

November 25, 2012



An Interview With:

**PAUL JOHNSON
GEORGIA TECH**

PAUL JOHNSON: Good afternoon. Clearly we're excited to have an opportunity to come to Charlotte and represent the Coastal Division. The way our season started off in the league, certainly didn't look too promising, but to our guys' credit they won four in a row down the stretch, and we ended up in this position. We also realize that in playing Florida State, for the second week in a row we're playing one of the top teams in the country, and it's going to be a huge challenge for us as a young football team.

But looking forward to being there and putting forth our best effort and seeing what happens.

Q. You mentioned those games down the stretch. Was there any one common thread or things that you guys started doing that you weren't doing earlier in the first half of the season that helped you guys really turn it around?

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, I think we were able to outscore people, honestly, if you want to know the truth. Early in the year we hit some spells, we had some high-scoring games, but we didn't finish. The last four games we got far enough out in front of people and scored enough points to secure the games, and we hadn't done that early in the year.

Q. I was just wondering if you could give us an assessment of where you think your defense is right now in terms of just trying to gain more consistency. Seems like you get a good performance, then maybe take a step back, then a good performance, then maybe take a step back.

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, we haven't played very well defensively. There's no secret

about that. The last game was probably as bad as we've played all year against Georgia, and they're a very good football team. Certainly they had something to do with that.

But the -- we've played good in spurts. I think we've played a couple of halves decently in the last few games, but it's been a while since we really played a consistent what I would call 60-minute game on defense.

Q. What do you think it's going to take to get that kind of consistent effort for a full 60 minutes?

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, we're going to have to have guys do a better job of looking at what they're supposed to look at and playing their keys and playing with great effort than we've had the last few games for sure.

Q. To kind of follow up on that, your offense has been known for its big plays through the years, and lately you've -- especially I recall against Duke, you had these monstrous time-consuming drives, and I'm wondering to what extent did you attempt to orchestrate your offense to keep the ball to help your defense?

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, we've tried to maintain the ball for a long time. It hasn't just been this year. But you're trying to score points, so we're not saying, okay, let's go at it and have a 20-play drive as opposed to three plays and you score quickly type deal. It's just kind of happened.

Saturday against Georgia we did a pretty good job moving the ball from the 20 to the 20, but unfortunately you don't get any points for that. And when we got down on their end, we bogged down or they made a play and stopped us. You know, if you looked at the stats, we held the ball for almost 38 minutes and had 26 1st downs and over 400 yards, but we didn't come out with any points, and it doesn't do any good if you do that. It maybe kept them from scoring a few more, but what we've got to do is learn to finish drives, and if they're time-consuming that would be great. All the better

this week especially.

The crowd we're playing is going to be hard to score. We'll take them any way we can get them. Going into the game yesterday I know they were probably top 10 in about every defensive category.

Q. You didn't face the Seminoles this year; is that correct?

PAUL JOHNSON: That's correct.

Q. When is the last time you played them?

PAUL JOHNSON: We played them my first two years here, I think. We played them in '08 and '09. Then they fell off our schedule.

Q. How different do they look from the years that you played them? In other words --

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, they're very similar offensively. Jimbo was the offensive coordinator when we played them. Defensively is where they're different. What they're doing now is a good deal different from than Mickey did. But they've always had talent. Player-wise they look similar.

Q. And do you think you guys will have any trouble shaking off the Georgia game since there's a great deal at stake in this one?

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, you hope -- you never know. You hope that we'll bounce back. We've got another great opportunity. I'm sure that Florida State is fighting a little bit of the same thing today with their game with Florida. It's unfortunate that it happened like that, but you've got to put it behind you and move on.

Q. You mentioned wanting to give your best effort to Florida State. I'm curious after looking at the film from Georgia if you feel like you did that against the Bulldogs.

PAUL JOHNSON: No, I wouldn't say we did.

Q. Can you describe what was lacking?

PAUL JOHNSON: Clearly we didn't give our best effort. I mean, I think Georgia is an outstanding football team, and I take nothing away from them. They're a very good team. I think this is the best Georgia team that we've played since I've been here.

