

November 14, 2012



An Interview With:

**FRANK SPAZIANI
BOSTON COLLEGE**

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, as Mike said, we have Virginia Tech coming in this week. They're our partner school on the other side, so we have a long history of playing them, and we certainly understand who we're playing. Frank is a legendary coach. They've got great players and a great program, so it's going to be a challenge for us.

With that, your questions.

Q. I'm curious as you watch film of Virginia Tech's secondary, they've obviously been leaving the other corners, a lot of isolated man-to-man. What do you see from their pass defense right now?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, you know, they've given up some big plays. It's a function of a lot of other things, pass rush and covering guys. You know, they're obviously having some problems over there, but they're a typical aggressive defense, and it's more about how we're going to be able to attack them and their defense.

Q. Considering the way this year has unfolded for you guys, where is the motivation level for your players? Do you still feel that energy from them?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, you know, naturally when you're 2 and 8 there's an issue with both of those points that you raise. But as I've said over and over again, I've been here 16 years, and there's a lot of great things, and one of them is our guys come to practice and they come to play, and I don't think it'll change this week.

Q. How have the struggles this season impacted your staff on the recruiting trail, and what's the sales pitch been from you guys at this point?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, we have our commits, and everybody seems fine. Once again, whether -- we just had a recruiting meeting the other day. What is our sales pitch? We've got a lot of things to sell at Boston College. I don't think we have enough time in the interview here. We've got a lot of great things.

Q. I want to ask you, you have a fairly unique perspective. You just played Notre Dame, and they've evolved into kind of a controversial situation where they're No. 1 in the computer polls and No. 3 in the BCS because of the eye test is what I keep hearing. Give me your expert opinion as an eye tester. You've played a Florida State team that's in the top ten of the BCS. Where does Notre Dame rank?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, you know, being on the field with Notre Dame through the years, Notre Dame is back in a lot of respects. They've done a great job with that program, and they're certainly a formidable football team. They've got a great defense, they've got a great offense, and they certainly have a quarterback that they're developing to fit their system. I think they're a National Championship caliber team.

Q. This is my uneducated eye, that their defense is of a much higher quality right now than their offense. Would you agree with that or disagree?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, once again, I'm not going to compare their defense to their offense. I would say this: Their defense has improved in the three years that Brian has been there from what we've seen and what we've played against. They're a force. They're a force. They've got good players and they're well coached, and they've got a nice team.

Q. I was going to ask a couple of things. First, this being the home game for a lot of your seniors, you have a lot of guys with different circumstances coming back and guys

that have been there for a while. What's it going to be like, and do you think it's hit home that this is the last game at home?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, I think it's always an emotional thing for seniors playing their last home game in varying degrees. But I don't think it quite hits them until that final whistle blows and they go down the end zone and realize that's the last time they're going to do it. But those guys have been very good for us. They've worked hard, they've done everything we've asked of them, they've shown up every week, and they've tried to supply the leadership that we've needed. We're just happy that we've had them, and we're sorry we're going to lose them.

Q. And on the other front, you had just mentioned how Notre Dame has evolved over the years, and now the fact that your program -- what do you think the turnaround is for you guys to return to the form that people are used to seeing you at?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, we need more victories, that's what we need. But we have -- if you just look at the depth chart and look at the people that we have and the people that are going to be lined up playing that have played, you'll see a lot of them are coming back and a lot of them are gaining a lot of experience.

As I've said before, I feel good about the future, but right now we're just having a little tough time looking at things through rose-colored glasses if you will.

An Interview With:

DABO SWINNEY CLEMSON

DABO SWINNEY: Good to be with you again today. Proud of our team for how they played last week. I thought it was one of our most complete games of the year. The team just seems to be continuing to improve. We've got a tough challenge this week with NC State, probably as talented a team as we've played. A lot of weapons on both sides of the ball. Offensively, defensively and special teams we're going to have to play a complete game. This is a quarterback who's capable of making every throw on the field. Defensively they lead our lead in sacks. Special

teams they've taken a kickoff and a punt back for a touchdown. They present a lot of problems, but we look forward to the challenge here at home, and hopefully we'll continue to improve as a football team.

Q. I saw a comment from Tajh Boyd the other day saying he thought his future there was up in the air in terms of making a decision about coming back or going to the NFL. Have you talked to them about that yet, or what are your thoughts on what he may end up doing?

DABO SWINNEY: I don't really have any thoughts about that. My thoughts are all on NC State. I think that's where his thoughts are, as well. But I mean, personally I'd be surprised, very surprised if he's not back here. That's not something we're really focusing on. There's a time and a place for that. Right now it's just about trying to finish the season.

Q. What's your sense about your pass defense heading into this game?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, we're going to have to play very well. He gets rid of the ball, and we're going to have to try to obviously get some pressure on him, and when we do, we have to win some match-ups outside from a coverage standpoint. They've got really good receivers, and they want to throw the football. He understands, he's a very smart player, he understands what you're doing, you're not going to fool him, and so basically it just comes down to winning match-ups.

But we've improved a ton. I mean, we really have. The last four or five ballgames, this team has, defensively in particular, really, really improved, and we've faced some teams that throw the ball very well. Listen, Duke I thought was outstanding with their ability to throw the football. Their quarterback and their receivers put a lot of pressure on you, and I thought we matched up pretty good there.

But it's going to take a great effort, there's no doubt about it, because these guys are very capable of putting up some points and making big plays.

Q. I wanted to ask you about NC State. When you watch them on film, what factors have come into play when they can beat a Florida State? What are they doing well, and then when you watch them on another film

getting dominated at home by Virginia, what's the difference you see on film between the great NC State and the struggling NC State?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, you know, I mean, you look at their first game, it was a pretty close game. They win three in a row, they lose in a shootout to Miami, have a ton of yards, lose by a touchdown, and then everybody saw the North Carolina game. And I'm not sure that the North Carolina game maybe didn't still affect them that Virginia game. Not to take anything away from Virginia because they played very well, but they just for whatever reason, it just got away from them early, and sometimes that happens.

But I would say the biggest thing is just the turnovers. I think Coach O'Brien would probably tell you the exact same thing. It's hard to win when you're negative in the turnover margin, and they just had some costly turnovers that have hurt them.

And then obviously you had the North Carolina game pretty much in control there and got away from them, and then they lose on the punt return. They've just had some tough breaks there where they just haven't finished. But this is a very capable team. They held Florida State, who's scoring a ton of points, to 16 points. So they're very capable. For us it's not as much about them as it is just continuing to prepare on our end and execute at a high level. Ultimately it's a game of execution.

You know, that's the biggest thing. They've been in just about every game. The Virginia game is just about the only game really that got away from them, and maybe some of that might be just a little bit leftover from the heart-breaking loss they had at North Carolina. But I'll tell you, they got back on track quickly against Wake Forest this past weekend, and I expect nothing but their best this week.

Q. Does the fact that they were able to beat a Florida State team that obviously your kids know is pretty good, does that help you -- I know every week you've got to respect everything, but does that help NC State as a team, hey, you'd better be at your best because they can be this good?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, listen, not really. We just don't focus on those things here. We do respect every team, because quite frankly there's not a team on our schedule that can't beat us. This very team embarrassed us last year on national TV. We really don't -- and from week to week, you look all around college football, I mean,

there's some crazy things that happen in college football.

Our method here is just literally every week is the biggest game of the year. Okay, here's the opponent, we don't really worry about the name on the jersey, it's more about, okay, here's this opponent, here's what they do, here's what we have to prepare for, here's our plan to win, let's execute it, period. Let's bring great purpose with our preparation, let's give great effort with an emphasis on technique. Let's have great commitment and just have the best practice Wednesday you can have today.

