what you dream about. So it should be a lot of fun.

**Q. As great as Gio Bernard has been in the last few weeks. Is there a danger the offense is depending too much on him? He was such an important part of your offense Saturday night?**

COACH FEDORA: I don't know. I don't think we threw the ball around well early in that game and really in the first three quarters we didn't do a good job of that. I don't think it's because we are dependent on Gio. I just think there were probably some situations where guys were waiting around to see if Gio's making a big play. That's not who we are as a team. That's not who we are as an offense. I feel like we're balanced and should be.

I think we're still one of the few teams in the country that are rushing for 200 and throwing for over 250. So we take pride in being able to do both. Unfortunately, we were not executing the other night throwing the football around, and didn't until the fourth quarter.

**Q. He obviously missed a game early this year and went out for a couple of plays in the Duke game. How is he physically holding up to all the hits he has to take?**

COACH FEDORA: Well, you will see he missed two and a half games early in the season and to this point in the season he's played 293 plays. So that's not an excessive amount at all. I think he's holding up fine. I think if you watch the style of runner he is, he's not your big cruiser that's taken five or six licks on each play. He does a nice job of avoiding the blows.

**Q. Wanted to ask you about Jonathan Cooper. How much did you have to kind of re-recruit him when you guys got on the staff, and what was that process like?**

COACH FEDORA: It wasn't a re-recruiting. It was more when he got here I knew Jonathan was one of the guys that was projected pretty high in the draft. I knew that he was going to want to talk and try to make some decisions. Basically it was a fact-finding or gathering as much information as possible from as many sources from the NFL and lay it out for he and his family so they

could make a good decision. That was all there was to it.

And Jonathan and his parents made a decision, and said they were going to stay, and we just went from there.

**Q. Just how good is he?**

COACH FEDORA: He's really good. I've been coaching 26 years now I've not had an interior lineman with his athletic ability. So he's pretty special.

**Q. Is it hard to tell that from talking to him? He seems like a pretty humble guy.**

COACH FEDORA: Yeah, you're never going to find that out from him, I assure you. You talk to any scout that comes through here. You talk to anybody that's studying game film, I mean, they're all going to tell you he's pretty special. Can he do things with his feet that mostly skill guys are doing.

But from Jonathan, he's a very humble guy. He's going to deflect all the praise. He's going to try to deflect it somewhere else. He's very, very close with the other four offensive linemen that he plays with. Those guys are always together, and Jonathan has a very unique personality also.

An interview with:

## MIKE LONDON VIRGINIA

COACH LONDON: A bye week for us. An opportunity to get some guys rested and healed and also an opportunity for us to work on ourselves and spend time reiterating fundamentals and coaching points and things like that. We have practice today, tomorrow and Friday, and have an opportunity to try to better our teams in all aspects.

**Q. I don't think many people were expecting you guys to struggle like this this year. Can you explain what's gone wrong?**

COACH LONDON: You always go into a season with high hopes and expectations. It's evident that every year there is a new team and there are new play makers that have to arise and step up and make things happen for you. We talked about the close games last year. That we

were able to pull out some close games on last-second wins on four occasions. This year three of the losses with 7 points or less and coming in the last couple of minutes and just have not been able to execute well enough to pull those games out and win.

It is frustrating, but at the same time we have to be mindful of the fact that with this open week our efforts and our energies have to be directed towards making good decisions, playing fundamental football and putting ourselves in position to help this team win. If that means schemes or systems or who we're asking to do what, then that's got to be required and will be required.

All we can do now is with the four games left on our schedule is to play those games as well as we can. To have the coaches, including myself, to put these guys in the best position best plan to be executed to give us a chance to win. That is the mindset right now that we've been working on.

**Q. Considering how successful you were last year, do you feel you went backwards this season or do you still feel like it's headed in the right direction?**

COACH LONDON: Well, I know it's headed in the right direction in terms of the process of when you get to a place. And this is the second recruiting class we have playing for us right now, currently recruiting the third recruiting class, the process of the expectations off the field of the players the process of look at the record. We are where we are as far as the record is concerned. I look at how this thing is being built and the expectations. There is still young, good, fresh talent that is here that has a chance, and as we develop them, have a chance to be good.