But we didn't finish drives, we had missed assignments, we snapped the ball on the wrong

snap counts. We did a lot of things that are self-inflicted, and when you do that, that's not putting your best effort forward I wouldn't consider.

Q. Is there anything you can put your finger on as to why that happened on such an important day for you guys?

PAUL JOHNSON: No, not really. I mean, if you could put your finger on it, certainly you would hope that it wouldn't happen.

Q. Is there an update with Omoregie Uzzi or Orwin Smith?

PAUL JOHNSON: Omoregie is fine.

Q. And Orwin?

PAUL JOHNSON: I don't know. He didn't play Saturday, so I wouldn't have any reason to think there's any change in him. We'll know Monday.

Q. Were there any other players that were hurt on Saturday?

PAUL JOHNSON: Not that -- nope.

Q. It was such an unusual situation on your side of the conference this year with North Carolina and Miami situations. What do you say to those who say you backed into this game?

PAUL JOHNSON: Say whatever you want.

Q. Would you agree with that assessment? When you see what happened with Miami and North Carolina --

PAUL JOHNSON: North Carolina wouldn't even be a factor, would they? Miami would have won the tie-breaker, I think, correct? We'd have had three teams tied?

Q. Yes, correct.

PAUL JOHNSON: So we beat North Carolina head to head, so I'm not concerned about them. You know, that's something that Miami decided to do. We have no control over it.

The only thing we had control over is we were 5 and 3 in our division. That's not the first time a team 5 and 3 in the division has gone to the championship game. You know, we were 5 and 3 and tied for it in '08 and didn't get to play. I think Virginia Tech won the thing. We tied with them. It is what it is.

Q. Can you remember a turning point maybe during the regular season where you recognized a sense of urgency from your players that we'd better kick it up a notch here if we still want to be in this thing and go to a Bowl game?

PAUL JOHNSON: You know, I'd like to say yes, but I really don't know because with the kind of season we've had, I don't know that you could say we've had a turning point. I think we played better the last half of the years. You know, probably once we had the bye week, we played Boston College at home. It was probably our best game we've played defensively, actually. And then going on the road, we caught Maryland when they were beat up. Probably the win at North Carolina was probably what people would have considered the toughest game, I guess.

Q. In retrospect, how important was the way you guys handled everything over the bye week in terms of pulling it together and not letting the pieces fall as opposed to letting the pieces fall apart?

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, I think it could have gone either way, and clearly getting off to a good start in the second half was important. But you know, this group and the coaches and the guys, we haven't had very many losing seasons. I think that it was a goal to try to finish the thing off, and that's where we are now. We need to try to finish it off. We've got another opportunity on Saturday, and we've got to go see if we can't play a whole lot better than we did this past Saturday or we'll get the same result.

Q. So many people before this match-up was even determined had Florida State winning the Orange Bowl, going to the Orange Bowl. Do your guys pay attention to that? Do they use that as a chip on their shoulder?

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, I don't know. You'd have to ask them. We could have had a lot of motivation this year that we haven't used. I think it just depends.

Q. I was wondering if you'd seen the report that the NFL was considering banning blocks below the waist given sometimes the college game and the NFL game follow -- college game follows the NFL sometimes on rules, I was just curious if you ever thought that would be a possibility for colleges, and

how would that affect what you do if that became the industry standard?

PAUL JOHNSON: I don't think it'll happen. I think it would affect everybody. There's not a team in college football that doesn't block below the waist. Not one. So, you know, it would change the way everybody plays.

Q. And not in a good way as far as you're concerned?

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, it would change the game. If that's what they want to do -- I haven't seen -- they've talked about that for the last 20 years probably, but you know, I don't know how you ask a 180-pound back to pick up a 260-pound blitz or how you do a lot of things if you don't allow blocking below the waist. I think that it's a phenomenon that's been driven by people complaining and the media or whatever. I'd like to see some stats on it. We've been doing what we do for a long time, I can't think of one guy we've put out.

I don't understand the logic behind it really, but to each their own.

