

November 21, 2012



An Interview With:

FRANK SPAZIANI BOSTON COLLEGE

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, as Mike said, we're traveling down there Thanksgiving week down to Wolfpack country, and it's a good football team, and it's been a tough venue for us to play in over the years. We're certainly going to have our hands full with a well-coached, very talented football team.

Questions?

Q. One of the guys obviously to be competitive this Saturday you have to control a little bit is Mike Glennon. He's leading the league in passing. What problems does he present, and as a guy that's seen your fair share of quarterbacks to defend, is he unique in any way?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, yeah, he's very talented. I think he's unique in that he's about 6'5½", 6'6". He's tall, rangy, understands the offense, and I forget what kinds of records he has, but for being a starter for only two years, he's well on the learning curve. He's going to pose some problems, and he's got a lot of weapons. He's got a lot of weapons. Once again, it's a good system, he's very talented, and everything I know about the young man is that he's very dedicated to being a big league quarterback. We've got our hands full with him.

Q. He has thrown some interceptions this year. Is that basically because, my own uninformed opinion, there are times when pressure bothers him a little bit? Is that something that neutralizes -- not neutralizes but helps in this situation, or is there something else?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, you know, there's a lot of reasons for interceptions, and I haven't gotten the feeling that he's -- that's an Achilles heel with him. Now, once again, pressure

bothers everybody. But some of his interceptions have been at particular times in the game where maybe they had to force something. But that's not his issue. He's a big league quarterback.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about Florida State and what stands out to you about the Seminoles' defense this year?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Let me say this: Florida State, they're well-coached and they've got excellent players. They have a front four that can match up with anybody in the country.

Q. How good is their secondary from what you saw playing against them?

FRANK SPAZIANI: They're good. They're talented people, and once again, the front four enhances the secondary's ability.

Q. I know you've still got your last game of the season to play. When you sort of look at the season as a whole, what do you make out of this season, and what are the things that didn't go the way you would have liked, and if you could have changed this or that -- I don't know if you've reflected on the season as a whole much to this point or not.

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, you know, I'd like to get into -- that's a little premature for me to reflect. Obviously I've got some thoughts on it and stuff, but it's -- I don't think this is the time for me to discuss it and sound like -- whatever. We're trying to focus on NC State, and that's what we've got to do.

One thing we haven't been able to do sometimes is focus as well as we need to focus, and for me to get into that discussion would be the pot calling the kettle black.

Q. What are the things on your side that you need to do well against NC State to have a chance to win on the road there?

FRANK SPAZIANI: Well, they've been a very good home team, obviously. First of all, we've got to protect our quarterback. I think they lead the

league in sacks. They do a very good job in that aspect of it. We're certainly going to need to run the ball a little bit to help ourselves protect.

And then offensively we've got our hands full. I mean, we have our hands full. We have -- they're talented and they're well coached and they've got a great scheme, and they move the ball on everybody.

Q. Having coached with Tom O'Brien all those years, do you kind of know what he's thinking, or is that too long ago?

FRANK SPAZIANI: I know never what anybody is thinking, okay? Once again, Tom is a very good football coach and he's a smart football coach. He'll have a good game plan for us. And I haven't the slightest idea, other than what we normally do with opponents; there's no insight because of my relationship with him.

Q. I just wanted to ask you one thing: The record doesn't really reflect it, you've only won one of your last four, but you had an overtime game against Virginia Tech which is obviously fairly impressive, and you played Notre Dame closer in the last month than almost anybody else. Is that a sign that this team really has made a stride in the last month? Obviously you'd love to have gotten a couple wins out of that. Has this team improved down the stretch?

FRANK SPAZIANI: I'm going to need you to go to one of our alumni meetings and talk to them. You know, once again, it's wins and losses, and if you don't win, you're not making progress.

Our kids are young and they're working, and we've had some guys come back from some injuries, and we've made progress, but we're still coming up short. So you take solace in that you're making progress, but it's still not good enough, and that's where we're at.

An Interview With:

DABO SWINNEY CLEMSON

DABO SWINNEY: Good to be with you again. Well, this is an exciting week here, our rivalry week. It's going to be a big challenge for us

getting ready to play an outstanding South Carolina football team. They've got two losses on the road to top-five teams, so obviously they are a very, very good football team.

We're going to have to play at a high level. They're defensively as good as anybody we've seen or are going to see, and offensively they've, I think, adjusted well without Lattimore and have done a good job of getting the ball in their playmakers' hands. They've got guys at receiver, tight end, and then obviously their backs, Kenny Miles has been around a while and has made some plays, and their quarterback is outstanding, very good in the return game. Ace Sanders is as dangerous a guy as there is out there in the country, so just a good football team and will take a complete effort on our part to have a chance to win.

Q. Like you just stated, it's South Carolina week, a huge game, and you have done a great job kind of building up this Clemson program as well as Steve Spurrier at South Carolina. With that being said, the last few years has been the first legitimate chance that you guys could even match up and play in the Chick-Fil-a Bowl game after you played in the regular season. Would you be in favor if that ever did happen, or what's your thoughts on that?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, to be honest with you, I hadn't thought about that. But I hope I don't have to worry about that. That means we got beat.

But when the regular season is over, that's when we focus on the postseason, and whatever you get, you get. You get dialed in on getting ready to play that opponent, and whoever it is, it's always an exciting time. Your players get a little bit of time off and then they come back and you get geared up for that postseason opportunity and the experience that you get, and obviously you want to try to win.

But that would be an interesting scenario. Again, hopefully we're not having to worry about that.

Q. How do you think your offensive line matches up with their defensive line, and what do you see on film that makes that such a strength for them?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, we're going to have to play well. We're going to have to play as

good as we've played all year. Their whole entire front is NFL guys. I mean, all of them. And some of the backups.

You know, Clowney would be probably a top five pick this year if he could come out. I mean, Devin Taylor, outstanding player, Quarles, Jerideau, they're all good players, they rotate guys in there. They're just very physical, they get pressure with just their four-man front, and that allows them to do some other things on the back end from a cover standpoint and allows them to play some man coverage and disrupt timing and things like that.

But this is as good a group as there is out there in the country anywhere, there's no doubt about it. We're a bunch of young bucks over there, got one senior, but these guys have played well throughout the year, and I'm confident with them. I like the guys I've got, but they're going to have to bring their "A" game.

Q. Is that match-up the biggest key to this game or is there something else you think is a bigger deal?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, I mean, that's certainly a big part of it. We've got to protect our quarterback and be able to establish the run game, and we didn't do that last year. But to me, the biggest thing to me is turnover margin. We've obviously lost the last three years in this ballgame, and we've lost the turnover margin, too. You know, you've got to give yourself a chance, and this is not a team that you want to play from behind against. You know, and part of that, again, is just making some of the plays that are there when they present themselves.

But winning that turnover margin is to me the critical thing. We've got to do a great job in that area in taking care of the football, creating some turnovers defensively for us. But there's a lot of things.

This is the type of ballgame -- any time you get two top teams in the country that play each other, the margin for error is not very big. It's three or four or five plays, so you've got to play every play like it's the play. And it could be -- you know, it could be something on special teams. I mean, you just never know.

But that's what makes it exciting and challenging.

Q. With all the in-state rivalry implications and the game your fans want to win and the game your players want to win and

all that, in addition to carrying the Clemson banner into this game, do you think about the ACC banner, as well, the ACC/SEC that comes up, and there's four of them this weekend?

DABO SWINNEY: No. We're just really just thinking about Clemson. That's really been our focus all year, and it shouldn't be any different. It's not about South Carolina, it's not about anything outside of Clemson. It's about Clemson, how we prepare, how we play, our execution, our effort, our mentality. And that's just the way it's been for us all year. Hey, every week it's been the biggest game of the year, and let's prepare great and nothing changes. The only thing different with this one is this is the last game of the season, and it's your in-state rival. So there's a little bit more attention than maybe any of the other games.