You can look at the glass as half empty. I look at it as half full. We just need to continue to pour into it and filling it. That's good with players and guys that are capable of handling the school work here. Guys that love winning and guys that give great effort.

I would say that we're continuing the process of building this program to where we want it and to where it remains and will be attractive to young student-athletes out there.

**Q. Looking at the numbers for your team, it looks like you've made some defensive progress in the last two weeks, again from**

**watching what I saw of the game Saturday -- I'm sorry I didn't see it all -- but it looked like you had some special team problems that probably cost you that game. Can you address those two areas? Is the defensive improvement real, and is special teams the area you really have to work on?**

COACH LONDON: As you look, I guess, when you're not doing well, all aspects of what you're doing come under scrutiny, heavy scrutiny. It is true that I think defensively we are all playing better, they are playing with more energy and the ability to try to make plays. Again, a positive of that coming out of that game, they were 1 for 15 on third downs. That's pretty good. A little bit over a hundred yards rushing, and a little bit over a hundred yards passing. What can be measured can be improved. Obviously, we want to keep the points down. In the last couple of games, that's been the case. It makes things worse when you turn the ball over in the red zone, and you put teams in scoring opportunities.

To the second part of your question, the special teams part of it, as always, it's a third of the game, and it's always something that, because it's a one-play football opportunity, that can put you in a bad situation. So two games in a row, first game against Maryland, the kickoff return first play, in this game, a punt return, then in the second play a score.

We've been trying to come back from a deficit. Those are areas of concern, but it's an area with an open week that gives us an opportunity to adjust, adapt, make personnel changes, schematically or whatever it is, to make sure that we put these guys again, as I said before, in positions to make plays or in position to be productive. That's what this week, this open week is dedicated to.

**Q. Perry Jones hit a pretty significant milestone. He's now one of the few backs in ACC history with a thousand yards rushing, a thousand yards receiving. That's pretty good for a guy that's sharing time with Kevin Parks. I just wondered if you can talk about what he's giving you and what kind of player he is.**

COACH LONDON: Perry is a two-time elected captain by his teammates. He is a selfless person. He could be a guy concerned about stats and give me the ball, but he's more interested in collectively what the running backs do and collectively what the team does. He's a leader by example.

He's a young man that just recently got engaged to be married and has a lot of things going on in his life. But he's also maintained the ability to be a focused individual on the football field. So Perry is an outstanding young man. It doesn't surprise me of the things or accomplishments that have come his way.

In his highlight tape in high school, he did everything. He kicked off, returned kicks, he'd punt, he did everything. He was a linebacker, a safety, running back, all of those things. He's an outstanding individual. So it's a great milestone to be recognized by a young man. That's a great young man.

An interview with:

## **BILLY HITE VIRGINIA TECH**

COACH HITE: Obviously we had a disappointing loss at Clemson, and we got back Monday morning. We ended up showing our players the film at 6:45 in the morning. Then in the afternoon, we had a team meeting, and then we showed our special team videos to our players. Coach Beamer decided to give our kids a few days off. So we didn't practice on Monday. We did not practice Tuesday. We're not practicing today. He wanted them to get a away from football for a couple days. Get their minds right. Anybody that's banged up a little bit, take care of their bodies, but try to heal up a little bit and get ready to go into a crucial part of our season. We'll go back to practice on Thursday, and try to get ready for Miami.

**Q. Your background is so much with running backs and all of that. I wanted to ask you about quarterback play. Some of the numbers we're seeing this year are not very ACC like, there have been huge passing numbers up and down the league. Is this where it's going? I know college football is putting up a ton of yards everywhere, but is this where the league's going? Is it getting to be a pass-happy league, do you think?**

COACH HITE: Well, I think the game dictates what's going on. We'd like to be running

the football more than we have so far this season. But we've gotten behind a couple times, and obviously couldn't get into the running game playing catch-up football. Now some of the other teams, I think you watch the West Virginias and people like that there are throwing it all the time, and I think everybody is working on their passing game a lot right now. It's the quickest way to score. They're trying to get the ball into the end zone, and people are throwing the ball a lot and scoring a lot of points.