Q. But when you say that you haven't seen a guy being put out by it, are you talking about opponents? Are you talking about your own guys, both?

PAUL JOHNSON: I'm talking about opponents, both, yeah, the whole nine yards. I mean, I'm not going to say in 30-some years that guys haven't gotten hurt, but we haven't -- they haven't gotten hurt any more than our guys have. We lost three guys last year to ACLs playing other teams on cut blocks on pass plays, by backs coming out or guys downfield. I say cut blocks; two of them weren't even cut blocks.

But that's why I can't think of anybody you would think. The way everybody talks about it, it's just like a morgue every week when you play; they're carrying guys off on stretchers. I haven't seen it. We just finished a game yesterday at Georgia. I don't think they had to cart anybody off the field, and I don't think they lost anybody for the next game. I think you could probably say the same for Duke or the same for the team we played the week before or whatever.

Q. I'm curious after looking at Florida State on film for the first time, what jump out at you, the defensive ends?

PAUL JOHNSON: The speed, athleticism. I think they play hard, they play with an edge. They can run. They're very athletic on both sides of the ball.

Q. In terms of their speed, how would they compare with Georgia would you say?

PAUL JOHNSON: They're right there with them, every bit as fast.

Q. This situation, in terms of playing a team that neither side knew who you were going to play each other, I guess it's a little bit similar to the experience when you were at Southern in the playoffs. Do you remember that situation and do you think you have an advantage with your offense?

PAUL JOHNSON: I wouldn't think so. We've played before, and both teams are going to have the same amount of time to prepare. We have no idea how they're going to line up. They haven't played anybody that's remotely close to us. It'll be a guessing game for both I imagine.

They'll have a better idea what we're going to do because they'll have seen us on tape against all kinds of different defenses. We'll have to guess what they're going to play.

Q. I want to ask you about Robby Godhigh. He's been kind of a difference maker in the touchdown game in the last few games in the ACC schedule. How important has he been down that stretch, so to speak, for you guys?

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, Robby has been really consistent. I think he's played well all year, and he's done very well for us. I mean, I'm proud of him. I think he's had a pretty good season.

Q. Has he -- is it safe to say that he kind of has been a reason for -- not the turning point, but to see the wins start coming in the last few weeks?

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, he's certainly had a hand in it. He's played well down the stretch.

Q. I also wanted to ask about the defense of Florida State. How much of a challenge is it to face that defensive line particularly with what you guys do?

PAUL JOHNSON: They're huge, and they've got a lot of them. So they roll them and they play a lot of guys. It's going to be a huge challenge. They're probably -- up front defensively, defensive line is probably the best

we've played or as good as anybody else, no question. Georgia is awfully good at linebackers and safety, and so is Florida State, but Florida State is really good on the defensive front.

Q. I'm not sure if I understand this right, so correct me if I'm wrong, but I think if you guys don't win this game and go to the Orange Bowl, you have to apply for a waiver to get into a Bowl game; is that correct?

PAUL JOHNSON: I don't think so.

Q. No? I thought that that was under the NCAA's new rule.

PAUL JOHNSON: I think they changed the rule, but I'm not sure. Our athletic director tells me that we're going to a Bowl game, so I just assumed it was changed.

And again, I'm just going off what he said. I can't quote you script and verse on the rule.

Q. I know you just started to study Florida State, but just impressions of what you've seen on tape of E.J. Manuel and the things he can do and what you might try to do to contain him.

PAUL JOHNSON: We're really just beginning to watch. I've had a chance to look at two or three games, so it would be premature to say anything other than that he's a really good athlete. He can hurt you not only throwing the ball, but he's athletic, can pull it down and run with it, and he gives them a lot of flexibility to do a lot of things.

Q. Is he similar to anybody that you've seen so far this year?

PAUL JOHNSON: I don't know. Might compare him to the guy at Clemson, Tajh Boyd. They're similar, I think.

Q. Coming from Baltimore, you used to be the Navy coach. Talk about your option. What's been the problem with the option this year? I know a couple years ago you put it in the ACC and nobody could stop it. What's been the issue this year?

