

December 1, 2012



An Interview With:

**JAMES WILDER
KARLOS WILLIAMS
EJ MANUEL
DEVONTA FREEMAN**

Q. Karlos, obviously this week I'm sure was pretty emotional given Coach Stoops' future. What was it like for you going through the week and then as the game ended with that play, what was going through your mind?

KARLOS WILLIAMS: It was a great week of practice. Coach Stoops didn't really talk about his move to Kentucky or him leaving at all. It was more focused on playing Georgia Tech, playing a sound defense and winning, and I was behind Moody all week in practice, getting good reps, making sure I knew my assignment alignments, and after he went down the first kickoff my name was called and I was kind of nervous, but it's the game of football, you've got to go out there and step up and it was my time and I think I played pretty well tonight.

Q. Karlos, could you go through the interception, just what happened?

KARLOS WILLIAMS: Coverage was called, they're trying to get the ball downfield, really spread the ball out, trying not to really so much milk the clock, but try to run a little hurry up and I was covering 3, 3 to the field, he came across and the quarterback threw a pretty bad ball. I just broke on it and tried to tip it up and bat it down, but luckily it tipped up in the air and I just tried to make a sure catch and that's what happened. I'm just happy I got the call and we're ACC champs.

Q. EJ, it's been seven years since Florida State has won a title. What's it feel like to be a champion again?

EJ MANUEL: It feels great. I think we're going to have even more. I'm honestly at a loss for words right now. I'm just enjoying the moment, I'm happy for my teammates, happy for our coaches and happy for our fans. To be able to do this and get Florida State on the right track while I'm on my way out of here, I'm extremely excited and proud.

Q. James, kind of walk us through the sideline when Karlos intercepts the pass? I know they were kind of rallying there for a minute.

JAMES WILDER: Yeah, I was standing on the bleachers getting the crowd pumped, and I knew they was going to come through and fight for each other. That's one of our mottos is fight for each other, so we were just making sure everybody on the sidelines was standing up, getting krunk, and getting loud and Karlos came up with a big-time play and he took it all the way back to like the 2-yard line and it was just a great defensive play by Karlos.

Q. EJ, could you talk about your last drive? It kind of worked like a punt anyway, and not only that but you got a few 1st downs to make them burn time?

EJ MANUEL: Yeah, that was huge for us. We wanted to get points but like you said we kind of used the go route as a punt more or less. I hate throwing interceptions, but it is what it is, and kind of took some time off the clock, put their team with bad field position, tried to help our defense get a little breather or whatever. We wanted to get points but we didn't. I thought we made some huge 3rd-down conversions and continued to move the ball down the field.

Q. Karlos, how did the team respond this week and in this game? You guys lose Tank, Mark Stoops has one foot out of door, a lot of distractions that could have gone the other way against you guys. Did it work in a positive way this week?

KARLOS WILLIAMS: Not so much

inspiration. Coach Jimbo always talks about you can't drive a car looking in the rear-view mirror, because you end up crashing yourself and end up dying. But the team focused and we always look forward through the front mirror and we drove perfectly right to Charlotte, North Carolina, we had a very good time at the hotel, eating good meals, hanging around, being the great team that we are, and we steered correct right here to the ACC Championship and we won.

Thinking about Stoops, I'm very happy for him going to Kentucky. Tank, I'm very proud of him; he played a great season, great season, losing B Jenks early in the season, but as far as that, we kept looking in the front mirror as coach Jimbo always talks about, and we're home safe now going to Miami to play in the Orange Bowl.

Q. Karlos, the offense turned the ball over three times in the second half, so how important do you guys feel like defensively you were able to step up and really preserve this lead?

KARLOS WILLIAMS: It's always important to have a good defense. We believe in our offense week in and week out, those guys make great plays, blocks, runs. There was never no point where we're not going to worry about the offense, it's all on defense. We knew that they were going to make their plays and we were going to make our plays, and it came up on the defensive side tonight. A couple weeks ago, it was offense saving defense, so we just stepped up, really locked in, you know what, it's defense tonight. Let's do it for them, you know they are having a hard time, we have to step up and that we did, the whole defense as a crew.

Q. EJ, talk about your special senior season, you becoming the seventh Florida State quarterback to pass 3,000 yards passing.