That's really it. That's all we've done all year, and this team has shown up ready to play and excited -- they're excited about playing on game day. It's not about, okay, let's get real excited this week because we play this opponent and then next week -- we just don't look at it that way. I think this team has done a good job, and that's why they've been a very consistent bunch.

Q. You mentioned also that your defense has gotten better in the last few weeks. Is there any individual or any couple of individuals that have been the key to that, or is it a cohesion thing?

DABO SWINNEY: It's just collectively as a group. We had our season-low two mental errors this past week and just collectively as a group we've just matured so much. You've got to understand, outside of Malliciah (Goodman) we had almost zero experience in our defensive line, and they've all played now. They're all experienced, we've developed some depth, and because they're so much more knowledgeable and understand what we're doing, they play faster and they play more confident. They're more focused on their fundamentals and technique. We're not busting like we were earlier in the year. And our linebackers are playing at a high level for us, our secondary has improved. So we're tackling better, and that's just all a result of the experience factor, learning a new system.

Now we've played 10 ballgames, and I'd be quite frankly pretty disappointed if we weren't better because we've got talented players. But we're a work in progress, and I felt like the first half of the season we'd kind of have to just fight our way through it, but I thought we would be much improved the second half, and that's how we have to turn it out, and I'll tell you, they're playing very

well, and they've got to just continue to play with a great effort and intensity and attention to detail that they've done these last few weeks because we're not giving up many points, creating turnovers, we're competing for balls a lot better, we're not giving up near as many long runs or anything like that. It's been good to see them improve. They're playing with a lot of confidence right now, and that's where we need to be, playing our best football down the stretch here.

An Interview With:

JIMBO FISHER FLORIDA STATE

JIMBO FISHER: Coming off a very tough hard-fought victory up in Virginia Tech, who played a great game. I'm very proud of our kids the way we competed in the game here in adversity and fought through situations. Very proud of our team the way we competed. I think we're making a lot of progress in a lot of areas. We still have some areas we have to fix, but I think that's every week.

But looking forward to a great game against Maryland this weekend. Maryland has an outstanding defense. They do some really nice things on offense, have a dynamic playmaker receiver, a very strong back. They've had some issues at quarterback because of injury but have still been able to move the ball and do things. Special teams are very sound. Like I say, they're the No. 2 defense, a very good team. We'll have to play our "A" game up there on the road and we'll get their "A" game.

But very excited, had a very good week of practice so far. Our kids seem very focused and locked into just playing a great game this weekend, and we're looking forward to it.

Q. Coming off a good win last week. Anything in particular you want to do even better this week against Maryland?

JIMBO FISHER: Well, I think everything. I think, one, hopefully we'd have a little more consistency on offense, but I give Virginia Tech a lot of credit for what they did on defense. They played a very good game. Must play better up front. Been locking on some things, and then all of

the things -- try to hit all the throws instead of just occasionally you're going to miss one or two.

But defensively I think we played very good against the run. I think we gave a couple things up in the pass not getting enough pressure. I think we'll be able to do that.

Then the special teams did a great job except for putting the daggone catch on the ground, and that's something we've been continually working on that's been an issue all year, and we have to make sure we get that fixed.

Q. What were you pretty pleased with from your defense that you want to keep up this week?

JIMBO FISHER: Our run depth. I thought we played great run defense. I thought our front seven did a tremendous job in the run. We need to take out a few little runs, but we limited that and made them throw the football and they were not able to establish a true running game consistently in the game, but I thought they did a nice job up front in that area.

Q. I just wanted to ask you, I'm just a little confused why you guys are having so much trouble getting traction in the polls. Do you ever look at the -- I know you made some comments about the BCS, but also the coaches rate you sixth in the country and the writers rate you tenth.

JIMBO FISHER: It's all perception. It's all perception. I mean, probably where the coaches have us is probably pretty close I would say in my opinion. That's where I'd put us, up in that same rank. Whether you have four, five, six, seven or eight there, those teams, Alabama and Florida State and Georgia and Florida and all those teams, Clemson, those one-loss teams right there, I think that's how you do it.

And as I said, I didn't understand the whole BCS and that whole thing, and as I looked at it, my biggest thing is I'm not saying this for a Florida State thing; I've said before, this is not a Florida State issue, because Kerwin (Lonzo) started explaining to me because I keep getting a lot of questions on it, so I looked at it, and one computer has you not ranked, one has you sixth, one has you 12th.

My whole thing was how can there be that much disparity. And that's the thing that concerned me on it. I don't understand it all, but I

think that's a major concern in how we do things, and I think the human element imposed has been to be there, whether it's writers or coaches or whatever. I think that's an important part of what we're trying to do, and that was my whole deal in that. I don't know.

Q. Do you think you guys are being punished for the computers for the schedule thing that was forced on you that was not your fault because you had to replace a top-quality team with a Division II team?

JIMBO FISHER: I guess it could be, but I mean, at the same time, our conference at times seems to be getting punished a little bit. You know what I'm saying? It seems to be. Now, I don't know that. Again, just from an outer appearance, that's the way it goes, I guess.

An Interview With:

RANDY EDSALL MARYLAND

RANDY EDSALL: Well, Florida State is a team that's playing extremely well in all three phases, very deserving of their ranking that they're at. When you look at their defense, it's a defense that's outstanding, top defense in the country. And then offensively very solid in all positions. So we'll have a tremendous challenge ahead of us on Saturday.

Q. What have things been like for a senior like Kenny Tate trying to regain his health coming off the injury?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, I have the utmost respect for Kenneth in terms of what he's had to go through to get himself -- when he got hurt last year and then the rehab process that he's gone through and then coming back this year and out there playing. I think the thing is he's playing well. I don't think he's still 100 percent, but he's out there competing and doing everything he can to help his team win. The game of football is very important to him.

But he's a guy that can make plays for you and he's somebody that, like I said, I have the utmost respect for and want him to go out in this

last game here at Byrd Stadium and play to the best of his ability and help us hopefully get a win.

But again, I think Kenny has been through a lot, but Kenny is not one to complain. He's a guy that just wants to go out there and try to be the best he can be each and every day.

Q. With the awful quarterback injury luck y'all have had and moving Shawn (Petty) to quarterback, what percentage of your playbook would you say you're able to run with him given the limited install time you've had?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, it's probably less than 50 percent that you have in, and again, it's one of those situations where you have to have that delicate balance of having too much or not enough in in order to give yourself enough opportunities to score enough points to help your team win. But also you don't want to overload the kid.

Again, same thing with protections and things along those lines. So it's one of those things that we're doing, the things that we feel can help us generate points, but yet also making sure that it's the right amount in order to be able to execute it the way it needs to be executed.

Q. As a guy who's kind of made his name defensively and I guess you're ranked second in the conference in defense right now, what do you make of some of these scores you see out there, for instance, the 68-50 North Carolina-Georgia Tech game?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, I think the thing is this: What you have to understand and what people have to understand is when you're playing these teams that are playing the no-huddle, hurry-up offense all the time, and if you get two teams that are doing that, you're going to -- you're probably going to have high scoring because you're just making the game longer and you're creating more plays during the game. And then again, I think that one of the things is if you're involved with teams like that and sometimes maybe defensively you don't get to work on the fundamentals and the techniques that you need to work on in order to play the kind of defense that you hope to play. And I think there's a delicate balance there, too.