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, we averaged 40 points a game in the league. Our issue has been more on the other side, I think. But you'd always like to score more points.

But maybe we haven't been as consistent

as we'd like in every game, especially out of conference we've had a couple of games where we didn't score a lot of points. But I think other than the Virginia Tech game, in league we scored over 30 points every game I'm pretty sure.

Q. I know you kind of got into the back door of the ACC Championship because of Miami and North Carolina saying they're not going to a Bowl game this year --

PAUL JOHNSON: I don't think North Carolina had anything to do with it. I think it was Miami.

Q. Yeah, Miami. What was the feeling waking up on Monday morning going, hey, we're in the ACC Championship game?

PAUL JOHNSON: I really didn't think a whole lot about it. I knew that on Monday morning we were 5 and 3 and in the top of our league, and I knew that Miami still had a game to play, and we all knew that North Carolina was not Bowl eligible because of NCAA violations. So we really didn't think much about that.

So our thought process was simply if Miami wins their last game and decides to go, then they'll go, since they beat us in overtime. And if they don't, then we're in. But we were trying to get ready to play Georgia. We didn't spend a whole lot of time thinking about it honestly.

An Interview With:

JIMBO FISHER FLORIDA STATE

JIMBO FISHER: Looking forward to coming to Charlotte to play for the ACC Championship. Very proud of our team for winning the division. We had to get past a very good opponent this weekend. We played in Florida in a great game and had some opportunities to win the game, battled back, made a lot of mistakes but then battled back and got a lead but then were not fortunate to finish, and we've got to get over that and put that behind us and be ready to go play for an ACC Championship because that's the important thing, and finish this season off the right way.

Got a great opponent in Georgia Tech, they present a lot of problems in a lot of phases. Have not had time to look at a lot of film on them. We've just reevaluated the issues from yesterday, but looking forward to the opportunity to come to Charlotte and compete for the Conference Championship and hopefully finish a great year in the ACC.

Q. What did you guys learn from yesterday's game against the Gators because I was watching it and it seemed like the offense had a little problem getting going. What do you guys have to do?

JIMBO FISHER: First drive we go down to the 25-yard line, we've got a good play, we have a guy open for a touchdown and get some pressure and we throw it away, and on 3rd down we had pressure, the quarterback got hit and gets an interception, got to throw it away, and then we missed two 3rd and 1s. One we had a poor run, missed a cut and one we missed a block.

You play good teams -- and then the next drive E.J. forced the ball, then we score, then we come back and score three times in the third quarter, get back on top, and then they get back in the game. We get hit on a play and he took a pretty good shot and fumbled and they were able to get back on top.

But when you play good teams you can't be sloppy. We turned the ball over too much, give up too much contain on defense. At times they ran

the ball well and on special teams we had a critical turnover on a kickoff, something we haven't had all year on a kickoff return, and they gave up a punt return late when it was 23-20. But in games like that, in emotional games you've got to stay fixed on what you're doing and execute, and we didn't execute in all three phases well enough to win the game.

Now, I thought we competed. We were down 13-0, came back in the game and got a 20-13 lead going into the fourth quarter, felt very proud of our team the way we battled, but then you've got to learn to finish. You still have to play well, and we didn't execute well enough. Now, as coaches we have to coach them better and do a better job when we get those opportunities to make plays.

Q. Talk about the running game because I know against Virginia Tech you were minus 15 or something like that and you got it better against the Gators. What's been the issue with the running game?

JIMBO FISHER: Well, earlier -- actually two or three runs we ran were good. We got behind. We missed a short yardage, and they had the ball the whole day. They were able to establish long drives in the first half, also. They ate a lot of time up in the game. Even though they didn't score a bunch, they still ate a lot of time and kept it down, and we missed those two 3rd and 1s because the first two plays we were right down the field and then missed those two 3rd and 1s, and that's a lot of possession time and a lot of plays where you can establish your run. Then we got behind 13-0, then we got forced into throwing the football and we started having success, so we just stayed with it.