**Q. One general question is how unusual is it do you think to have a 4-4 Virginia Tech team facing a 4-4 Miami team?**

COACH HITE: Well, we're not used to being 4-4, I can tell you right now. We're the only team in the country that's won 10 or more games the last eight years in a row. It has really been a tough time for us this year.

The thing that is amazing about it, our kids are still really playing hard. They're practicing hard. They're doing things the right way. We just haven't won some games that we were in that we had a chance to win. So it's been really tough.

I can tell you right now watching Miami from where they were at the beginning of the year to where they are right now, they have really improved. I think it will be a heck of a contest next Thursday night.

**Q. Miami, obviously both teams are having some problems rushing, but Miami's rushing defense is 117th in the nation out of 120 teams. Do you feel that you guys could take advantage of that a little bit?**

COACH HITE: Well, we have young running backs right now, and I think that's the biggest difference is the inexperience that our running backs do have. The more reps they get, the better they're going to be. I watched a bunch of film on Miami defensively, and I think they're a very good football team. I really do.

But we're going to have to be able to run the football to win that game, no question about it.

**Q. In what way do you think Miami is a good football team defensively?**

COACH HITE: Up front they're young, but I think it's the improvement that they've made since they from the opening ballgame to right now. I think their linebackers are good, and they've got the typical Miami defense with the team speed. I mean, those guys can fly around. They're

physical. They'll hit you, and I really do think they're good.

**Q. Coach, I wanted to ask you about Duke Johnson and the threat he presents. I think he's the leading pressing rusher in the league and kick return guy. How dangerous is he? How much of a focus on defense does there have to be?**

COACH HITE: Well, that's the thing. Coach (Bud) Foster does such a great job with our defense. I'm sure he'll have a plan put together. They've been back in there the last two days looking at film and trying to figure out a way to stop him. I think, again, they're a talented team, and offensively also, again, they have great skill kids, and we've just got to make sure we're ready to play and go out and play like Virginia Tech's capable of playing.

**Q. I know you mentioned you guys having off for a few days, and Miami's doing the exact same thing. How does that help a team?**

COACH HITE: I think it's really good to get away from it. Especially when things aren't going the way you want them to right now. Just get away from it, work on your school work, get your mind off of football. Take the three days off, enjoy yourself a little bit to get ready to come back to work on Thursday and prepare for Miami.

I think the coaching staff needed this also. I think it's good to get away for a couple of days. Even though we have been meeting, you're back home with your families at night time, and you're not here for a 15 or 16-hour day. I think it's coming at the right time for us.

**Q. This has nothing to do with that. But the weather, I should have checked, but I don't know how the weather has been there. Are there any -- I mean, it is still several days away. But any concerns about that? What's it like going into the Heat or humidity?**

COACH HITE: That's always a tough thing. We'll make sure that our kids are hydrated. They'll start drinking water and the Gatorade two or three days before we even arrive down there to make sure they stay hydrated. Our trainers do a great job on that.

But believe it or not, we're at 75° right now too now we don't have a lot of humidity and there

is a chance that the weather is supposed to change Monday and get down into the mid 50s, low 60s but until that time, we're going to be 75 or 80. So the weather is beautiful here right now.

**Q. Great. So it will be a piece of cake?**

COACH HITE: Not when you get in that humidity down there.

An interview with:

## DAVIID CUTCLIFFE DUKE

COACH CUTCLIFFE: First I want to comment on Sean Renfree, deserved recognition. I guess in the last seven or eight days now, he's one of the ten finalists for the senior scholar award in the NCAA, and now really appreciative of the National Football Foundation announcing that he was one of the 15 scholarship winners.