The thing that's also -- it's funny because you know, everybody talks about player safety. Well, we did some things in the college game with

the 40, 25-second clock but you start running all those plays, now you get back into the player safety issue. But I just think it's the hurry-ups and then also that sometimes people don't get a chance to work on the fundamentals and techniques because of these types of offenses that they have to go with, and plus there's more kids nowadays that want to play offense because of all the throwing and everything else.

Q. Is there less coaching from play to play because of the substitution issues?

RANDY EDSALL: Yeah, when you get a team that's no-huddle, you're not coaching on the fly, that's for sure. Even in practice, if you want to simulate the speed which you're going to see from an offense, you're slowing your practice down and maybe not preparing your guys the way they should be for that game. So there's a lot of issues that are involved there, but what you have to do is you just have to find a way to conduct your practice time to get done what you need to get done.

Q. I wanted to ask you, this season obviously was on the verge of being a breakthrough season with a lot of young guys, and it's been kind of derailed by the quarterback injuries and other places. I just wonder how your young guys that were having breakthrough years and are still individually are handling the losing streak and the reasons behind it. Is morale easy to keep up? Is it tough to keep up?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, I think that -- I thought yesterday we had one of our better practices, the energy, the enthusiasm that we had out there and even the execution was pretty good. You know, the big thing is you worry about what you can control. You know, you just try to stay steady all the time. But everybody is disappointed. Nobody likes to lose. But again, there's some times that you're going to go out and give it everything that you have and you're going to end up on the wrong side of the ledger.

But you just try to keep these kids to understand that, hey, every day it's your responsibility to go out and get better, and for us to get better as a team, and there's issues that happen. We can't control that, but what we can control is how hard we work and how well we prepare and understand that you owe it to yourself, you owe it to the University, you owe it to your teammates to do that. But yeah, our guys, they're disappointed that we haven't won in a couple

weeks, but the one thing is they haven't -- you go out and watch the practice yesterday and you wouldn't see that it was a team that's struggled through some of the things that we've had to struggle with this year.

Q. Is there a sense that with so many young players playing such key roles that you guys have laid the foundation, even if it's not going to pay off for a Bowl or championship this year, that you've laid the foundation to be a competitive team at the top level in the ACC in the next year or two?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, I feel good about what we're doing, and then the foundation that's been laid, and you take a look at the talent level that we've brought in and will continue to bring in here, and again, it's my job as the head coach just to continue to stress that, again, about the process that we're going through.

I thought we were on the right track, and then again, we've had some -- we had some situations that arose that kind of didn't allow us to keep going the way we were. But we make our adjustments and we go and we do the best we can with what we have, and that's what we're going to do.

I think we're well on the way to doing the things that we want to do, and sometimes there's things out of your control. But I really like the direction we're going. I really like the effort and the enthusiasm we're getting from all our players, seniors, juniors, sophomores, freshmen, red shirt freshmen, I'm really excited about today and hitting the practice field and really excited about this week and really excited about what's going to continue to happen here.

Q. As far as speed of practice, have you been encouraged with what you've seen this week from (Stefan) Diggs, (Wes) Brown and (Tyrek) Cheeseboro, and has (Brad) Craddock been able to maintain his top spot at kicking?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, again, we were out there again yesterday. We'll continue to evaluate all those guys and see where we're at, and I'll have a better idea tomorrow once we get through practice with everything that they've done.

Q. In order to stay in this game as opposed to last week with Clemson, basically another high-powered team, what do you need to do to keep the score down so you can stay in the game?

RANDY EDSALL: It's just like any week. It doesn't matter who you play. You've got to go out and each guy has to do his job. You've got to put a game plan together that's going to allow them to take away the things that those teams do and go out and play with tremendous enthusiasm and passion and execute. They're a very tough football team to defend with the weapons they have. But this is no different than any other week. If you don't do the basics and you don't do the fundamentals and you don't execute, it's going to be tough to beat anybody.

So again, that's our formula is just to go out and play as hard as we can one play at a time and execute the game plan, be a good fundamental and technical team and disciplined team and look to create turnovers.

An Interview With:

NC STATE TOM O'BRIEN

TOM O'BRIEN: Certainly have a big challenge heading to Death Valley this weekend, but it's a great place to play football against a great football team. Very explosive on offense and solid on defense. Big challenge, but our kids are excited about the opportunity to go play and see what we can do on Saturday.

Q. What's your message to your defense this week about what you have to do in order to keep this game competitive?

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, probably the same thing if you asked that question every week who plays Clemson. They're so explosive on offense. They're averaging about 28 points in the first half, so what they've done is they've come out and jumped on people right away. I don't know if you can stop them. I think you have to try to contain them and slow them down. That's the best thing we can do. A lot of big plays off play-action pass and run fakes and things like that, so certainly just

have to try to control what they do and not give up the big explosive plays that they're so good at.

Q. Easier said than done, however?

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, it hasn't been done yet this year. They've lost one game on the road to Florida State. They've been undefeated I think probably two years at home. Certainly it's a tough venue to play in. They feed off their crowd, and they have so many big play guys, a quarterback that can beat you with arm or leg, tailbacks catch the ball and run with it, and same thing with their wide receivers. There's not any one area that you say they're weak in. They're strong in all areas, and they put a lot of pressure on your defense.

Q. In conference play their two receivers (DeAndre) Hopkins and (Sammy) Watkins are averaging almost 200 yards a game between them. Are they the toughest pair you've gone up against in a while?

TOM O'BRIEN: Yeah, there certainly is two of them. Everybody seems to have a feature guy, and then there's the other guys. But these are two top-rated guys, and that's where all the stress comes in on the defense is that they have two guys that get in the seams or get down the field, double moves, things like that coming off play-action fakes that gets the ball deep, and they can run by you.

And not only those two, but as I said before, you've got the quarterback and tailback to deal with at the same time.

Q. Early in the season you had a couple times where y'all had some trouble keeping people from running by you. You did better against obviously Florida State. Can you talk about the development in that area of your secondary? Is that something y'all fixed?

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, it's something that had to get fixed if we were going to succeed. Certainly from the opening game we got stung a little bit that way, but I think the kids have done a little better job from that point on. But this will be as big a challenge as we've had this year, especially with throwing the football to two guys that are quality NFL receivers basically.

Q. I don't know whether you caught any of what Randy Edsall was talking about, but I asked him about the 68-50 game last

week, there was a 41-40, you've had some obviously big scores in your game with Carolina. Where is this going? Are the scores going to take off even more, or what do you see?

TOM O'BRIEN: I think what's happened in the league is a couple years ago or when I first came in, everybody wanted to know about the offenses, they weren't scoring, this and that. I think what you see is the amount of senior and/or junior quarterbacks that have played a lot, and you look at the Florida States, you look at Clemson, you look at our quarterback, and I don't want to slight anybody by naming quarterbacks, but there's a lot of guys with a lot of experience that are coming back at that position, which allows you to do some things on offense that I don't think have been done before in this conference.

And with the spread and everything else, it forces all those one-on-ones on defense. But you have to have a guy that understands the offense and can throw the football. I think the class of quarterbacks in this conference this year is as good as any in the last five, six, seven years.

Q. What about all the no-huddle now? Is that because of the veteran quarterbacks or is that here to stay and how are defenses going to react to it?

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, you know, it's anything else. Some teams did it. We saw Rich Rodriguez do it at West Virginia back in the Big East and started this whole trend towards that, and that's like anything else in college football, whether it's offensively or defensively, somebody will catch up to it.

But we're a huddle/no-huddle team. We had 94 plays last week. So I don't know whether it's just the no-huddle, but there seems to be for whatever reason, I can't remember running 94 plays in a game that I've coached.