We had a couple nice runs in there; Devonta had a 20-yarder, 32 had a nice run as we got going, but then we just got behind and had to keep throwing it.

Q. How is E.J. doing these days after yesterday's banged up a little bit? Is he all right for the weekend?

JIMBO FISHER: Oh, yeah, he'll be ready. He'll be ready.

Q. You haven't played Georgia Tech in about three years. They have such a different kind of offense, and now you've got a short turnaround for them. What kind of challenges does that present just getting ready for what

they do, especially against an offense that most of your guys haven't seen before?

JIMBO FISHER: Oh, it's a huge challenge, and it's going to be a very -- we have to have a lot of discipline, we have to have a lot of confidence in what we're doing. We've been developing a plan, and we're looking at it and we're going to have to be very disciplined how we go about it and deep great leverage on the ball, and it will be a huge challenge. That's one of the advantages that Georgia Tech does have is that when you don't play them off an off week or a long period of time, that one week turnaround is extremely tough. They do a great job with their offense, too.

Q. I know it's real early in the week obviously, but do you think you guys will have any kind of aftereffects from having played so hard against Florida and coming up short? Is that the kind of thing that they have to snap out of?

JIMBO FISHER: Yeah, it's something we've just got to snap out of it. You understand your goals and your vision, and one of them is a Conference Championship with a BCS berth on the line and you have to do that, and hopefully the maturity of our team will be able to push us through that. And I'm sure they'll be sore, they'll be hurting today. They'll be down today. But tomorrow when we get ready and juiced up, we've got to be ready to roll and get it done.

Q. Real quick, curious, Tank Carradine, any update on his injury situation?

JIMBO FISHER: Yeah, Tank tore an ACL.

Q. Obviously I'm sure that's a huge blow for you guys. What's going through his head? Obviously I know he was looking ahead to the NFL draft.

JIMBO FISHER: The draft will be fine. The draft will still be fine. They'll rehab, and that won't affect those guys much at all, maybe a round at the most, and sometimes if you get the right guy to do it and it's clean, it's not that big a deal to them anymore.

He's sad and he's down because he can't be with his teammates we've already told him, and from that standpoint, but I mean, from the NFL, if it gets done cleanly, which we think it will be and be fine, he'll still play in the NFL and be very highly drafted.

Q. Will it be Mario or Giorgio or --

JIMBO FISHER: We don't know that yet. We'll have to wait.

Q. The other thing I wanted to ask you, I saw a report out today that Coach Stoops had talked with Kentucky. I was wondering if you could confirm that.

JIMBO FISHER: There's no confirmation on that. There's no confirmation on that. I'm not going to comment on anything. Our season is still going on.

Q. Sure. Well, I guess that's sort of my question. You've been around a long time and kind of been through this, and as the coaching carousel starts to turn this time of year, can that be a distraction in terms of focus and preparation or anything?

JIMBO FISHER: You know, there's rumors -- this time a year when jobs come open, rumors are flying everywhere, and you find out about 98 percent of them are false in the end of it.

Now, there's some truth -- a lot of -- the thing is the guy you don't hear about is the guy y'all should be worried about. That's the one that always gets the jobs if you go back and look at it most of the time.

You just eliminate it and our guys, it's part of the business and part of our players and we won't let it affect us, I know that.

Q. Just wanted to ask you a little more on Tank. Obviously you guys have had to deal with these kind of conversations the last few weeks, obviously with Chris and with Brandon. How did he take the news?

JIMBO FISHER: He was very good. He was sad, and then he asked questions about -- I did some research about the draft and how things are drafted and the way the NFL would look at it for him because I knew that would be a very important thing to him, and what he had to do and how his surgery pattern would go and what he needed to do for rehab because that's what he's got to start looking forward to.

And he's very interested, and he also wanted to know about graduation and how it would affect his graduating. Can he wait to graduate before he has his surgery and all that. He was very mature and handled it very well and of course very sad because he wanted to finish the season

with his teammates. But it was a very sad moment. But he understood and he handled it very maturely.