Sean is a complete football player, certainly a complete student. Almost a 4.0 right now in Duke in graduate school. Also just a complete person. So we're very happy for Sean, his family, and certainly very proud of him.

With that said, I saw Florida State early in the season as we prepared to play Wake Forest. Obviously, you can't help but watch a team like that pretty closely. Even though I was focusing on Wake Forest, I thought Florida State was the most complete team I've seen in quite some time. I still believe that now after seeing them and focusing on them, they may be the most complete team in the country. A lot of people question this about one team or this about another, and every position across the board, certainly their specialists in the kicking game, their coverage and return ability in the kicking game, I don't think I've seen a more complete team in a number of years. So, this will certainly be a huge challenge for our team.

But they've done a tremendous job in Tallahassee. So with that, I'll take your questions.

**Q. How do you keep your team focused when you're facing Florida State coming off such a high bowl eligibility for the first time since 1994?**

COACH CUTCLIFFE: There are some challenges associated with that, because that's all people around them are talking about. They're

good when they're with us. They have practiced well. I thought they responded well Sunday. You're a little emotionally spent after a late game anyway, but certainly one like that, I thought we were a little emotionally spent.

But we have a light workout Sunday, but it's full speed. That helps. Win or lose, it helps to get out there and sweat. Monday they had the day off. They were better Tuesday, we practiced in the morning and much better today. But I think they realize they played Florida State last year and that helps. They know how good they are. They know they have to prepare to even have a chance in a game like this. So hopefully we get our energy as emotionally charged as well as we'd like, but certainly I think they've prepared well to this point.

**Q. What are your thoughts on Florida State's running game now that Chris Thomsen's out for the year?**

COACH CUTCLIFFE: I hate that for him, number one, and I mean that sincerely. He's a really fine football player, and I enjoyed watching him early in the year, as I said, as I was watching that team. He's been through some really difficult times. But they've got quality players there. Everybody knows that. Truly have quality players that can step up and do what they have to do.

That's part of having a great program, and they'll be fine running the football. You not only have to worry about their backs, but you have to worry about the quarterback who is a fine runner, and their receivers that do a nice job with their reverse game and different things with their receivers. So they've got a lot of weapons on that offense.

**Q. Earlier today we were talking to Coach Fisher. He said one of the things that really impressed him about the game and about you guys was Will Monday and how he has -- his length and his ability to avoid run backs has kind of flipped the field a little bit and makes the field position thing. Can you talk about that and the job Will has done as a freshman punter?**

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Yeah, he's been tremendous. What it shows to me is that Jimbo (Fisher), they understand, they put the same kind of emphasis on the kicking game. Watching their kicking game, I think they're really well coached, And a good football coach would notice that's

helped us win games.

Will has been accurate. Will has great hang time. He's got a lot of good football left in front of him. He really has stepped up and taken challenges. I think that last punt in that last ballgame was indicative of the year he's had when he put that ball and pinned them inside the 10-yard-line we ended up giving up the score.

But the kicking game and what he did is exactly what you want a guy to do, so he is a weapon. We're very happy he's on our team, and of a great deal of confidence, because Will is a great, great worker at practice. I was out there with him this morning. I thought he had a great morning this morning. He is a focused young man. I'm very appreciative of his work ethic.

**Q. You have another freshman kicker too who is leading the ACC in field goal percentage. 14 of 15, I think this year. Can you talk about the job Ross (Martin) has done?**

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, Ross has been so consistent, and it's because of how he works. He's had two really good days. He had a good day to day in the area of kickoffs has been good also. He's done a good job with location. He's done a good job when we ask him to try to get a touchback. He's moved the ball around into different locations so it's not just the field goal kicking, the place kicking.

They're both very mature for their age. They're a joy to work with. Certainly the best freshman pair, and I've had some good ones. But this is the best freshman pair that I've had as a coach, so that's exciting in that regard.