Q. What would you have been normal over the years in terms of plays?

TOM O'BRIEN: I think somewhere in the 70s, 70, 75, I think, is normally where it was. I think we're close to 80 something. I haven't looked at it lately, but we were close to the high 70s. Last week might have pushed us to 80 plays a game.

Q. I wanted to ask you about kickoff returns. You had a guy that brought one back 90 yards or 100 yards I guess it was.

TOM O'BRIEN: Right.

Q. There have been eight kickoffs of 90-yard touchdowns or more this year, three more than ever before in history. Is there something with the rule changes with moving the kickoff back? I thought maybe bringing it out to the 25 would reduce the number of guys bringing it back, but it seems to have the opposite effect.

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, I think what you have to do, and it's one thing that we caution our team on all the time is if you have a guy that can kick it in the end zone, sometimes they get lazy running down. All of a sudden Powell, he doesn't hit it in the end zone, the ball is coming out, and there isn't that same intensity going down. And I think that may have something to do with it. They automatically assume the ball is going to be kicked in the end zone, they're going to dig it out on the 25, and maybe the ball is mis-hit, or the other thing is coaches are doing a good job coaching returns.

Q. Well, the fact that you would get it at the 25 rather than the 20, have you changed what you tell your guys, that if it's going in the end zone let it go? Obviously Tobias brought it out, a ball that would have been a touchback.

TOM O'BRIEN: Well, I think it has to do with you pre-scout the kickers, and it has to do with hang time, how does the ball get there, does it get there on a line, or is it hung up and gives their team the chance to cover. So it has to do with the hang time of the kick and where they are when you -- the special teams coaches look to what yard stripe are they at when the ball gets to the end zone, is it worth bringing out this week, or should we just take the ball on the 25.

An Interview With:

JIM GROBE WAKE FOREST

JIM GROBE: We've got a big challenge, of course, in front of us. This will be our third top-ten team we've played this year, counting Clemson and Florida State. Another tough challenge on the road, tough place to play, South Bend. Disappointed we didn't play better last week, thought NC State's kids played great and whipped us pretty good. We didn't play obviously our best football, so we need to kind of bounce back and see if we can't find a way to play better this week.

Q. When you look at the Notre Dame defense on film, what makes these guys so damned good on defense?

JIM GROBE: Well, I think they've got the formula, and that's to be able to pressure your quarterback without having to do a lot of blitzing. They've got a really strong defensive front. I love their front seven guys, but especially those defensive linemen. They're really able to rush three guys and still get pressure on your quarterback, and when you're able to do that when only three or four guys rushing and still play the coverages that you want to play, I think that makes you special on defense.

Q. How do you get your guys to get past all the mythology that surrounds Notre Dame, just the name and the Golden Dome and the whole atmosphere? They've been to NC State before and places like that, but this is something new, and I just wondered how they adjust to it.

JIM GROBE: Well, I think we're going to find out to be honest with you. I think playing them last year helps, takes a little bit of the mystique out of it. I mean, we know they're a really good football team, really talented, very well coached, all those kind of things. Playing at their place will be, I think, pretty special for our football team. On one hand I think it's good because we don't have to spend a lot of time trying to motivate them to want to go play this week. On the other hand you hope that they can go up and get their feet on the ground and they're not spending most of their time

during the game sightseeing. I think this is one of those trips where you've got to stay really, really focused because it's pretty cool to go to Notre Dame, but at the same time you've got to play good to hang in there with these guys.

Q. You've played 10 games now and your conference schedule is over. Does that seem a little weird?

JIM GROBE: It does. It does seem strange. We've gotten used to playing Vanderbilt after Thanksgiving, so that's not unusual, but as it turned out this was just the only time that we could work it out to go back up to South Bend. It does seem a little bit strange that we're through with the ACC part of our schedule.

Q. I asked Coach Spaziani this earlier because he just played Notre Dame. A lot of discussion nationally about the eye test and how the computers love Notre Dame but in the polls they're behind Kansas State and Oregon and that might keep them out of the National Championship game. As a veteran coach what's your eye test about Notre Dame? Are they a National Championship team or not?

JIM GROBE: I think they absolutely are a National Championship team, but I don't think that means that Oregon and Kansas State are not, and I think that right now to me, with any of those three teams, you can flip a coin as to who would win on a neutral field playing. I think we played Notre Dame last year, and I think -- I thought they were pretty good last year. They're improved over last year by quite a bit. But I think it would be hard to pick any of those three teams one over the other when I think they're all really good.

Q. You mentioned this is your third top-ten team. They might have the best defense of the three; again, that's just an uninformed opinion, but they're not as explosive offensively it doesn't seem as Florida State as Clemson. Is that how you approach the game, and do you agree with that assessment?

JIM GROBE: I think that's pretty solid. I think they're probably the best defensive football team we'll have played. But I think with Clemson and Florida State you're probably playing a little bit more explosive offensively. But when you look at Notre Dame, what they do a great job of

offensively is taking care of the football and they've got a young quarterback that really hurts you with his feet, can really run out of trouble and hurt you. Sometimes you think, hey, we've covered everybody and you think that's good, but then he takes off running and can really hurt you with his feet.

But I would say that this is the best defensive football team we've played so far.

Q. I guess when you're playing Clemson and Florida State you know you've got to score some points, so you might take some chances offensively. Against Notre Dame do you not do that thinking you maybe get a break or two and win a low-scoring game?

JIM GROBE: Well, I think the one thing that you do know, you'd better not turn the football over because they are not turning it over. I think that was one thing that last year was the biggest difference between Notre Dame last year and this year. I think last year they had about mid-30s in turnovers on offense, and this year it's like, I don't know, 10, 11, 12, something like that in turnovers. So that's been the biggest difference with Notre Dame.

I think last year they had a very similar football team, but they turned it over too many times. That's where they're really doing a good job is taking care of the football.

So I think going in there, you know that the one thing you've got to do, you feel like you've got to score some points certainly against that great defense. It's not going to be easy, but the one thing you know offensively, you'd better not turn it over because they're not going to.

Q. I know over the years you've probably learned to expect the unexpected --

JIM GROBE: That's well put.

Q. How do you account for the NC State, Wake Forest and Virginia performances against each other over the last couple weeks?

JIM GROBE: It's really -- I think as much as anything, it's kids. You're coaching guys that have other responsibilities other than football, academics, and each week you just hope you bring your best team every Saturday, but typically you don't. And there's some games where your kids get fired up to play and some games where they don't. Some weeks there are different things, you may have some kids with colds, with the flu,

you may have some kids that are banged up, and maybe not seriously, just a little bit of an ankle, little bit of a shoulder, things like that, and that varies week to week, and you just never know from one week to the next what team is going to show up. You hope your best one shows up, but we know through a 12-game season it's really, really tough to get your best football team to show up every Saturday.

Q. What do you think about all these crazy scores?

JIM GROBE: I think that's offenses today. We were talking yesterday about back when I was at the Air Force Academy, and that was a long time ago, I'm talking 28, 29 years ago when I first got to the Air Force Academy, our defensive goal, and this was in the Western Athletic Conference, they called it the "Wacky WAC," it was one of the first conferences with wide-open, basketball-on-grass kind of stuff. But our goal even back then was 300 total yards defensively, to only give up 300 total yards and 14 points. And when you think that that was even a goal, even a thought back then that we could hold somebody to 300 yards and 14 points, and you look at it now, and I think it would probably be more in the range of 400 yards and probably 28 points would be a better goal for you defensively right now.