But our mentality is exactly the same. We've just got to focus on ourselves and have great preparation and just put a great effort on display Saturday night.

Q. When you look at the other ACC/SEC match-ups this weekend, just as an observer, is it the kind of thing that you say, hey, this is a great opportunity for the conference, I'd like to see us win two or three of these?

DABO SWINNEY: You know, again, I've been so focused on what we're doing, I really don't pay a lot of attention to that stuff. But yeah, I mean -- I'm trying to think who all they are. I know Florida State plays Florida. Love to see those teams win and represent the conference great. But that's irrelevant, really, to what I'm trying to do here.

Q. I was just wondering what Breeland's workload has been so far this week and if he's not a chance of playing on Saturday.

DABO SWINNEY: No, I don't see him playing. He's been very limited and actually did an MRI on him and came back good, but he's got some strained area in his groin-abdominal area, so he's not going to be able to play.

Q. I wanted to ask you a little bit about Florida State since you guys are really the only team that's had a lot of offensive success against them. What were some of the keys were you guys having success in that game, and how difficult is Florida State's defense, and what stands out to you about them?

DABO SWINNEY: Well, they're outstanding, and it's been a long time ago for us, obviously. I think we've improved tremendously since that game. But they were a top-five team when we were there, and in my eyes they're every bit a top-five team still. They've taken care of their business. They like to -- haven't always been pretty, but great teams find ways to win, and they make the big plays when they get the opportunity, and when their back is against the wall they respond, and that's what Florida State has done. They've responded.

Same thing in our ballgame. Heck, we got them -- we're getting ready to tap them out, and shoot, next thing you know, they're on top. And so this is a really deep, talented football team. Defensively they're outstanding, great D-line, great linebackers, as good a secondary, I think, as there is in the country. So just a complete team.

But for us we feel like we're pretty good, too. And it was a great match-up, and we won a lot of match-ups. We took advantage of some of the things that they like to do and hit some plays early. But our play makers made plays and won big match-ups. Our quarterback played well. And again, unfortunately, we give up the kick return and it kind of turned on us down there and we weren't able to -- and then we had a big turnover late that kind of sealed it for them. But overall a very, very dangerous football team in every phase, offensively, defensively, special teams. There's really, I don't think, a weakness on their team. I think they've got play makers everywhere. They've got -- a great back goes down, shoot, they've got two or three more, here they come. Outstanding quarterback, and defensively, again, just a ton of depth and speed and athleticism.

An Interview With:

JIMBO FISHER FLORIDA STATE

JIMBO FISHER: Coming off a road victory versus Maryland, which was a very important victory for us, allowed us to clinch the Atlantic Division. Very proud of our guys for being able to do that and have an opportunity to play in the championship game. Handled business very well with having that being a very important game with

the big rivalry behind, I thought our kids handled the distractions and not looking ahead to Florida because understanding the importance of the Maryland game very well. Very proud of them.

Had a great week of preparation so far, looking forward to playing an outstanding Florida team, who is, like I say, one of the top teams in the country. They do an unbelievably great job on defense; Coach Muschamp does a super job with them overall; special teams are very well; offense, have play makers. Driskel will be back in the game, can run and throw the football and do all the things that he does, but it's also Brissett; if he plays he's an outstanding player, too.

So it's a match-up of two teams in the top ten, the way it should be, that Florida and Florida State are having a significance in the national limelight and what's going on in the game, but more importantly it's a great rivalry, one of the great rivalries in college football, and I'm very blessed to be a part of it, and I'm looking forward to the opportunity to playing on Saturday.

Questions, please.

Q. This is one of four ACC/SEC match-ups this weekend. Do you think about that at all in that, hey, this is a great chance for the ACC to make some sort of statement as to how --

JIMBO FISHER: No. I don't mean any disrespect to our league, but it is great for our league if we're successful, but we're playing a rivalry game. It's a big game against Florida and we know them very well and they know us. It's just about that game. If it does, and it helps our league, I'm all for it. I'm not against that. But that's not a focus as far as what I'm concerned, but I want to do well for our league, I want to represent our league because I think we have a great league and how we play.

But the big thing we have to focus on, just playing well against Florida and if that part of it works out, that's part of it.

Q. The other issue is that if you can win and some other results favorable to happen to you this weekend, do you feel like this could propel you into the BCS -- into that mix?

JIMBO FISHER: I think one thing we found out in college football, anything is possible. That's the one thing that's predictable. The month

of November is always crazy; like I said, it's like March Madness, there's always games coming and going, and I think it's the greatest month in all of sports because it's amazing what happens in college football during the month of November.

But we don't sit and dwell on that. Our goal is to do what we do and control what we can control and that's play well against Florida who's a great opponent, and if everything else falls in place, then it does. But I think that's one of the great things that makes college football what it is, that you never know what's going to happen, and it's amazing to me how we all sit in astonishment, like can you believe this is happening. Well, if you look at it, it happens every year. It happens every year in college football. That's what makes it so great.

Q. Just kind of piggy-backing off your statement right there, anything is possible, I mean, if Notre Dame loses to USC and for whatever reason you guys lose to Florida, Florida backs into the national title game. Do you think that's fair, or what's your thoughts on that?

JIMBO FISHER: You know, I mean, it's obvious that's not for me to decide. It happened last year with Alabama. You're talking about a team that didn't play in its own conference championship game and was able to get in, so that's the rules and that's not Florida's fault if they're fortunate enough for those things to happen. They're just playing football, also.

Like I say, we have to look at some things, I think, as a sport, but that's the way the rules are and they want the best teams, and if that's what happens, I hope it doesn't happen because that means we lose to them, so we need to take care of our business. But that's my main concern, but that's what's out there.

Q. I wanted to get your take on Maryland moving to the Big Ten.

JIMBO FISHER: I've never even thought about it. We've had so much on our mind after getting back from that game and getting on to Florida, I really don't. I mean, anytime somebody leaves your conference it's not a good thing, and they were one of the original founding members. It is alarming when no one knew or knew anything about it, but Maryland has to do what's best for Maryland, and that's their business. I have no idea why or why not, but we have to focus on what we've got, and we will have to look at -- I'm sure everyone is aware of what's going on, and our powers that be at Florida State will deal with that.

Q. I was going to ask, do you think that because they found a way despite the \$50 million exit fee to leave that it could open the door for other programs to reconsider that option?

JIMBO FISHER: I have no idea. I mean, I honestly -- and I don't mean -- I don't know enough about the situation or if they have to pay or they don't pay or I have not enough information. I haven't looked at it because of my focus on this game to even be able to comment on it. I'm sorry.

Q. I wanted to go back to something you said in your opening comment. I think it's the first time since 2000 both you and Florida are ranked in the top ten in this game. Do you think that adds something extra to the match-up this year?

JIMBO FISHER: Oh, I think there's no doubt because when you both are having outstanding seasons like we both are, it definitely does because it has more national ramifications, and when you do it -- but our own personal deal, no, as far as -- because we take pride in playing against Florida just like they take pride in playing against us. But I think from a fan standpoint and everything that goes on, and it's hopefully back to where it should be where it's like this every year, but that's -- it is a good thing. I'm not against that, I promise.

Q. And just last year everybody was talking about the state of football in Florida being down with teams not finishing in the top 25, and here you guys are a year later both in the top 10. Did you expect that to happen so quickly, both you guys back up at the top?

JIMBO FISHER: Honestly, yes. Because I think you have great programs, you have great availability of players, and I think both groups have gotten good players there, and they've got a great staff, and I feel we've got a great staff. Just a matter of getting back on the field and playing, and like I say, things are never as good as they seem, they're never as bad as they seem, and there's reasons that would happen, but we knew we would be back, and I'm sure they did. It doesn't surprise me one bit they're back.

Q. I wanted to get your impressions on Mike Gillislee and how important it'll be to contain him on Saturday.

JIMBO FISHER: Well, I mean, I think Mike had an outstanding year. He's fixing to break 1,000 yards, been very dependable, great inside runner with good burst and wiggle and can make you miss, throwing, catching the ball. I think he's had a tremendous year and he's an excellent player for them, and it is very important because they like to run the football, and you have to be able to stop the run to be a great defense. He'll be a -- containing him will be a key factor on Saturday.