**Q. Ross's long attempt is 43 yards. I saw him preseason, he kicked some quite a bit longer. How far out would you be comfortable asking him to kick?**

COACH CUTCLIFFE: I'm a go for it on fourth down rather than try to make three points. But in a game winner, he's 55 yards, he's pretty darn accurate. The one he hit the other day would have been good, probably, from 60. He's got a very strong leg, but you just don't want to make a living attempting those kinds of field goals. He's having to try to attempt a game winner.

I feel good about his preparation and his confidence level. We do those all the time or each week at practice. I think that 55 yards is never a great percentage, but he's certainly in range there.

**Q. There's been already I think five or six instances this year of an ACC kid throwing for at least 400 in a game, and that is as many as we've seen in the last decade coming into the year. From where you sit, any rhyme or reason for it? Are we just seeing more skill right now in the passing game than we've seen in the conference in a while?**

COACH CUTCLIFFE: I think it's across the board, across the country. It's like every sport, I don't know when it stops, but it just continues to accelerate the athleticism, the ability, the speed, the size of receivers help completion percentage. The number of attempts, obviously, have increased, because people see the explosives. They used to say how many bad things can happen when you throw the ball. Well, you don't see it as much anymore.

I think most of it is not just the quality of the quarterbacks and their ability to spin it and put it where they want it. When we're playing a receiver this week that's 6'5", 240 pounds and can run as fast as a guy that used to be a 6'1", 180 pounder, that's a good target. So I think it's a combination across the board. But it's also not just the Atlantic Coast Conference. I think it's nationwide.

**Q. As you speak right now the rumors are flying on Twitter about the possibility of you going to Tennessee. How committed are you to this program right now? I know we've had this conversation before.**

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, you're the first one to mention that to me, and I've got a Twitter account, and nobody has tweeted me on that. I'm not focused on any other job other than this one. We're in a great place. The most important thing to me are the people. I have great admiration and friendship with our leadership here at Duke, right through the director of athletics, our entire program, our family, our staff is very, very happy here, so the only thing we're thinking about is Duke University.

An interview with:

## AL GOLDEN MIAMI

COACH GOLDEN: Just really just trying to get the team rested up and healed up and get caught up on our academics and trying to alleviate any conflicts from an academic standpoint that we have with the mid-week game next week. So just really focused on our team right now.

We did not practice Sunday, Monday or Tuesday. Trying to get a lot of the young guys healed up, and today went out and worked out for about 90 minutes.

That's really all I have from here. So whatever questions that you have, I'll be pleased to answer them.

### **Q. Checking to see if there's anything new with Duke (Johnson)?**

COACH GOLDEN: He practiced today. Like I said, the X-rays were negative. Was he a 100%? No, but he was over 90, certainly enough to practice.

### **Q. Also just wondering on how do you decide how to attack a bye week like this?**

COACH GOLDEN: Again, it can almost lure you in just thinking it's a bye week. It's really not a bye week, and you've got to be careful. Saturday is Monday to us. Again, we've had a rough schedule. Really 12 weeks straight with a lot of young guys, and I've really just been focused on trying to get them back and get them healthy and really get caught up on school work because we've traveled so much, especially the first six games. So we're trying to get them caught up on school work, get that out of the way, and we can concentrate on Virginia Tech when Saturday comes.

### **Q. When you give the kids three days off, do you see a big spring in their step when they get back out there today? Or after what you've been through, is three days not even enough?**

COACH GOLDEN: I think it's going to help. It's going to be the collective time off, so we'll try to go today, go again tomorrow, and take Friday off and get into game week. So I think by the time

we get into game week, I'm hoping that we'll bounce back.

But I think most coaches would say if you give them three days off, the first day back is the one where they drag a little bit. It's the first time they get lactic acid in their legs and they're pumping with their chests and everything. So today they fought through it a little bit. But hopefully tomorrow will be a little bit better.