Things have just changed so much with the wide-open offenses. I think match-ups every Saturday are key. Sometimes you match up better with personnel, but the offenses all over the country right now are putting up lots of points, so that's why you get big swings every week.

An Interview With:

PAUL JOHNSON GEORGIA TECH

PAUL JOHNSON: We are extremely excited to have chance to come back home and play after road games the last two weeks. We are playing a very important game for us. It's a chance to finish the league schedule, as worst in a tie for the top of our division with a win and a chance to get Bowl eligible, so we have a lot to play for.

I think we are playing against a very good football team in Duke, much improved team, and I'm sure we'll have our hands full on Saturday.

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Q. When you recruit a player like Orwin Smith, do you have in mind that the position, he's going to be an A-back rather than a B-back or do you let that work itself out?

PAUL JOHNSON: We just kind of let it play itself out but you have a pretty good idea which one they fit. But it will work itself out normally.

Q. What attributes does he have that suit him for that particular position?

PAUL JOHNSON: Not only is he a good speed and good runner; he's a good receiver and can catch the ball. He's got some toughness. I think he would be a good player no matter what position he plays. He's just a good football player.

Q. He was telling me that his freshman year he was not that good a blocker and he felt like that probably kept him from getting on the field and that he really worked on that his sophomore year. How is his blocking now?

PAUL JOHNSON: It's good. I think it's improved. He's still probably not the best blocker on the team but he's very adequate and he's improved in that area a lot.

Q. I wanted to ask about Duke, you've played them every year and some of the games have been competitive; this year for the first time, they are Bowl eligible and in contention, as you are for the division title. When you look at them on film, what's different about them this year from previous years?

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, I think they have probably got a little more experience. They have got a lot of guys that have been playing for three or four years. You know, they have got off to a great start. I think that they came out of the chute really well and they have played with some confidence and some swagger and I think they are just playing better.

Q. By your perception have they closed the gap between Duke and the top teams of the league?

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, they have always played us close. Most every year, maybe in 2009 we got up on them pretty good.

But the last couple games have been close games. I mean, they have been like a score or two-score games. They have always played us very tough.

Q. The shootout, do you look at that as an isolated --

PAUL JOHNSON: We have struggled defensively, there's no secret about that. We struggled all year. So continued work-in-progress and we need to play better than we did a week ago.

Q. Is it a season-long thing, not going to be fixed this year -- wait till the rest of the year?

PAUL JOHNSON: I don't know about that. We are going to do everything we can to try to play better on defense this week. If we don't, we are probably not going to win the game.

Q. Is it a single, glaring thing or just across the board?

PAUL JOHNSON: I think North Carolina did some good things. We played a little better in the second half and got some stops. It's lot of things like that; it's your eyes and playing responsibilities and doing all the things that you have to do to be a good defense. It's never usually just one thing.

Q. Why the explosion of long kickoff returns this year?

PAUL JOHNSON: Honestly I couldn't tell you. This is the first time we have returned one since I've been here and first time Georgia Tech has returned one, I think it is ten years maybe. Sometimes it just happens that way and I couldn't give you a really good answer for that.

What did Tom say? I would be interested to know what he had to say about it.

Q. Because so many guys kick it in the end zone, sometimes coverage teams might get lazy and the guy that doesn't kick it in the end zone doesn't bring it out. I was wondering about the rules situation, moving the touch back up to the 25, does that change the approach at all? Do you tell your guys, bring it out or don't bring it out because we have got better field position if we take a touchback, or does that play into it at all?

PAUL JOHNSON: Not really, I don't think. Not for us. In fact, I think it would maybe work the opposite way.

Q. I've heard some discussion from people saying that particularly when the two new teams get added that the divisions be decided by inner division game play only because as it stands now, the Coastal teams don't play obviously the same Atlantic teams each year. What do you think about the division is sort of decided?

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, I mean, that's the way it has been. I think -- I don't really have a take on it. I mean, it's been that way forever.

When we played in 2009, when we won the thing in 2009, we had to play Florida State and Clemson, which is considered I guess two of the stronger teams over there, which they are this year.

It equals itself out. I think it balances itself out. I don't know that you should just play within a division. If it's a conference game; it's a conference game and they should count.

An Interview With:

MIKE LONDON VIRGINIA

MIKE LONDON: It's indeed an honor and privilege to be on ESPN Thursday night. I think one of the oldest rivalry games against North Carolina, a very good North Carolina team, outstanding talent. So we look forward to the challenge in tomorrow night's game. Questions.

Q. Your team has been involved in a couple shootouts, one with Louisiana Tech and another with Miami last week. Do you see more of the same tomorrow night?

MIKE LONDON: Well, it's hard to gauge at this point right now without having gotten into the game and seeing the ebb and flow of how it will go.

Obviously we want to make sure we score enough points to win the game and not give up that many points. I think Carolina has shown that they are very explosive offensive and put so many points up on the board that they are a quick-strike offense with a veteran quarterback in (Bryn)Renner and having outstanding height in their wide receivers.

And obviously the guy who makes it all go for them is (Gio) Bernard, who is the No. 1 in the

nation in punt returns, rushing yards, total yards. So he's got the whole package.

So, we have our work cut out for us because there are so many weapons that they have, and you can see how they put all these points up on the board.

Q. The Coastal Division has been hard to predict this year. Why do you think it's been so hard for one of you guys to separate?

MIKE LONDON: Well, I've always said that there are a lot of outstanding coaches in the ACC, and not just the coastal, but the Atlantic, and every year, the team hits those cycles of the top end of your recruiting cycle, or you're losing veteran players that were significant contributors the season before. So a lot times, about the breaks; the bounces and breaks that you get.

It's hard to say, to put one emphasis on what it is. But I'll always attribute to the type of coaches that there, and whether it's a group of returning veterans that are in key spots is always something that's significant, as well.

It has been -- you're right. You look at our side of the division, and you know, it has been characterized as not ever thought of it being in the type of order that it's in at this point.

But with some more games left to play, there's still opportunities for teams who have been looked at as far as being the leaders of their conference to have chances to do that and teams like ourselves will still have chances to control their own destiny and looking for an opportunity to do that, as well.

Q. Do you think it's been a down year for the division?

MIKE LONDON: I wouldn't characterize it as a down year. There's so many times unless you're in the program itself, about who you have, who is back in those key positions, about the experience that you have.

As I said, I attribute a lot of it to coaching and parity a little bit. Guys are out coaching hard and they are getting great talent and they are taking the talent that they have, and particularly experienced talent, and using it to influence the type of games that they are playing.

I just think that this year, you look at all of the things that are going on, the wins and the home and away wins and the last-second wins; the year definitely is one that you can look at and say, who would have thought that.

Q. The injury report last night listed Maurice (Canady) as doubtful because of a medical condition. Do you have any update on him and his status for tomorrow night?

MIKE LONDON: I do not at this point. I know that there's some things that he's doing this morning and there's one last opportunity for him to do something this afternoon to determine his status.

So we are hopeful, but at the same time, any medical issues that would increase a player's opportunity to get further injured, then obviously we don't want to do that. But we'll know by the end of the day.

Q. And the NC State and Miami games, just points-wise, it's the best back-to-back games Virginia has had against Division IA competition in seven years. What has suddenly clicked in your offense the last two weeks?

MIKE LONDON: I think it's hand-in-hand. In the NC State game, there were several turnovers which gave us more opportunities as far as possessions. There were more explosive plays -- you know, plays whether it was a ball throw down the field or runs. Like I said, defensively, there were turnovers, several turnover sacks, six sacks. We scored on defense with a safety.