Q. I'm just curious, I'm looking at polls, and usually the AP and the coaches track fairly close. You guys are a huge difference, 5 in the coaches, 10 in the AP. Why do you think there's such a difference in perception among the coaches and the writers?

JIMBO FISHER: You're one of the writers. Ask them.

Q. I'm not on the voting panel, I've got to say.

JIMBO FISHER: No, I mean, I have no idea. You know, it goes back to what their individual opinions are. Everybody has got one, and who's to say who's right. But that's just the way it is sometimes. I have no idea.

Q. In some rivalries home field makes a huge difference, some it doesn't. In this rivalry from your experience is having the home field a big advantage, little advantage or no advantage?

JIMBO FISHER: I think it's a big advantage, I do. I know we were fortunate enough to win at their place last year, but that is a very tough place to play, and I know this place is a very tough place to play and being a game of this capacity and what's going on. And if you look at the history of it, it's been a -- home field has had a significant -- there was a little run there in the mid 2000s I think at times in different places, but I think over the history of it, usually -- I'd rather be at home, I promise you that.

An Interview With:

RANDY EDSALL MARYLAND

RANDY EDSALL: I know I've been very, very impressed watching North Carolina on film this week. Offensively they've got a lot of weapons, and defensively they give you a lot of problems with their scheme and the pressures that they give you. I know that it's going to be a tough game for us, and we're looking forward to going to Chapel Hill and playing them.

Q. Knowing you a little bit, I'd suspect that you try to avoid distractions on a weekly basis, and how difficult has it been this week to prepare a team where all the conference switch discussion has been going on?

RANDY EDSALL: I'll tell you, we always practice on Sundays, so we did that, and then on Monday is our day off, and that's when there were the things that were going on, the press conference and all that. And then we went back out to work yesterday, so really, it kind of occurred on a day when we were off. We went out, practice was normal yesterday, and go to practice today, and tomorrow morning, and review our things here and get on a plane and go.

So it really hasn't been a distraction at all for the team or myself or our coaches.

Q. I know it's happened very suddenly, but I'm just wondering if you think as a football coach, does changing the leagues change your recruiting philosophy in terms of where you go, where you try to recruit from as opposed to where it was going to be in the ACC?

RANDY EDSALL: We're going to recruit the areas that we've been in, but then also I think because of where you're going to end up playing more of your games, you're going to go and recruit some of the areas that have been good areas to recruit with the number of players in some other areas, too.

But our philosophy and our approach to recruiting is not going to change, it's just we might go into a couple other areas that we weren't actively recruiting as much as we would be now.

Q. And again, I know it's all happened very quickly, but has there been time to get any kind of feedback from the guys you're currently recruiting or currently have committed, any feel for the move and how they're taking it?

RANDY EDSALL: When we knew about it, we talked to them on Monday evening, and guys are excited about it. We've gotten a lot of positive response from our -- the kids that have verbaled to us and also some kids that we're recruiting for '14 and '15, as well.

Q. When you watch Gio Bernard on film, what kinds of things or how many different things jump out at you?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, his quickness, his durability, his power, his ability to catch the ball. Very, very talented back. You know, very talented. Had the opportunity to see him in high school down there at St. Thomas Aquinas and was impressed with him then and impressed with him now. He's really a complete back and somebody who's playing very, very well for North Carolina.

Q. Do you adjust your defensive scheme any to try to account for him, or do you just pretty much play what's worked well this year and hope that will be good enough?

RANDY EDSALL: Well, I think any time that offensively when you take a look at North Carolina, you're going to line up and load up the box, they're going to throw the bubble screens, they're going to throw the lookies, they're going to do things to take advantage of what you're trying to do to shut the run down.

So I think you have to -- not only do you have to be sound if you're going to look to take the run away, but you've also got to be cognizant of the fact that they're going to fake the ball to him and then throw it outside. You have to do a good job of being able to defend the whole field and defend everybody that they have because they have -- with the quarterback and the receivers, they've got a chance to hurt you either way. So they've got a very balanced attack. But the thing you do have -- the guy that it all starts off of is Giovani. So you've got to take care of that first.

An Interview With:

TOM O'BRIEN NC STATE

TOM O'BRIEN: Certainly this is a big game for 16 of our kids because it's senior day, the last time they'll get a chance to play in front of the Wolfpack Nation here in Carter Finley stadium. They're a special group of kids. It's the first group that we had a full year to recruit. Four of them have already graduated, 10 of them are due to graduate here in December, and the two others will graduate within the next year. All 16 kids will have earned their degrees since they've been here.

With a win, if we can find a way to win this game Saturday, they'll have won their 24th game in three years, sending them to three Bowl games in a row. The most wins in the history of this school for a three-year period is 26. Early in the '70s it was done and then Philip Rivers did it. They can end up the regular season two wins shy of the best three-year period since it's been here. They've had a great influence on this program as we continue to move forward, it'll be certainly an emotional day for them.

Q. I wanted to get your perspective on Maryland leaving the conference because I remember when the ACC announced Pitt and Syracuse would join you, you talked about your experience when you went through the transition at BC from the Big East to the ACC. What do you think this next year is going to be like for Maryland, and what are your thoughts on losing them as an Atlantic Division opponent?

TOM O'BRIEN: You know, I hope it isn't the way it was when we left the Big East. There was a lot of acrimony at that point. I think in today's world, people are changing conferences every year, so it's -- it may be bad with the fans one way or another, but certainly we'll treat Maryland with the respect that they're due as a longtime partner of the ACC.

I think any time change happens I think it's an opportunity to make yourself better and it's an opportunity to be better.

The thing that I would hope going forward, and especially because they're traditionalists and everything else, that we can't do it next year, but

certainly going in 2014 that we could change our brackets and go back to the original ACC against everybody else, the Wake Forest, Duke, Carolina State, Georgia Tech, Clemson and Virginia, the original guys, and we can go back to playing each other and it can be the old guys against the new guys. I don't care what you call the conference. But I think that would certainly be something we've got to consider, and if we're going to be traditionalists and think that that's important, then maybe that can happen in 2014.

Q. Is there any concern, you probably haven't even had time to talk to any other coaches about it, but just that this could open the door for more teams to leave the ACC?

TOM O'BRIEN: As you said, we haven't talked about it, but I would think that that might be in some guys' mind one way or another, but as far as coaches, we have no influence on this process. You're asking the wrong guys that question.

Q. I just wanted to ask you about the Bowl situation. Obviously you qualify for a Bowl, but winning another game, it just seems to me that so many teams are bunched in the middle of the ACC that one more win could make a big difference in your Bowl destination. Does that matter at all, or do you pay attention to that?

TOM O'BRIEN: No, it certainly doesn't, and I think that's one of the carrots that we talk about to the team, that they can separate themselves from everybody else. You're going to have 10- or 11-win teams in your top two, and then if you want to be the third team in that selection process, then you have to win this game on Saturday, not only because it's senior day, the last home game and everything else, but it certainly has a lot to do with, I think, your stature and where you can go in the Bowl process.

Q. When we talked to Coach Cutcliffe Tuesday, he was talking about -- we were talking about this, that so many teams are so close in the middle of the league to being 6-6 or 7-5 or maybe 5-7, and he was talking about it being parity. Obviously Clemson and Florida State have separated themselves, but other than that, is there parity in the ACC, and is that a good thing or a bad thing?

TOM O'BRIEN: You know, parity is always good, but certainly I think perspective for the league, you don't want all your Bowl teams as

six- or seven-win teams. I think you like to have parity at the eight-, nine- and ten-win level, but that hasn't been the case this year. So everything is relative, and you have to figure place where you're going to be this year in this league. We have an opportunity to possibly separate ourselves from everybody else by winning another game, and that's certainly important for us.