Q. Obviously these are conversations that you've had a lot this year. Are they kind of getting old at this point, kind of tired having to deal with these kinds of serious injuries?

JIMBO FISHER: You do, but it's part of the business. They come. We've had just Chris and him right there and Brandon early, that's three significant ones. But they're not fun, I promise you that.

Q. And actually speaking of the defensive line, also you were just talking about the challenge that Georgia Tech poses specifically for the line. What type of challenge does that offense --

JIMBO FISHER: Well, they're going to cut a lot, they're going to do different kinds of blocks, but the other key is your secondary and your linebackers, they're going to get challenged just as much, I mean, who has support, who has leverage, getting second level cutting on those guys. I mean, it'll be a huge challenge for all those guys that are involved because it's not going to be -- I mean, your line is going to be important, but you're going to have the linebackers, you're going to have to have everybody involved in it.

Q. You talked earlier this year about learning a lot from last year after you lost to NC State. Is this a good time for them to look back at that and learn the way they recovered very well from that loss?

JIMBO FISHER: No doubt. No doubt. And remember, there's still a lot to play for and you still have a lot of goals and achieve some things and still have a very good year, you know what I'm saying, and the way these seniors are I'm sure they'll do that. But you're exactly right, Tom; you have to reflect on past experiences to be able to play like you need to play, you know what I mean, and that's what you need to do.

Q. Does Tank's injury -- a lot of guys have played a lot of plays this year, so how much are you, despite the injury and despite how sad it is, kind of prepared for something like this with the way you've rolled guys in and out of that line?

JIMBO FISHER: Well, that's why we do it, because in our part of the game and to keep guys fresh in their bodies and everything. But Giorgio and Mario ended up -- Mario second half of the season played a ton a ball, and Giorgio played a lot in different scenarios with people we have up there. It is very important and it's great we've been able to do that, and that's one of the reasons we do it, so if something like this does happen you're not totally inexperienced.

Q. I'm sure you saw the report earlier this week that the NFL was considering -- competition committee was considering banning blocks below the waist for next year, and given how rules tend to filter down to the college game, I was just curious if you had any thoughts on how that might fundamentally change football if that step was taken, and obviously you're playing a team that does a lot of that next week. I was just curious kind of how it might change college football.

JIMBO FISHER: Well, that's a great question, and from -- not putting a lot of thought into it, I think it's really going to change the running games. I think it's going to be much harder to run the football that way in certain schemes, and you have to maybe go to more power type schemes and things like that. But I think it will be much harder to run the football when you eliminate cutting on some different levels and maybe make it more of a throwing game. And offenses like Georgia Tech, I think if that does happen, I think it would critically hamper a lot of the things they do.

Q. Do you guys teach cutting at all? Do you use it at all?

JIMBO FISHER: Oh, yeah, we do. Yeah, we do, legally and then by the rules in which we do, but we do cut in the backside of zones and stretch plays and things. And I think -- I mean, when those big guys get running, you can't stop them when you're trying to cut angles, and it changes. The way defenses move now, the constant movements, if you don't cut on the backside, it's hard to get running plays, it really is.

Q. Do you find that it is -- it does play into injuries?

JIMBO FISHER: It helps the running backs. Yeah, I think it does. What's funny, though, like the guy yesterday, for us, Tank, who got hurt, he was just running up field, planted his knee, went to make a cut and blew it; never got hit,

never got pushed. Brandon Jenkins was running up the field rushing the passer and stepped wrong. But it does. There's no doubt cutting does affect that, but I don't know as much as we think it does. You know what I'm saying, and what goes on. I don't know which way I am on that.

But it will have an effect on the game, I don't think there's any doubt.

Q. Can you see just which team is able to kind of get past its loss yesterday after having a pretty good advantage --

JIMBO FISHER: I don't think there's any doubt. They had a great rivalry game and we did, too, and you've got to be able to put it behind you quickly so you can go on. I think that is going to be a big factor, I don't think there's any doubt.

Q. I'm curious, as you noted, the offense that Tech runs is unusual and will take some preparation. Did you devote any time last week to formulating a plan how you're going to go about coaching it?