I think in the Miami game, again, offense was quick and I always go back to third downs and look at third down, 9-for-14 and I believe they were 4-for-10. So there's chances to extend your drive versus getting off the field.

You look at our quarterbacks, both of them that played, neither one gave up an interception. Of course an interception came from our tailback Perry Jones, but I think not giving the ball up and not giving turnovers has been a key for us.

It has not always presented itself; that in the previous games, in order for us to be successful, we are going to have to continue that trends, particularly against a very explosive North Carolina offense and a good defense.

Q. Given the success you've had in the five-day window last season going down to Miami, do you pretty much follow the same routine this week?

MIKE LONDON: I try to, yes. The only difference is when you're the team that's traveling, your Sunday and then your Wednesday -- the Sunday after your Saturday game and the

Wednesday when you're using that to travel, can be affected.

So we feel pretty good about having a Sunday practice which is productive and today's practice, because we are at home, our guys are into the routine of being allowed to still go to class and still sleep in their own beds and just do different things like that.

We like the routine of if it was going to be a Thursday night quick turnaround game, rather it be the home game that's hosting the game because of the familiarity of the players and their daily routine.

Q. You've not played in a lot of Thursday night games in recent years. It's often speculated that it helps recruiting. What did you sense that last year's Miami victory on Thursday night enhanced your stature with recruits?

MIKE LONDON: I think without a doubt, when you have an opportunity to showcase on Thursday night, everyone is watching that game. ESPN is a great brand and does a great job of marketing it's programming, particularly on those Thursday nights.

You look at the last couple Thursday night games, you see teams that are playing that I think have received bumps in their recruiting.

So it's no different for us last year playing Miami down there and being successful that recruiting definitely was enhanced for us.

You know, and this year, you're not doing quite as well as what you want to be doing on the field, but having won the last two games and having changed a play on national TV again; again, you can improve your brand and you can improve the opportunity of exposure that we are looking at you and maybe take a second look at you because they see what you're doing on the field.

Q. Usually people think when you're juggling quarterbacks that it's not a very good situation, but it seems to have energized your offense. Can you talk about the philosophy behind playing both guys and using them back and forth in a game?

MIKE LONDON: Well, you have to have gone through the process of both of them having played and been starter and both of them having come in at the end of a game and seeing what

they can do. Both of them's knowledge of the offense and both of them's skill set of the offense.

You know, when you look at ourselves, particularly going into the break, there were things that both Michael (Rocco) and Phillip (Sims) did well and there were some things that we could help them with in terms of other players and surrounding casts.

Coast Lazor and the offensive staff crafted a game plan or a menu of things that both of our quarterbacks could do and execute.

And I think that thus far, it has worked out in terms of what they can do and based on what was seen prior to the previous possession; and just so many other different things, a guy has a chance to look at from a sideline, what's going on with coverages and rotations of defenders and anticipating blitzes.

I think at this point, we are where we are with Michael and Phillip, and we'll continue to keep doing this and hopefully give us opportunities to win the last two regular-season games.

Q. Have you ever done anything like this before in your career?

MIKE LONDON: I've been around here at Virginia when Matt Schaub and Marques Hagans -- you know, I've seen different quarterbacks play in a game in previous teams that I've been on.

I know that it's not the most conventional, but each team has to decide what's in the best interests of the team and what's going to move the team forward. I've always said between those two guys, what makes it easier is that Michael is selfless and so is Phillip. They just want the team to win. They want to do whatever their part is to help us win.

When you have that mind-set from your two quarterbacks, then there's a lot of respect that they have garnered and a lot of things that the players on our team appreciate and admire and so they go out and play hard for whoever is taking the snaps.

An Interview With:

FRANK BEAMER VIRGINIA TECH

FRANK BEAMER: Typical Boston College football team, big up front and very tough, played very tough football, very good football. I think that offensively they have had a couple backs hurt. I think they are going to get them back. And then they have been really able to throw the ball extremely well.

And then defensively, you have got to earn everything. They do a great job keeping the ball in front of them and make you earn every yard you get. So we know what a challenge we have going up to Boston College and trying to get a win up there. Questions.

Q. Did you have a chance to meet with Donaldven Manning, and do you have an update on his situation?

FRANK BEAMER: No, I didn't. We'll release a press release later on today but I want to meet with him first though.

Q. Will he be available on Saturday?

FRANK BEAMER: Well, I want to meet with him before we discuss anything else.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the Coastal Division race in general. Why do you think it's been so hard for one team this year to really separate itself?

FRANK BEAMER: Well, I think it's very competitive. Everybody's had their good games and everybody has probably had some games they would like to have back. So, it's just been that kind of year.

Q. The perception from the outside from some people might be that it's been a down year for the division; do you think that that's fair?

FRANK BEAMER: Well, you know, from our standpoint, you know, we are not happy where we are. We are just kind of digging out of it right now.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the division race. I know it evens out over time, but still this is an odd year with two Top-10 teams in the other division. With the unbalanced schedule, Virginia Tech and Duke are the only two teams in the Coastal that play both Clemson and Florida State, and there are two teams that don't play either of them; in determining the division championships, is that fair?

FRANK BEAMER: You know, it always changes around. Over a period of time, it's certainly fair and I think probably the own way to do it when you have as many teams in the conference as we do. You know, over a period of time, it all works out.

Q. Logan mentioned yesterday that one of the things he wants to improve is throwing on the run, how would you evaluate passing on the run this year and have you changed at all in play calling what you do based on some of his struggles with that?

FRANK BEAMER: Well, I think he's very critical of himself. What I really like about him is he always wants to improve. That's just the kind of guy he is and very competitive.

I think again, that will be something that he'll work on and get better at doing. I've seen him make some good throws and I've seen him make some that he's dumping the ball off and wasn't so good.

So, you know, sometimes those things come on a scramble where he's running and all of a sudden trying to get the ball to someone.

Q. Just a clarification, did you meet with Manning yesterday and you'll meet with him today, correct?

FRANK BEAMER: Yeah, he's coming back to meet with me today.

Q. Talking to a couple coaches today about the plethora of kickoff return touchdowns. You've always been a special teams guy. Can you explain why there have been more kickoff returns for touchdowns this year in the ACC than ever before in history?

FRANK BEAMER: Well, I think it all -- I think it gets back to the kick itself and how far you allow your coverage team to get down the field before that ball can be field; caught.

And then, I think last -- well, I think you're seeing more athletic guys on the kickoff return

team and more guys that -- and what happens, you're blocking that guy in open field, and the more athletic you are and the more you can run your feet and the more size you have, you can kind of absorb a blow and then run your feet.

You know, it's harder for those guys covering kicks to get down the field. So I think it's a combination of things. I know with us, not getting the ball high enough and not long enough has kinds of become -- that's held us back a little bit.

Q. Just a little counterintuitive with the new rules of bringing the ball out to the 25, you would think there would be more touchbacks and attempts at return. Has that not the case?

FRANK BEAMER: Yeah, I think people with a kicker that can get in the end zone, that's what they can do.

But when I came in, I could see that people were very accurate in placing the ball with height, and then get your coverage team on down the field. You know, some people would try to do that, figure they could get you before they could get to the 25-yard line.

But the opposite of that is true: If you're kicking the ball and not kicking as far as you want to and as high as you want to, then the receiving team has just got an advantage.

Q. Have you changed your advice to your kickoff return guys about taking the touch back?

FRANK BEAMER: I think if you're catching the ball in the end zone, it's how long that ball has been up in the air and you have to have a feeling for that. If it has not been up very long, you know you want to bring it out; and if it's hung up for a while, you're better off staying in.