Q. You've got in Boston College a team that played a pretty tough game against Notre Dame and then lost in overtime against Virginia Tech. What concerns you about them? Are they a team that you see has shown some improvement as the season has gone on?

TOM O'BRIEN: No, they've played very well the last two games. As you said, they've had great effort up there, and that's typical of the Boston College teams that I've been familiar with in the past. They certainly have not been afraid to come play us. They've beat us because, as I told the team, because they've been tougher mentally and tougher physically than us and have played harder than we have, and that's something that we have to be concerned with.

I know that Frank and them, they seem to like to come play NC State. They've had success, and we would expect them to play better this week than they have the last two weeks.

An Interview With:

JIM GROBE WAKE FOREST

JIM GROBE: Thanks. We really had a tough time this past weekend in South Bend. Notre Dame is a pretty good football team, and I don't think we played our best football. But we were very impressed with Notre Dame, and obviously one of the best if not the best team in the country right now.

Didn't play very well. We really need to bounce back this week. Important game for us. We know that for us to be in a Bowl game we need to win Saturday, so I think we'll have a good effort out of our kids. We've just got to play a lot better than we have been playing, a really talented and well-coached Vanderbilt team.

Q. Given your history with the ACC back to Virginia, I wanted to get your perspective on your reaction to Maryland going to the Big Ten.

JIM GROBE: Well, it's disappointing for me. I have total confidence in John Swofford to handle the situation, but going forward, you know, I played against Maryland when I was at Virginia, and we've played against them all the time since I've been at Wake Forest. So it's going to -- it's disappointing to me, but hopefully Maryland can benefit from the above. Apparently they think that's going to be good for them, and I hope that all works out.

But being old school, you kind of get used to some of the status quo that doesn't exist much anymore. The conferences are changing so much, and I think with Maryland leaving, for a guy that played against them back in the early '70s, I've been familiar with Maryland for a long, long time, so I'm sad to see them go.

Q. Tom O'Brien said he'd like to see an old guys versus new guys league when they figure out who the replacement is going to be. Do you think the realignment might be a good idea with old guys versus new guys?

JIM GROBE: Well, it's fine with me. You get comfortable with the old guys, people you know, and I think that's one of the things that will probably be a challenge for Maryland going into the Big Ten. They're not going to be familiar with the people they're going against, and I think you do get a little bit -- maybe not comfortable because everybody is pretty good, but you get a little familiar with everybody, and so I think that's probably a good idea on Tom's part. I don't think that's going to be the overriding factor.

Q. You said Daniel Mack's foot was still giving him problems. Just curious to see how he did last night in practice, and also, have you heard from trainers and medical staff on Colin Summers and Josh Harris?

JIM GROBE: Yeah, you know, with Daniel Mack, he's practicing. I think he's still a little bit tender, his foot is, and so he's having to be careful. We haven't practiced Colin Summers, we haven't practiced Josh. I think in Colin's case, he's not cleared up yet, so that's a concern. And in Josh's case, we really don't know much because he's been sick. So the combination of being sick and not being really able to test him for his concussion has kept him out.

I really don't know what to tell you yet. I think we'll have a better idea after practice tomorrow. But right now Daniel Mack seems to be a little bit better. Hopefully by Saturday he'll be full speed and ready to go, and the other two guys have not practiced, so we'll just kind of see how that goes over the next couple of days.

Q. Also, depending on Josh's status, does that mean more action for Tyler Jackson? I know you said you liked some of the things he did at Notre Dame.

JIM GROBE: Yeah, he did a nice job. We've always liked Tyler as far as his ability to get his shoulder pads squared up and head to the goal line. He's a good football player, and right now we would be starting Deandre Martin, and Tyler is his backup, so I would expect that if Josh can't go, Tyler is going to get some snaps Saturday.

Q. How have you ended up playing Vanderbilt in the last game, and what would be your preference along those lines, conference or non-conference?

JIM GROBE: You know, it's a little bit of a challenge honestly just to play anybody after Thanksgiving. You know, it's a deal where all your students take off on Tuesday and you're keeping all your guys around -- probably a little tougher on the freshmen, especially red shirt kids that aren't going to really get in the game but have to stick around to practice.

But I like it. I think it's nice to get your conference schedule out of the way, and if you're going to play one after Thanksgiving, I think it's good to play one out of conference. It's a little bit of a roll of the dice depending on how strong anybody is. Vanderbilt, of course, this year is playing lights out and done great in the SEC and they're a really good football team. Probably my biggest concern is just playing a good football team rather than who we're playing.

Q. Obviously the most important thing for you is the Bowl eligibility of this game. Now, it's one of four ACC/SEC match-ups this week. Does that kind of thing even cross your mind at all, that hey, if we win this not only are we Bowl eligible, we've beaten a pretty good SEC team and kind of a plus for the ACC? Does that factor in at all?

JIM GROBE: Well, I think so. I think that our first priority is to take care of the Deacs and try to win a football game against a really, really good football team. Vanderbilt has done a great job not only playing in the SEC but outside the league, and it's a really good football team. So that's our No. 1 concern. But I think any time you go out of conference, whether it's the SEC or any conference, you'd like to represent the ACC well.

So I think that's a factor, but I don't think that's the number one factor for us right now. We know our backs are against the wall, and we need to get a win. So we know Vanderbilt is a great team, SEC, all those kind of things. But bottom line is we've got to find a way to get a win, and that involves taking care of our own football team more than who we're playing.

Q. They wore you out pretty good last year.

JIM GROBE: Oh, man.

Q. Are they even better than that team or --

JIM GROBE: Yeah, you know, I think they've got nine starters back on the offensive side of the ball and seven starters back on defense, and the thing that's so remarkable about this football team is I think Coach Franklin and his staff are doing a really good job coaching these guys, but on defense they have a 11 juniors and seniors starting for them on defense, and eight juniors and seniors starting on the offensive side of the ball. So this is not only a talented team, but most of these guys are back from last year, and you can see it against the teams that they've played, this is a much improved Vanderbilt football team, a very veteran football team, and typically when you've got older guys, when you've got juniors and seniors out there playing you, you not only have experience but you have toughness, and that's what we see in this football team. And their punter and kicker are back that did a good job last year, a couple of better specialists in the SEC.

So this is just not only a well-coached football team, but this is a veteran, tough, hard-nosed football team. They're better than they were last year, there's no question.

Q. I understand you'd much prefer to get Bowl eligible by winning this Saturday and getting a sixth win, but have you been following the situation that you guys because of your APR may be eligible at a 5-7 record? Are you aware of that, and if so, what's your reaction to that?

JIM GROBE: Well, you know, one of the guys yesterday in our press conference mentioned that. I am not aware of that, and I have not really followed that. I do think that we're not a bad football team. We've played three top ten teams, we may have just played the No. 1 team in the country at the end of the season, at least now they are for sure. So we've played a really rugged schedule. We've played Bowl teams, we've played three top ten teams. But I think more than anything else, we're just focused on trying to win Saturday. I don't think we ever focus on anything else.

I think our players are going to come out and play as hard as they can. We know we're playing a really talented well-coached Vanderbilt team. But I don't think that's a factor for us right now. I think our number one thought is trying to win Saturday.

Q. I'm obviously not informed as to how good a chance it would be or not be, but in the sense that you might be in this position because your APR has been so good, is that a positive for the football team?

JIM GROBE: Well, I don't think there's any question. You know, we're proud of being an academic school that's playing in a big-time conference. I think that's something that we feel is important. Wake Forest is tough academically. The classes are tough. So it sounds -- you assume that an academic school should have a good APR, but in fact it's harder to have a good APR at the tougher schools because the classes are tougher.

So I think we're proud that we've got a good APR, but right now we're about playing football. We're looking forward to Saturday, and we know it's going to be an uphill climb. We're playing a heck of a team, well-coached team, but I think the thing that our players are focused on right now which is good is we're not focused these next couple days on our APR, we're focused on playing football.