EJ MANUEL: It's a great feeling. I'm extremely proud of it. And I thank my teammates, my offensive line, they did a great job this year. I think they really took it upon themselves to protect me, and my backs, tight ends, receivers, all my supporting cast, I thank them. Any time you get yardage like that, you have guys that are out there making plays for you. So I'm just happy and proud of my teammates.

Q. Devonta talk about how important it was the way you guys established the run

early, especially against a team like that and they're the team that usually does that?

DEVONTA FREEMAN: We just tried to establish the run, run the ball, knock a little time off the clock. But still execute the plays and stuff, just go down the field and drive.

Q. EJ, is it special for you to be the quarterback that got Florida State back to this stage and got over and won the ACC title?

EJ MANUEL: Definitely. I'll be extremely proud of it 10, 15 years from now. I'll be able to say I helped our team get back to where we needed to be as far as the BCS conversation, the national championship conversation and things like that. I want to see greatness from here on out. We have a lot of great players, a lot of great young players and guys understand what it takes to get to this point, so I don't see us going back to where we used to be. I think Florida State is back in the conversation.

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An Interview With:

JIMBO FISHER

Q. What's it mean seven years since Florida State has won an ACC title, you guys are champions again.

JIMBO FISHER: Well, I think it's huge because I think you keep continuing to change the culture. We had a culture there for a while that we couldn't win those games, we couldn't win 10 games in a season, now we've won 11. We won the Atlantic, it was the second time we've been here in three years, we now got over the hump and won the first championship, and I think you've got to understand, you've got to win one before you can ever say I'm back and everybody wants you to -- you've got to win a Conference Championship before you win a National Championship, and now our kids understand what it takes and how hard it is, but they're champions. And I'm going to tell you, it's something, you think different, you act different, you become different, and I hope it'll transform in the off-season into our young guys and we can keep that culture around here like it used to be.

Q. Can you talk about the way Karlos played? Obviously a lot of potential in that kid. He wasn't supposed to start, right?

JIMBO FISHER: Well, he was going to play a bunch. We knew he was going to play in there a bunch, and that's what he was in that situation. And Karlos, he's played great all year, did special teams, whatever you asked with the ball in his hand and he gets -- he's very instinctive, he's a very good football player, he's physical and got good ball skills and he played a tremendous game. The guy is going to be a great player. He's got two years left, and I'm glad of that.

Q. Talk about establishing the run early and kind of controlling --

JIMBO FISHER: We wanted to. We felt we really could so we could get the play action things going later. You couldn't play a better first half than we did offensively. We scored three out of four drives, we had the ball, ate the clock up, ran the ball, scored 21 points, missed a 3rd and inches, which is ridiculous. And then the second half come out with self-inflicted things. I thought we played a great first half offensively and a great defensive first half, then the defense continued to play well in the second half and on offense we just shot ourselves in the foot. A senior lines up wrong, didn't line up on a formation right, got a penalty. Two or three times we broke midfield and we're driving down to get points and we had a holding, we had a lined up wrong, got us a 1st and 15 and then we had the turnover late when EJ got hit in the back. We had a guy coming open on a play. But just a lot of self-inflicted wounds and silly things, but very proud of the first half and how physical we were and able to establish the run.

Q. We talk an awful lot about the work the players put in but you've got in a lot of work yourself. What does this win mean to you personally?

JIMBO FISHER: I mean, I don't know that because I don't ever think in those terms. It is for the players, our loyal fans, the people who stayed behind us, and it's great for them to be there. I'm extremely happy for our players because I know how hard it is and how much flak they've taken, when are you going to be back, when are you going to win a championship, when you going to do this or this group here; you've recruited a great class. Well, it's only the third year of the program. We've been in two Conference Championships, and we won one, and we've won 11 games, we won 30 games, we're about the seventh winningest team in the country.

These seniors and these players have done tremendous job. For me I guess I'm going to think about it later. I don't ever think in those terms, I'm just happy for them that they can call themselves a champion, because that doesn't

happen. There's some great teams out there that never get to say they're champions, and that'll be a bond they can keep forever and ever.