JIMBO FISHER: We do a lot of things in the off-season. We formulated plans in the off-season for preparation if you ever had to just have a general idea of how you wanted to do things with people in the past. But we haven't had time to work. That Florida game was too big for us and too important of a football game.

Q. When you find out you were going to play Tech what was your first reaction?

JIMBO FISHER: It's just who it is who it is. They did a great job and they earned the right to be there.

Q. I was looking back, I guess the last time Mark coached an option team was when he was at Houston; is that correct?

JIMBO FISHER: Who was that now, Coach Stoops, the last time he played an option team?

Q. Right, I'm guessing when he was at Houston they played Rice.

JIMBO FISHER: Probably would have been. I couldn't tell you that. If I told you that, I'd be telling you a fib. I didn't know that stat. That sounds like it possibly could be.

Q. A lot of your guys played in the championship game two years ago when you faced Virginia Tech and got beat. E.J. was just a sophomore then. How much better is he now, sophomore to a senior obviously he's a lot better, but in what way have you seen him grow?

JIMBO FISHER: I think how he deals with things from day-to-day and the ups and downs and he understands there are ups and downs. There's going to be tough moments like yesterday for him and how he responds back and bounces back. I just think he's a much mature player, and he has great knowledge of what we're doing.

Q. For all the guys who did participate in that game, can having that experience be any kind of an advantage?

JIMBO FISHER: I don't think it hurts you. I mean, I hope so. I don't know how many of them played a significant role in it. I know Rodney did, Lonnie did, E.J. did. Other than that on offense I don't know if there's anybody. Christian Jones played a little, Kelvin, Everett probably played some, Xavier played. I'm trying to think. The two safeties a little bit. Joyner played some, played some corner. From that standpoint -- and Hopkins did. But it doesn't hurt to have some guys that have at least been there. Yeah, Nick Moody played, too, I guess.

Q. If you don't mind an off-topic subject, what are the most important things you learned working with Nick Saban that's helped you build your program at Florida State?

JIMBO FISHER: I think just organization, a lot things, the infrastructure of your program away from football, how you go about preparation during the week for football and then a lot of schemes and schedules and things, but I think just the infrastructure and a lot of day-to-day things that affect the players.

Q. Did you ever see a different side to Nick in your time with him at LSU or always what he appears to be?

JIMBO FISHER: I mean, Nick and I were friends. We were. I was over at his house, and he would relax, and we got along very well.

Q. What's he like relaxing?

JIMBO FISHER: Nice guy. I mean, Nick is. He's a really nice guy. We get along great, and

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he's fun to talk to. Knows a lot about a lot of things, big sports fan and all that stuff. He's a great guy.

Q. Do you feel like the league as a whole or individually has any kind of image repair to do nationally, regionally or in the minds of recruits this postseason after losses of yesterday and three high-profile inter-conference games with the SEC?

JIMBO FISHER: I don't think -- kids take it for what it's worth and they want to play. You're always constantly trying to do that and you're trying to sell your program and where you're going. But I think each team will do that individually, and how that affects the league will be the overall effect in the end.

But I think you're constantly doing that no matter what success you have or failure you have because as soon as you have success they'll say, hey, well you can come over here and play quicker. I mean, there's different ways people spin it, but I think that is always a part of what you have to do as a coach.

Q. I wanted to follow up on something you said about meeting in the off-season and trying to figure out ways to coach teams. I guess you're saying that over the off-season you figured out if we play Georgia Tech in the ACC Championship, here's how we want to go about putting the defense together?

JIMBO FISHER: Yeah, exact. You look at things -- possible problems of your season and things that are unorthodox, you say you have a chance to do that, you spend a couple days talking with people and look how people have done things and have a general idea so if that situation ever occurs you have a base formula plan where you want to start from.

Q. Coach Johnson mentioned earlier that he thinks you guys have an advantage because they have no idea how you're going to attack the option. Do you feel the same way?

JIMBO FISHER: Yeah, I don't know. I mean, we have to go see it and we have to simulate it, so it's six one way, half a dozen the other.

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