An interview with:

PAUL JOHNSON GEORGIA TECH

COACH JOHNSON: Clearly, we have a huge challenge. There is no question that I think the University of Georgia is currently ranked third in the country and they've lost one game. They're a tremendous football team, a big challenge, but it's a rivalry game and one that we're looking forward to going up and see if we can't give them our best shot and see what happens. So looking forward to the game.

Q. Last week your offensive efficiency in that game, you did not break a lot of big plays, but you had an amazing success rate on 3rd and 4th in the few times you were in the fourth down. Coach Cutcliffe said he didn't think he had ever seen an option team go through a whole game without a bobbled handoff or dropped pitch or something like that. Were you pleased with the efficiency in that regard?

COACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I think the last couple games we've been fairly efficient. Hopefully, that is the way that we play all the time. But we've been very efficient in the last couple of times.

Q. Is the fact you qualified for the championship game, I know you've got the huge rivalry this week and then have to come back with another Top 10 opponent the next week. How difficult is that in preparing for? Does it do anything in your preparation for Georgia knowing you have another tough game next week?

COACH JOHNSON: Right now we're totally focused on Georgia. If we don't go up there and play well, they'll embarrass us. No question about it. So we're trying to make sure that we get ready for that game. As you said, we'll go from the number three team to the number five, which may be higher after this week. But it will be a challenge. It's also an opportunity, and that's kind of the way we look at it.

Q. I know you made some defensive changes, Coach. How would you comment? Have you been pretty pleased with your

progress on the defensive side of the ball? And do you think are going to be the defensive keys to slowing Georgia down this Saturday?

COACH JOHNSON: I think our defense has been a mixed bag since we've changed. We've had a couple of games that have been pretty good, and a couple not so well. But Georgia's very talented. (Aaron) Murray is a tremendous player. You couple that with the fact they've got a really strong receiving corps. The two freshmen tailbacks are good, and they've gotten better and better on the offensive line as the year's gone on. So it will be a challenge.

The key is trying to get some pressure on the quarterback. We haven't been able to do that the last couple times we've played him. He's too good. If you don't get pressure on him, he's going to pick you apart.

Q. How has your secondary held up this season? How do you feel about the match-up this week with Murray and their receiving corps?

COACH JOHNSON: I think the secondary can be deceiving sometimes because a lot of it has to do with are you getting any pressure and those type things, but it's a tough match-up. Clearly Georgia has some good receivers and an outstanding quarterback. So it will be a challenge for our guys this week.

Q. When you made the change in the defensive coordinators, why did you pick Charles Kelly to oversee your defense? What did he bring to the table?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, Charles has been here the whole time I've been here. I think he has the respect of the players and the other assistant coaches. I knew he'd be organized, and I just felt like that was the best move to make at the time to try to finish out the year.

Q. With this being your big in-state rival game and all of the implications of that to the fans and players and so on, on the periphery it's also one of four ACC-SEC match-ups. Does that even cross your mind at all, the fact that if you could pull this off, it would be a feather for the league as well as Georgia Tech?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, I don't know. I guess you think about it, but that's not the big deal.

Clearly, we'd love to have success up in Athens for a lot of reasons, and I think the ACC would benefit as well. But there are four games, so it will be interesting to see how they turn out.

Q. When you have a chance at the end of the day to look back and look at the scores and see how the ACC did, is that of considerable interest to you those match-ups?

COACH JOHNSON: Sure, I think it will be interesting to take a look at it and see how it turns out.

Q. I'm interested in rivalry games in this term. Some rivalries, the home field doesn't matter very much. Sometimes it's a big deal. In this rivalry in your experience, is it a big deal whether the game is played in Athens or Atlanta?

COACH JOHNSON: Actually, we've probably played better in Athens than we have in Atlanta for whatever reason. But they've got a pretty good home-field advantage. They'll have a big crowd and they can get really loud. But in this particular instance in my experience in the four years, we've probably played two of our better games up there as opposed to here. I couldn't tell you why, it's just kind of happened that way.

Q. In the contract for this series, does the visiting fan get a lot of seats or a few seats or anything different than a normal on-road split?

COACH JOHNSON: No, I'm sure it's normal. But they have a pretty good fan base, and they always have a lot of fans no matter where it's played here or there.

An Interview With:

LARRY FEDORA NORTH CAROLINA

COACH FEDORA: We are looking forward to our final game here of the 2012 season at Kenan Stadium. It's a bittersweet feeling. One of excitement for our seniors that they are getting to play their last game in front of their home crowd, but also knowing that this is the end of a pretty special team. But we're looking forward to it.

Q. Could you address the three-game explosion by Quinshad Davis? The guy has had a three-game stretch that would constitute a good season for most freshmen. Just wondered what you think of this guy for the last three weeks?

COACH FEDORA: I think the light's been on for Quinshad the entire season. He's done some nice things for us early in the season, and he continues to get better each and every week. Just so happened that probably they did not worry about him in their defensive game plan and decided they were going to stop Gio in the running game. One thing we have prided ourselves in this offense is being able to do both. We'll just take whatever you give us.

So Quinshad has responded. He's been in a situation where he's had the opportunity to make some plays, and what he does, is he makes the plays. So he just gets better and better each week. I think the future is extremely bright for him.

Q. It seems like you're not going to blow the lid off of the defense, but he's got great hands. It seems like he's going to make all the tough catches, if not the real long ones?

COACH FEDORA: Yeah, he really can. He's got great concentration on the ball. He has exceptional hands. He's got really good awareness around himself as far as how to get himself in position to be able to make a catch. He's a big bodied guy, that is just kind of growing into himself. I think he has an opportunity and a chance to be a great receiver in the future.

Q. Maryland obviously has had problems with offense due to the quarterback rotation. But defensively they're one of the top defenses in the country in the ACC. What problems do they specifically present and why?

COACH FEDORA: I tell you, I think, in looking back on the season, they're going to be the best defense we've played this year. First of all, they've got good players. They've got some really good players that can run and do a great job. They've really adjusted well to the defensive scheme they're running. It's not as conventional, so it's a little different than what you see normally.

I think they're probably going to blitz you a little more than half the time. So that adds some problems to it. It makes your margin of error that much smaller. They've been doing a great job this year.

Q. It's got to be tough with their offense not being able to sustain a lot. But I guess offensively and special teams, the one concern you've got to have is Diggs. He's had a pretty remarkable freshmen year. He's kind of their version of Gio Bernard. Can you talk about the problems he presents?

COACH FEDORA: Sure. I think Mike Locksley has done a great job of finding a lot of different ways to get the ball in his hands, and that is something you want to do when you have a play maker like that, and they're doing that. He's getting it on speed sweeps. He's getting it on reverses. He's getting it out of the backfield. He's getting it on screens, on vertical passes, intermediate game, and then he's touching it on punt returns, kickoff returns. So he is their guy. He's their guy that's going to make plays for them. He's just done a tremendous job, especially for a true freshman.

Q. Even though this ends the season, how important is it to you guys? You can accomplish a couple of things such as getting a piece of first place in the coastal. It would be your 8th win, which would be the third most of anybody in the league. How important are those things to your guys?

COACH FEDORA: Well, those are things that we wanted to do when we set out at the beginning of the season. So it's still sitting there right in front of us. Now all we have to do is prepare like we have each and every week and play with passion and a certain energy level and focus that we need on Saturday. If we do those things, we will feel very good about this year.

Are there things we're going to regret this year? You bet there are. No doubt about it, but that's why you have to play each and every week and you have to be ready to play. Our guys understand there is a lot to play for, and I think they're really excited about playing this game.

Q. What is the feeling that the team has put up a record -- it's been a pretty good record this year at 7-4. But this is their last game. Do you sense anything unusual about that around practice?

COACH FEDORA: We started off this week talking about that. I talked about it with the team, and we don't want to focus on it being our last game. That's not what we're doing. We're really trying to prepare just like it's the next game. I told them if we continue to do that, when we walk

off that field on Saturday, you can hold your head up high. You'll be proud of the way you've played.