Q. With Michael Cole already being out for Saturday, do you talk about any changes or anything differently you'll be doing as far as approaching the secondary or nickel or dime or your packages or anything?

FRANK BEAMER: I think you'll see Desmond Frye in the ballgame. He's a guy that's a true freshman that has a really bright future. He has played on some special teams for us and I think has got good football sense, and he's got good skill. You know, he's going to probably be in the game a little bit more.

Q. With the kickoff, you said that was something you guys were going to visit a little bit, too. Have you made a decision?

FRANK BEAMER: We have charted the last two days and we are going to chart today, and then make a decision.

An Interview With:

DAVID CUTCLIFFE DUKE

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Huge, huge challenge. Georgia Tech is playing their best football, one of the hottest teams, certainly, offensively in the country and always cause a problem. They play highly motivated and very good as a team. Dangerous in the kicking game.

I don't know that I've seen a team that's been hitting on all cylinders like they are right now. A threat to score so many different ways. We have our hands full. But as I've said all week, I think I our guys are excited about the big challenge, and it certainly will be one. With that, take any questions.

Q. Obviously against Georgia Tech you have a lot of concerns in stopping their fullback and stopping their quarterback. When they are able to get the ball outside on a pitch to a guy like Orwin Smith, what kind of pressure that does that put on the defense?

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Well, he's exceptionally fast young man. He's tough, he's experienced. He's been a good football player down there for a long time. They do a good job of getting the ball to the perimeter in a lot of different ways. They can certainly toss it to him in the sweep and he can get the pitch on certain option plays, and of course they throw the ball to those guys. He's a big threat, just like many of their guys are in a lot of different ways.

Q. After you look at what they were able to do last week, I don't know that anybody -- well, maybe Oregon, 68 points, two weeks in a row -- what do you do to slow them down?

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Well, you just don't sleep after you watch that. You go to the store and

try to talk to the pharmacist out of some Ambien is about all you can do.

When they are hitting on all cylinders like that and as I said, not just offensively, but their return game and their kicking game is outstanding; so many weapons offensively, big passes, big runs, they can hit you with a fullback.

They have two quarterbacks playing very well, they are a little different, the two quarterbacks, so you have to prepare for that. It's pretty nightmarish. I think the thing that you have to do is just be consistent and like any time if you're playing a good offense, if you don't tackle well and you don't play good technique, you have no chance.

So I think you have to focus on your team, playing fundamentally very well, and hopefully we can do that.

Q. You guys have done your part in turning the Coastal Division race upside down this year. What's your perspective on how unpredictable the division has been and how much fun it's been to be a part of that this year?

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Well, it's been great fun to carry our season into November would mean a significant things. It's something that I'm used to and I enjoy. I call it, the tournament. We are in the tournament now. People that win the tournament, or a playoff as they like to call it, we are in it right now.

It's interesting. Our league has got a lot of good football players. I think we have a number of outstanding coaches, programs. Certainly Virginia Tech has been very dominant. They still have a great program and a great football team but it's a year that the schedule has been tough for a lot of us. They have had a tough conference schedule. We certainly have.

Anything can happen. You know, there's a lot of parity in our league and I'm just glad we are a part of it.

Q. Do you take offense, and no offense intended with this question. But do you take offense to the perception that because Duke is in it, and you guys can win the Coastal Division, that it might be a down year for the league?

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: No, I don't take offense to that. I wouldn't take -- I really wouldn't. I chuckle at it, I do, myself and we kind of find that a little bit of fun.

This business is hard so you might as well make it fun and it does make me chuckle. We have a good football team but we are not great football team just yet but we have a good football team that can play in all three phases. I think anybody that plays us will tell you that.

Now, we have not played well in three ballgames. Part of that is the opponent and part of that is we didn't play well.

We are a work-in-progress, and as I said, we are just very proud and happy to be part of something in November that's meaningful.

Q. You said part of that is the opponent and part is you; on your end what does your defense need to do better than it has in recent weeks?

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Well, it's been tough. First of all it's health we are still battling but we have given up way too many explosives.

If I have to focus on one thing, we were not giving them up early and then it's become a nemesis and it was a nemesis a year ago. We may have played well two or three downs or even four or five downs in a row and then we finds ourselves giving up a big pass or a big run and it just turns the game upside down.

So consistency, one; two, that will lend itself towards not giving up so many big, explosive plays.

Q. Can you talk about the recruitment and what you remember?

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Sure, I'll start with our quarterback, Sean Renfree. Sean was committed to Tech under Chan Gailey, and I had recruited Sean when I was at Tennessee.

When I got this job, I immediately re-cranked up the recruiting of Sean from our perspective at Duke and with the coaching change and the style of offense changing, put us right in the middle of the hunt for Sean and we are proud that he came and he's had a storied career here on and off the field. He's been a tremendous asset to not only our football program but to Duke University.

Vad Lee is a youngster that I would say, the relationship went beyond recruiting. We really were very close and still close. Have great respect for Vad and I always expected him to do extremely

well at Georgia Tech. I just don't want him to do so well when he plays us.

You know, he's a fine young man, fine family. And I'll be honest with you, I'm very proud of Vad and what he's accomplished. He's a good youngster.

Q. You said your relationship went done recruiting and football; how does that happen and what do you believe?

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Vad was over here a lot. The school is not very far away. Just used to sit and talk. He was around and in my office and around the university a lot and he had former teammates that are on our team.

We had three (Durham) Hillside products on our team that were teammates of his, so we were just close, and it wasn't all about recruiting. Not that kind of a relationship. We did recruit him but it was just different and again, I respect him a great deal as a young man.

I have to say I'm very proud of who he is and what he's done, and you know, I just hope he doesn't do it so well like he has been against us, but more likely, that's what he will do.

Q. Were you recruiting him at Tennessee?

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: I was at Tennessee and started recruiting Sean Renfree a little bit there.

An Interview With:

AL GOLDEN MIAMI

AL GOLDEN: We are getting ready for South Florida, a team that we are 1-1 against in the last two games and both games were decided by 3-point margins and it's our final home game of the year and so we are going to have a great number of seniors that have meant a lot to our program.

We are excited about the opportunity that we have and we know what kind of game we are in for and we are preparing for the next team coming in at 3 o'clock on Saturday.

Q. Just wanted to ask you about the big picture of the Coastal Division race, it's been so unpredictable. Why do you think it's been so hard for one of you guys to really separate this year?

AL GOLDEN: I can't speak for anybody else but we have sputtered at times on offense this year and certainly we have struggled on defense and when it looked like we were getting ready to turn the corner on defense, we got 41 points put up on us and clearly didn't do a great job on the passing game.

I can't speak for anybody else. I just know where we are as a program. We have two very important games left, first in South Florida and then another look back into the Coastal Division playing an excellent Duke team. Not really equipped to speak for the other coaches in the program but know where we are and know what we have to get fixed before Saturday.

Q. Just wondering your thoughts on this series and if you would like to see it continue on?

AL GOLDEN: I think we are taking a real close look at just overall our scheduling. Moving forward, we have had some lack of continuity at the athletic director position so it's been tough to have a solid philosophy, if you will, with the out of conference schedule and certainly USF will be considered as we look forward.

But right now, there's just too many variables in terms of the ACC Conference and what that scheduling is going to look like and of course playing Florida State on the other side and what we need to do in terms of our out of conference schedule, which clearly this year is brutal, I think everybody would agree.

Q. And in terms of this game, you're not going to see B.J. Daniels and they have not announced a starter yet. How do you prepare for the unknown at quarterback?

AL GOLDEN: No. 1, I want to honor B.J.; I think he's had a terrific career at South Florida and just want to say congratulations to him on great career and sorry to see it end prematurely.