### **Q. I know it's exactly the same. You have ten days, Virginia Tech has ten days. But when you have that extra day or two to play with, do you have to be cautious about the volume of the game plan?**

COACH GOLDEN: Correct. You're exactly right. That's one of the kind of the edicts, if you will, that we're kind of all on the same page as a staff. We're not the type of team right now that can do too much. We're trying to be careful with that. I'm trying to protect the team from a physical standpoint as I alluded to earlier. It's just been a strange year and a strange schedule, and that combined with the youth of our team.

Right now my number one priority is to get the team healthy. Not just healthy physically, but healthy mentally. Get them back, and get them to relax a little bit, get away from football, and come back refreshed and ready to go for an excellent Virginia Tech team.

### **Q. Just wondering how Stephen (Morris) is making it through with his ankle after playing last week if he's still in a boot or still sore?**

COACH GOLDEN: He's doing better, actually. Sunday, Monday, Tuesday helped him a lot. It's not like we're asking him to run the ball a lot or scramble today. It's mostly pocket stuff for him, or handing the ball off or play action. So he did fine.

As I said, I just think a combination of the three days and another day Friday, then fairly light practice on Saturday should get us to where we want to be for game week.

### **Q. Wondering about the idea of facing a 4-4 Virginia Tech team seems kind of odd. They're usually on top of it. Just some general comments on them.**

COACH GOLDEN: Again, I don't really judge them on where they're at in terms of their

record. They have been the champions on our side, on the Coastal side, six of the eight years that we've both been in the league. This league has gone through them. They're the champion. So whether they're 4-4 or 8-0, is immaterial to me.

They're an excellent team. They know how to win. They've been to where we want to go, and that's going to be the challenge. Again, we're not really thinking about Virginia Tech right now. We're just trying to get our team better, and get ourselves healed up and take care of our academics.

**Q. As far as your defense goes, one of the Virginia Tech assistant coaches said he's seen a lot of improvement since the beginning of the year. Can you talk about some of the freshmen defenders who have been playing, maybe Tyriq (McCord), (Earl) Moore, and how do you think they're doing?**

COACH GOLDEN: Well, I think a lot of those young guys are starting to execute their role very well. Tyriq, for sure in terms of the pass-rush he's giving us on third down and the energy he brings when he comes in. But Deon Bush is playing good football now. He's not just playing. He's playing good football. Eddie Johnson is playing good football for us. And obviously getting Jimmy Gaines, Gianni Paul, Denzel Perryman, and (Raphael) Kirby, getting those guys healthy has helped us a lot.

It's helped us with our rotation. It's helped us with our production. So all of those guys I just mentioned are young except for Jimmy. They're all young. They're either freshmen or sophomore.

I think those guys have come a long way. I think the biggest improvement for us the last two weeks has been Olsen Pierre and Corey King and Earl Moore and those guys inside. We have to have a little bit better gap integrity still. But those guys are playing, as young guys, those guys are playing better and giving us an opportunity to fit runs better.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about the problems that you faced with (Virginia quarterback) Logan Thomas. How difficult is that to prepare for?**

COACH GOLDEN: You're going to make me live this with the bye week and then game week is what you're saying to me?

**Q. Exactly. Sorry.**

COACH GOLDEN: He's an excellent player and an all-around player. Clearly you know they're going to have some time here to put in whatever they want to do from a game plan standpoint to improve. So we expect to see a great Logan Thomas next Thursday. Big arm, can run, can beat you with his feet and has done a great job in terms of his leadership and distribution of the football.

So, again, it's going to be a great challenge for us. We know that. Just have a lot of respect for Logan Thomas and the way he plays.

**Q. Is there something can you do when they lineup for short yardage and he sneaks? That seems to be almost unstoppable.**

COACH GOLDEN: He's a formidable player back there, there is no question about it. The thing that Logan does is he's smart enough not to just take it in the A-gap or B-gap. He'll go outside like he did against Carolina in a short yardage situation. He'll take it in the C- or D-gap on a sneak. He has the latitude to do that, which obviously translates from trust to both Coach O'Cain and to Coach Beamer down to him.

So he has the latitude to do that. He's a smart player, so obviously those short yardage, that short yardage operation gives you a lot to deal with.

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