Then there will be sadness that hits, but you can't focus on that during the week or you end up screwing up your preparation.

Q. Senior Day, a lot of guys playing their last home games. Can you talk about some of the seniors? I know you inherited them and you've had them for one year, but can you talk about some of those guys and what they've given the program? Kevin Reddick, Sylvester Williams, and how big a hole does that leave or how tough is it to replace that kind of group?

COACH FEDORA: First of all, this group is very special because this group had the opportunity to leave. To a man they all sat in there and said we're going to see this thing through. So it told you a lot about what they're made up of. From Kevin Reddick to Sylvester Williams, to Jonathan Cooper, Mookie, you know, Travis Bond, I can't think of all of them in my head right now. But every one of them made that commitment, and they have done everything we've asked them to from the very beginning, from the very first practice we had with them back in winter. I can't say enough about these guys. I really can't.

Is it going to be hard to replace them? You bet it is. It's always hard to replace seniors. But when you have your program established the way you want it, your next guys step up and become the special group. I don't know if we're at that point in the program yet just being here one year. But we're trying to build it so when your seniors leave, somebody else steps up and they become the guy.

Q. I know one senior who will not be playing is Casey Barth. How big a loss is that? Not having a guy with his dependability and his range for a game, does it change your thinking in how you play?

COACH FEDORA: Oh, you bet. It's something that we talk about as a staff very much so how we call a game, offensively, all of those things have to be taken into consideration. It's tough when you lose a guy like Casey. He's got every record here in the book for kickers. So it's extremely tough.

But Thomas Moore gets the opportunity to step up and show what he's got for the future, so

that is the exciting part about it. The other guy we lost for the year, Brennan Williams. You lose him in the last four games of his senior year.

So that is the thing you constantly preach as a coach. Your only problem is this one, and that's it. You're one play away from your career being over or your season being over. That's why you've got to play it as if it's your last play.

Q. With Jonathan Cooper being named a finalist for the Outland Trophy, what does that mean for your program?

COACH FEDORA: Any time you have that type of positive recognition, it's huge for your program. It's just one more time or many more times that people out there are talking about the University of North Carolina.

To have a guy that is a tremendous ambassador for our program like Jonathan Cooper, a guy that's excelled on the field and off the field, it's something we take great pride in. He's exactly what we think a North Carolina tar heel football player, student-athlete should be, and we're proud of him.

An Interview With:

MIKE LONDON VIRGINIA

COACH LONDON: It's a last opportunity for our seniors, our last game against an in-state rival, against a very, very good team in Virginia Tech. We're excited about the opportunity to travel on the road and play in a good venue that's up there. We expect to hopefully be competitive. They've got a great team with a quarterback that we think a lot of in Logan Thomas who is very athletic and does a lot of great things.

Q. At the beginning of the year there was a lot of hype around this Virginia Tech defense that they struggled some early in the year, but it seems that they've kind of rounded into form. I'm curious what you see that's got them being more effective, and what you see in their pass-rush?

COACH LONDON: Well, I have a tremendous amount of respect for Bud Foster. I know him professionally, and I know him

personally. I know the trademark of his defense is those players. They always play hard regardless of what issues may occur. They're a very aggressive team. They will -- they're not afraid to blitz you or play manned coverage. They played man coverage and blitzed against Florida State.

They did it against Miami, and it's kind of a mindset and attitude that you have to block us, but you have to get the ball off. When you see that and you see the players playing fast and playing hard, it gives offenses some issues with the protection issues and the ability to get the ball out. They've been hit with some big plays here and there, so maybe that has something to do with it. But I think Bud always has his defense available and ready to play and playing at a high level.

Q. They seem to be more effective since they switched and basically got back to their base defense instead of playing so much nickel package. What do you see in the difference there? Have they been playing more of that base look recently?

COACH LONDON: You just see the evolution. When you look at the beginning of the season, mid-season, and toward the latter part of the season, I'm sure a lot of things dictate what you do, early success or lack of or personnel moves, sometimes all it dictates is to what you do because of who you have. The last couple games, again, what you see is a very aggressive team.

I know that their eight-man front defense is something that a lot of schools in the past have come up and studied about how to play it. I know that's always been a staple of Virginia Tech defense. But I think the last few games what we've seen is more of a put pressure on you, play hard with the corners and just bring enough people around the box to say you're not going to run against us. So you see that and you see, I guess, he settled into what his guys can do best and what they've executed the best. That's what you normally do is try to find something that works best for you and stick with it.

Q. What do you see in the way they rotate their running backs and particularly the way they're using Martin Scales in some of the short yardage situations?

COACH LONDON: Well, I see what they do is kind of like what we try to do. If you have a group of talented players, particularly in the

running back situation, and you have a player that can do a job or two and they do it well, then you try to implement them into the part of your game plan that when it's called upon, they can execute it. You see the running backs, all of them are very good. You see the young man that comes in for the short yardage. If everyone was watching, you saw the Boston College game, he did a great job of extending the drive by lowering his pads. He looks like he's a very physical runner.

I think like a lot of us you try to find not necessarily by committee, but you try to find those individuals whether it's the type of play or the down and distance situation that they can give you the best opportunity to be successful. So I see that. It's something that we try to do as well.

Q. Given that Maryland has been such a strong border rivalry for you guys, I wanted to get your perspective on them going to the Big Ten?

COACH LONDON: As I was asked the other day, obviously, you're shocked initially. Maryland has been a partner of the ACC, almost 59, 60 years, but the decision was made by their leadership that they were going to do what is in the best interest of their program. I think it is a border rival team that will probably continue to, now, at least it will go against in terms of recruiting, if not on the field anymore. Our most natural rivals are particularly the game that we play Saturday, but also with North Carolina being the south's fourth oldest rivalry game.

As I said, our recruiting will extend, and perhaps get more heavily involved into the northern Virginia, D.C. Maryland suburb areas because of the choices young men will have to make or they'll have. So we wish them well. But we want to continue to be strong in that area of recruiting.

Q. Any update on Morgan Moses?

COACH LONDON: No update. He's out of the boot. We'll practice here in about 20 minutes and see how he performs and go on from there.

Q. As you said before, the streak is what it is. But a lot of these games have been lopsided. You took a really good -- you had a really good team last year that had trouble with Virginia Tech. It wasn't a close game. Is there any psychological hurdle you have to get over to beat them?

COACH LONDON: I don't believe so. The hurdle is to be competitive when you step out on the field. The mindset is to be positive, and to be confident that what you do with the plan is in place for you to be successful. There are some guys that have played all four years or three years or two years against them, and we have some guys that have never played against them.

So every year is a new year in terms of the mindset and how we approach it. So we know something was on the line as far as the winner going on to represent the coastal, and something is on the line again as far as their bowl eligibility and us ending on a positive note.

So our mindset is being competitive regardless of the records in the past, and the things that have happened before. We approach each game like that. There is a human element to this because we are in-state schools. We do see each other on the road recruiting. Our guys know their guys. We know their coaches. We know about the success that they've had and vice versa. So it's about what happens on the field on Saturday at 12 noon.

Q. Wanted to ask you about Colter Phillips being a senior, and he's gone through some adversity in his time. But what he's meant to the program having him around at tight end this year?

COACH LONDON: Well, I think he's a young man that has actually grown and matured over the years. When I was here I originally recruited him and I left. To come back and see his growth and development has been very, very positive. Also, to be with him as he had to deal with the tragic situation that happened with his father his teammates and coaches and Colter have become much closer. So behind the scenes, inside the locker room things have meant a lot to this young man because we've become an extended family. When there is a loss and someone there to help you deal with it, you grow even closer.

I'm very proud of Colter. He'll be a graduate of this university, whatever he sets his mind to go on to to do, I'm sure he'll be successful at that. We'll miss his leadership. But he was a great teammate, and I think that's always important is having young men that are great teammates, and can do a lot of things other than just play football.