In terms of South Florida, I don't know who we will see. But I think we are ready for either one of them. I think their offensive line is playing really well right now, big play potential in Davis and

Mitchell on the perimeter and Murray is running the ball effectively right now.

At the tight end, Sean Bryce has been playing more of late. I see that more as an offensive system right now, as opposed to just a quarterback. I don't think that they are going to change very much. Skip is one of the best coaches at teaching fundamentals and getting back to basics in the bye weeks. I think we'll see a couple of new wrinkles but I think they will just get back to who they are in terms of a system and executing.

Q. A thought about Michael Rocco, both times you've faced him, he's been in and out of the lineup before playing against the Hurricanes.

AL GOLDEN: Well, that's tough. You're making me re-live it.

I think he played really well and clearly we didn't play well enough. So it's hard for me to separate the did he fish sighs of our team in that game.

All I'll say out of respect for Michael is, you know, just separating what we didn't do well, just that the young man played brilliantly down the stretch and just he executed really well, made good decisions with the football, found his check downs, made vertical throws and really hung in there.

I think we pressured ten of the last 16 plays and he hung in there, really threw the ball well. I could go on and on about the things that we need to do well, but I'm answering your question about Michael.

Q. What do you need to fix to prepare for this week?

AL GOLDEN: Clearly getting Denzel (Perryman) and (Eddie) Johnson back, that's about 20 tackles a game, maybe more and two big playmakers, I think that's going to help. Doesn't look like Deon Bush is going to make it back. But that also means that (Rayshawn) Jenkins back there has had another week to mature and obviously got a lot of great experience last week.

So I don't think from a system standpoint, we are going to change much, and I just think getting two of our three biggest playmakers back and having some experience with some of the other guys is going to make a difference hopefully.

Q. Curious if you know what the timing might be for post-season?

AL GOLDEN: Here is what happened. You know, every time we get in that position, just all the speculation goes crazy and everybody wants to answer all those questions and right now what we need to focus on is playing well and playing better than we played last week, because we had the same questions last week and we didn't take care of the one thing that we needed to take care of, and that was the University of Virginia.

With all respect, it's something that we are not discussing or talking about and it's really something that I have no dialogue with or input on right now at all. My job is to get this team ready to play South Florida who is coming off a bye week and will be very fresh.

Q. I know that injury reports come out on Thursday, but can you give any insight as to what your receiving core looks like right now?

AL GOLDEN: Well, Allen Hurns looks like he'll be okay to play. Phillip Dorsett, Herb Waters, Kendal Thompkins. Of course we line Duke Johnson up there a lot. Dallas Crawford can do that, as well. We'll wait and see on did he have on Johnson and moving forward.

Q. Is that a group you're concerned about, or no?

AL GOLDEN: No. We played multiple personnel groups and obviously Phillip is having a good year. Herb has been playing much better of late. Allen had probably one of his better games last week, Allen Hurns. So we are going to need some guys to step up for sure, because we lost Scott and Robert Lockhart in the last couple weeks but hopefully these guys will step up and answer the call.

An Interview With:

LARRY FEDORA NORTH CAROLINA

LARRY FEDORA: Short week here, quick turnaround and probably hopefully we are exactly what the doctor ordered for this football team. I think our guys have had a great attitude this week



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and I'm excited about getting back out on the field with them.

Q. Can you put into words how big of a loss Casey (Barth)'s injury is, and what's the position looking like after that?

LARRY FEDORA: Well, Casey, losing him is obviously a big loss for our football team. I think he's the record-holder here at the school for just about everything in the kicking game, and he brings a wealth of experience and a lot of confidence to the position.

You know, Thomas Moore will be handling all the placekicking and kicking off duties. The thing was, when Casey was injured last year, Thomas was the one who was doing all the kicking at that time. So we feel comfortable with him. He's had plenty of live reps in games throughout his career. Even though we are going to miss him, the next guy is going to step up and play.

Q. Your first year in the conference, how different do you feel preparing for a team that you prepared for last year and at their place?

LARRY FEDORA: Well, I mean, it's very similar. We really haven't changed how we prepare for them. I mean, you know, I can say this, in just watching them, I'm impressed with the turnaround that they have had during this season.

I mean, you don't see a lot of things happen like that in football, and I think that they had a rough spot -- a rough road there for a little bit and now it's like a totally different football team. You can see the confidence in the way they play and they are taking care of the football and all those things.

So we will prepare for them this week exactly like we did last year, except for it's half the time.

Q. Do you see what they do with the two quarterbacks?

LARRY FEDORA: No, they don't change their system or change the scheme or anything like that. Both guys, I think they have a lot of confidence in both of them and I think both have gotten better as the year has gone on.

So they are playing both of them and they feel like both of them bring something to the table obviously, or they wouldn't be playing them. For us, it's the same game plan whichever one is in the game.

Q. You obviously have a short week to prepare but at the same time, you want your guys to move past what happened last week, so is that good or bad that you have got the short week given what happened last week?

LARRY FEDORA: Well, either way, we are going to say it's good. I mean, because that's the only way you can approach it is that it's good. You have a bad taste in your mouth, you only have a few days and hopefully you get that bad taste out of your mouth so you don't have to wait all the way until Saturday.

I think our guys have handled the short week well in practices, the way they have done it, gone about it; their maturity, the way we have wanted to have energy out there but also be able to take something off of them.

But I guess the real proof is going to be how we play Thursday night.

Q. You talked about Jonathan Cooper; can you talk about obviously what is good about Jonathan and what you see from Oday (Aboushi) and compare their games a little bit?

LARRY FEDORA: I would say first of all in comparison, they are two different positions. One is on the inside and one is on the outside. I think their guy -- he is obviously a very, very good player and I'm sure he's going to probably play for a long time himself.

On our side of it, Jonathan is really the complete package. I mean, and I'm very proud to say that I've had the opportunity to coach him because he's a great young man, and he's very intelligent.

When you talk to him about what he needs to improve in a certain area, he is constantly working on that and wants to know what else he can do. He's very, very athletic for a big man, and is just a huge part of our offense.

Q. When you look at the film of Saturday's game, with the 68 points you gave up, is there a fluke or fundamental breakdown? Is it something you can fix in five days?

LARRY FEDORA: There's a lot of things you can fix in a short period of time, because one, you're not going to face that offense. So we don't have to worry about the assignment discipline on the options.

But yeah, there are some things, definitely. We gave up a kickoff return for a touchdown. We had a botched fake punt on the 25-yard line that gave them another score. We turned the ball over

on a screen pass on our own side, and we fumbled ball in the red zone going in.

So there were around 24 points just off of special teams and turnover mishaps. Yeah, we can correct a lot of things.

Q. You mentioned the kickoff return. I've asked a couple other coaches this. You've had a long kickoff return in the Virginia Tech game that was very important, and you gave up one. This year in the ACC there have been more long kick after returns, 90-yards plus, more than ever before in history, any reason for that?

LARRY FEDORA: I think you have some pretty danged good players back there returning the football, I really do. I think people are still feeling out and trying to decide how they want to want to handle moving it up to the 35-yard line; instead of some have the ability to kick it out in the end of the end zone and some don't and they are trying to figure out what they want to do if they can't.

Q. The 25 to the 20, does that change your approach, maybe be more anxious to take a touchback than you might have been at the 20?

LARRY FEDORA: Yeah, because one, the kicking team is closer, also. So your chances are probably not as good if it's kicked deeper in the end zone. Yeah, we have talked about that and the philosophy has altered a little bit.

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