An Interview With:

FRANK BEAMER VIRGINIA TECH

COACH BEAMER: I think we're playing a very talented football team this weekend. I think they play very tough. The offensive line has always been a strength. It is this year. I think they've got some playmakers there and wide receivers and running backs. Tight ends are playing very well for them, and two quarterbacks are playing well. Simms 56% completion and Rocco 62, I believe it is. Both of them have more touchdowns than interceptions.

On defense, they get after you. They attack and get after you, so we know what kind of game it's going to be. Trying to get bowl eligible is very important to us. The only game that really matters right now is the one this year and we've got to get ready to play a really good football game.

Q. Before the year there was so much hype around your defense, sort of preseason pub, and they've played so well the last few weeks. Are they living up to those expectations now?

COACH BEAMER: Well, I think we're playing better. I think it all starts with keeping our secondary healthy. When we can cover some receivers and get them to hold the ball a little bit, that helps the pass rush. So I think we're going to be tested Saturday. I think this is a very good offense. They do a lot of things and a lot of personnel, and we're going to be tested here Saturday.

Q. You seem more successful since you -- I don't want to say simplified -- but you went back to the base package and more of a nickel look. What impact has that had?

COACH BEAMER: Well, I do think knowing what to do is the most important thing. Don't let your mind tie up your feet. I think we've been playing fast and knowing what to do certainly helps that.

Q. It's so unusual having no players in your program, and a lot of your fans are not used to seeing you in this situation coming down to this game which you need for bowl

eligibility. I wonder how everybody's reacting to that? How do you find the position that you find yourself in?

COACH BEAMER: I do think our fans are, like we are, disappointed in the results of some games. But not looking back, looking forward, looking to the future. There is nothing we can do about the games that we lost. We had a great crowd here for Florida State, just a tremendous crowd with great enthusiasm. I thought our kids played really hard last week against Boston College for the most part, and they even got down in that game, but they hung in there and kept battling.

So I think that's where our program is. We've had a couple of tough losses. We need to play better. But the only thing that we can affect right now is how we prepare and play against Virginia. That's where our thoughts are, and I think that's what our fans feel like. Hey, let's get in here and have a great atmosphere Saturday and try to get bowl eligible.

Q. Do you get the sense that your players have that sense of urgency, not just because you're playing your in-state rival, but because of what's at stake?

COACH BEAMER: Yeah, I think we practiced well this week, but it's how we play on Saturday that's the only thing that matters. That is the only game in this series that matters right now is the one coming up Saturday.

Q. This is a rivalry weekend and a lot of rivalry games. Some rivalries home field makes a big difference, some it doesn't. I know you've dominated this rivalry. But do you see a significant difference when you get to play at home as opposed to Charlottesville?

COACH BEAMER: Well, I think when you play a rival game, it has less importance. I think both sides know what's at stake and both of us from here in the state and you know we always like to play at Lane Stadium. Don't get me wrong. But I think when you put a rival game in there, it probably has a little more significance as far as the outcome of the game.

Q. Maybe it's a one-year fluke, but looking at your performances this year, you've been significantly better at home than on the road. Is it just a one-year fluke? Is there a reason for that?

COACH BEAMER: Well, I think so. The way things went, and certainly we've played better at home, generally speaking. We always like playing in Lane Stadium in front of our fans. They get into it, and I appreciate that.

An Interview With:

DAVID CUTCLIFFE DUKE

COACH CUTCLIFFE: I want to start off by wishing (ACC Senior Associate Commissioner) Michael Kelly well publicly on this teleconference. He's been a big part of my transition into the Atlantic Coast Conference, and he'll be missed. Everybody there in the office does a great job, all of you, Mike Finn, and we appreciate that.

It's hard to believe it's the last ballgame. It's also hard to believe that these are seniors, fifth year seniors that came in with us the same winter that we came in. This game is obviously a celebration in that regard. Got a really good, talented, good football team we're playing in Miami. And Miami whipped us badly a year ago. A well-coached team, a team that's got skill and athleticism in all three phases, a big challenge for us.

We haven't won in a while now, so hopefully our team will play its best football game Saturday because it will take that for us to be successful. With that, I'll take your questions.

Q. I wanted to follow up a little bit on something we were talking about yesterday about Conner (Vernon), and the great year he's had the last couple of games his production has been down a little bit. I'm just wondering if that's because of the opponents, because he's getting special attention or has it been some carry over from that knee injury suffered against North Carolina?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Yeah, he's not been full speed. He's missed a lot of practice time, so he's not quite been what he was. He's better this week. He's able to work Sunday and Tuesday and today. In fact, I just talked with him a few minutes ago. He said he feels better. He's worthy of a lot of attention, particularly last week. Georgia Tech didn't take a lot of chances. There was a lot

of double coverage there for Desmond Scott. Scott caught ten balls in the middle of the field so that was part of it last week.

But Conner's feeling better, and I certainly hope that's the case Saturday where he can play his last game in Wallace Way full speed.

Q. You've talked about the secondary and how guys have made up for some of the losses there and things like that. Can you talk about the receiving corps? You went into the season with one returning receiver. One very promising young guy that hadn't done a lot, and then a converted running back because of the off-season stuff you had lost a couple of guys you were counting on. Now you've got three guys with 60-plus receptions. Can you talk about those three guys? Are you surprised by the production you've gotten at that position?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, we took some really tough blows to kind of retrace people that don't know completely what we're talking about, we moved Brandon Braxton who was a starting receiver to the secondary. Then we lost Tiree Watkins last spring. A guy that had lettered twice as a receiver, a good player. Then the injury to Blair Holliday who came out one of our starters. Then an injury to Braxton Deaver, who is kind of that hybrid receiver-tight end who was the starter there. All of a sudden, we were left in a pretty difficult circumstance.

As it ended up, we've had three guys that have had great years. First thing I've got to do is say Matt Lubick has done an incredible job to teach Desmond Scott. To have never played receiver and go from running back to receiver in that 57 catches is incredible.

And then James' development, and Conor continuing and Matt's mentored Conor for three years now. I think it's one of the best jobs I've seen done. Thank goodness, knock on wood for the most part those guys have stayed healthy, which we needed. We haven't been as deep there as we have in the past, but very proud of what they've all accomplished.

Q. I think you've been with us long enough to be considered an ACC guy. How did the Maryland announcement strike you this week?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, I had heard this speculation almost a year ago and then it died, and then it came back. With the landscape of college football being what it is and going to be, I'm certainly not going to overreact to it. I am an ACC guy. If they don't want to be in the ACC, I'm kind of like that about recruiting, if you don't want to be here, I don't want you here. I'm being honest. I'm not being ugly, I'm just being honest how I feel. I won't let it bug me or bother me. I can promise you that.

Q. Coach O'Brien said earlier today he would like to see the divisions realigned in 2014 and have all the original ACC teams in what he called the old guys division, and have the other division be the new guys division. Any thoughts on ACC alignments going forward?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, I haven't looked at it, you know. I certainly haven't had time to look at that. So I couldn't comment on that particular one. I don't want to be called the old guy. So I might question Tom's choice of words. That would be it.

Q. I know this topic is on the top of your mind, but could you offer your thoughts on the match-up between Florida State and Georgia Tech?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: I would say number one, Georgia Tech's mad at us for not winning (laughing). Playing Georgia Tech and playing a different offense and Georgia Tech's playing very well, but it's difficult for Florida State. It's probably not what they were seeing a few weeks ago. They got a big game with Florida in a very short period of time to get ready for that offense, and that's difficult. It's a game that can have national implications.

So they're going to be lined up. Florida State's one of the more talented teams that we've coached against in a long time in any league. Georgia Tech is playing extremely well. I told Paul after the game they're just not making any mistakes, and they didn't make any mistakes defensively, which helped them a great deal. It wasn't just that their offense didn't make mistakes. They didn't do much against us.

But they have a very capable return game. Florida State is an excellent kicking team. If you'll study the statistics, those stats don't lie. Florida State's the best kicking team in our league, best field position team in our league. So it's an interesting match-up in that regard. But I think the

big thing is how they're going to defend the option, and how well they can do that in a week. So it should be a great game for those folks and they're going from both schools. I would encourage anybody that wants to see a good football game go to Charlotte December 1st and watch the ACC Championship game.

Q. Florida State obviously hasn't played Tech since 2009. I'm curious from your experience, how much will an additional challenge when they haven't seen it in that long as opposed to you guys when you're seeing it every year at least?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, it's hard. I don't know what Florida State has done. We kind of put an emphasis on learning about it when we came into this league. We really have a playbook that's independent for option teams. We play Navy and Georgia Tech next year. We played Army and Navy, and we've seen it a lot. We still can't stop it. So it is difficult.

Q. Your senior class obviously you guys took a leap of faith buying into what you're selling. I'm just curious not only all of them but the Durham guys too that did the same thing. Obviously there are so many reasons why getting to a bowl game is important for the program. But rewarding these kids, is there some satisfaction in that?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Absolutely. When you say leap of faith. I don't know if it took a leap, but it takes commitment, and they have done all of that. They've bought in and done everything we've asked them to do. They've worked hard and been very committed to the process. You knew it was going to happen. I just prayed for this group that this is the team that broke that ice. Once the ice is broken, we don't intend to go back.

We preach hard on leaving a place better than you found it. I can promise you these seniors have done that when it comes to Duke football. So very, very happy for them.

Q. When you look at the names, Vernon and (Sean) Renfree, and Kenny's not in here but would be, Desmond Scott, Austin Gamble, and there are others, obviously. But the names have almost become synonymous with your kind of game because they've played it so much in their careers?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Yeah, they have.

Q. Is it harder to lose a senior class like that than it is otherwise because these guys have played so early and played so often?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Yeah, it does. It's an emotional thing. Walt Canty is a fourth year guy, but it's the same kind of connection in that regard. You know, you're right. They've become synonymous with our tenure, but the thing to recognize is that group of guys is synonymous with good football. When could you say that last? You're naming people like Conor, and guys that set records, Desmond Scott, only one of three guys in the history of the league that threw over a thousand yards rushing, receiving, and kickoff returning. I could go on with all the awards and national recognitions.

So you start thinking of football excellence. Well, that is what you call change in the culture. That's what these seniors have done. So you're darn right it's going to hurt to lose them. We've got good, young players. We're not losing a large, large number. But we're losing some very special people, and that will be a challenge.

An Interview With:

AL GOLDEN MIAMI

COACH GOLDEN: We're facing a bowl eligible and 6-5 Duke team, a team that beat UVA and UNC, two teams that handed us losses. They're 5-1 at home. As coach just mentioned, an incredibly experienced team relative to us, especially - nine players with over 30 starts. Obviously, very explosive on offense, excellent quarterback who knows how to distribute the football, and receivers that are not only nifty but generate yards after a catch. Clearly one of the first teams we've faced all year with three guys over 50 and really four if you count the tight end position. So excellent offense.

I'm sure coach is ecstatic with his kicking game. Both (Ross) Martin and (Will) Monday are among the elite in our conference. Then on defense, very similar to Virginia Tech, a rugged group up front. Played the same type of scheme, pressure-oriented in the red zone on third down and active, very active group in 27 takeaways.

It's a very veteran and experienced team that knows how to win. Again, my hat is off to Coach Cutcliffe for the blueprint that he's designed and these kids coming through. It's a tough, disciplined team, and that's why they're 5-1 at home and obviously got our attention.

Q. I know you weren't part of the decision to self-sanction. How difficult was it for you to break the news to your team? What was the reaction?

COACH GOLDEN: Well, the air went out of the room, obviously. The athletic director is the one who broke it, then he removed himself from the team meeting, and I discussed it with them, and we moved forward. In terms of that, it's been a resilient group. Heartbreaking losses, and then they come back. I'm very proud of them.

Yesterday I said I appreciate them, I'm humbled by how they've approached it. The maturity they've shown and how they've represented the University over the last 72 hours and how difficult that's been. It's difficult because these kids have given up a lot. It's not that we've given up two bowl games; we've given up the opportunity to be part of three postseason games, and that's giving up a lot.

Q. Do you anticipate that that is the kind of thing they can get past and pull together and play well? It's a possibility it could go the other way? They were so close to actually be in a BCS game.

COACH GOLDEN: At the end of the day, I don't think there is any question that we'll be defined by how we respond moving forward. Unless I'm mistaken, the first test of that will be 12:05 in Durham on Saturday. We can make all the excuses that we want, but the reality is we're facing a very good team. A team that is obviously hungry, that is going to a bowl game and senior-laden or experienced-laden on Senior Day. Even despite this or regardless of this it was going to be a tough out, and we better get focused and ready to go.

Q. Sounds like you've got a thousand things on your mind, but you usually have pretty good insight. How did that Maryland situation strike you this week?

COACH GOLDEN: Oh, I couldn't even tell you. I didn't hear anything about it. I didn't read

anything about T I'm probably the most ill-informed. I appreciate you saying I usually give you good insight, but it's the wrong week to ask me. I couldn't even give you an answer right now as I'm thinking because I've been so enthralled. I apologize.

Q. With you saying that, I'm not sure this is the right question for you. But I wanted to ask you about the championship game between Georgia Tech and Florida State?

COACH GOLDEN: You guys are piling on now. Are you kidding me?

Q. From your memory, what is the biggest challenge Tech's faced with Florida State?

COACH GOLDEN: Oh, I just don't even know how I can answer that. Again, it's been an overwhelming week, as I'm sure you guys can appreciate. The only thing I can say is you could say -- you can try to discredit Georgia Tech and how they got there all you want.

But I believe coach was sitting there at 3-5 and made some transitions and pulled the team together, so here's what I'm going to say. It's a credit to Coach Johnson and his team, and the adversity that they've overcome, and they really have they played well down the stretch.

Obviously, we're disappointed we don't have that opportunity, but I think at the same time, Coach Johnson will tell you he's proud of the way his kids held together.

Q. A year ago you guys hammered them (Duke) pretty good. Before that the series had some close games though Miami has won them all. I just wonder what you see different from the thing you saw in Miami last year to the team you're seeing Saturday?

COACH GOLDEN: Clearly the way I -- I thought they were right on the cusp. I was scared to death going into that game. I think some things went our way. We got some breaks early, and it kind of snowballed. But this is a different team, both them and us. They're a year older, and we're three years younger. So that's the reality of it. We're going to need to muster up every ounce of energy and focus to win in Durham.

They're 5-1 at home, they're an experienced team. They're coming in with a lot of confidence in how they operate, and our guys need to snap back quickly, and get over all of this postseason stuff and get ready for this Duke team.

Q. Is the big threat that you guys have to stop them defensively? Because offensively teams have moved the ball on them, and you guys have a pretty potent offense. Is the test for the defense to stop that passing game? And they have a little running this year, is that the big threat?

COACH GOLDEN: I don't think there is any question. I think their quarterback is a big-time quarterback. He's almost 2-1 touchdown to interception ratio. He's close to 70%. They're getting 30-something catches out of the tight end group. Maybe closer to 40. They have three receivers over 50. That means the quarterback is distributing the football and taking what the defense gives them. Got some veterans on the offensive line who have started a lot of games. I think their kicking game is excellent, and don't be fooled by the defense.

I think the reality is they've got 27 takeaways and that scares you. You watch the way they ball hawk and try to disrupt the ball on defense. It's a group that, boy, if they get two takeaways, we better find a way to get three or four and even it out or at least get two.

I'm very impressed with this 84. I don't know how to quite say his name, but I'm really impressed with him. Then they're bringing the young man after him, 94, who also has a great motor. And what can you say about Canty? 96 tackles. I haven't seen anybody with those type of numbers, and Cockerill has five interceptions.

There is a reason they're going to the first bowl game in, I believe, 18 years. It's obviously the culture that Coach Cut has instituted there and the response of those young men in that room that have gotten them to this point.

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