Q. On that same tone, just what it means for EJ to go out like this.

JIMBO FISHER: I mean, you always -- the quarterback is always measured by championships. You say it, sometimes it's fair, sometimes it isn't. But he is a selfless player, he plays hurt, banged up, bruised, he's the epitome of what you want in a student athlete, the guy leading your team, and he takes the good, the bad, but he's a champion, and that's what he is. He's a warrior, he's a competitor, and he's going to be remembered hopefully as the quarterback to start the run for Florida State to start coming back.

Q. What did you guys do well defensively?

JIMBO FISHER: Kept great leverage on the football. I think first half we did two things: First of all, they kept great leverage on the football and they had great eye discipline, and you noticed for most of the time when they had a guy on the quarterback, a guy on the pitch, they gave up a few plays inside, but you're going to get a dive play or two, but the big plays usually come on the option from the outside, and we kept great discipline on having a guy on the quarterback, a guy on the pitch, and they didn't -- as I say, I want a hero in the game, and a hero to me in this game for them on defense was not a guy who was going to be outstanding and fly around but a hero, doing my job. I had to be very disciplined, and if it wasn't my play I had to take the quarterback, I had to take the dive, and they stayed as a unit and a team and played very well that way, extremely well.

Q. How important were some of the plays that EJ made with his legs running the ball tonight?

JIMBO FISHER: Pretty cool. We had that option because they started blitzing, and we knew early they hadn't blitzed much at all, and they came at us and blitzed like crazy and were getting the edges and the option, and his legs were very critical in getting those big plays in there early, especially in the first half. He made some really nice plays. He had a nice scramble in the second half that ate up a lot of time, also.

Q. On that note with the defense, it seemed like Mario did a really nice job?



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JIMBO FISHER: He's physical. That guy is going to be a heck of a football player now. I mean, one guy goes down, another guy gets an opportunity. I don't know how many tackles or plays he made in the game, but I noticed he had a big sack there one time on a critical play, and that guy is going to be a heck of a football player now.

Q. Again, talking about the growth of a program, that game seemed to be played a lot like the NC State game.

JIMBO FISHER: Exactly right. As I said, you find ways to win games. Good teams win games in different ways. The Clemson game we outscored them. This game we played great defense. The NC State game we couldn't make enough plays either way. But again, that goes part of being a champion. There's a point in time you point back and you look at it and you say, that was it. That's the time that you got over that hump and you got there and you didn't let the circumstances blur your vision, and they did that.

The defense -- and we were able to make that play. They were determined, they said at halftime we're going to do whatever we've got to do, and they did.

Q. Talk about your relationship with Nick Saban; they're going back to a national title game. Any similarities on how you're building your program?

JIMBO FISHER: I would like to think so in that we do -- the infrastructure of our programs are very similar. I think we have a lot of beliefs that way. Nick does his own things. I believe in strong defense, I believe in being able to run the football, play action, play sound, having balance on offense and defense, and I think that's the way you win championships. I think when you become too one-dimensional and all the different things, numbers are great but wins are what it's all about in championships. You've got to be great on defense, and that's a lot of things -- we believe a lot of the same things. Now we've just got to go win us some championships, National Championships.

Q. Real quick just what happened to Menelik?

JIMBO FISHER: Yeah, he hurt an ankle in the first half. He really went and he came out that second half and it stiffened up on him a bunch at

halftime, and he just couldn't push off. He couldn't get enough power on it, and he said -- and he was gimping and wasn't -- that's why we couldn't reach those blocks and he couldn't push and he said he had to come out, so we played Bobby.

Q. When will you decide whether or not Coach Stoops will coach through the Bowl game?

JIMBO FISHER: I mean, I doubt -- we'll have to talk about it. It's going to be very hard because you're a head coach, now, let me tell you something. You think you know what's about to hit you. I'll tell you what, when you're sitting in that chair and you look behind you, there ain't nobody else. You make all those final decisions and all the things you've got to do as a staff and organization and all that stuff, I mean, I'll be amazed if that -- I wouldn't expect him to. He's got to go take care of his business. There's a lot of things in there.

If he wants to, we'll talk about it, but I'm going to be shocked because let me tell you something; when you first get a head coaching job you have no earthly idea about how much time and effort, and you think you're organized and ready, for every one you've got five more things happening you've got to get done. That is going to be a very tough chore.

Q. I assume you wouldn't know who would lead your defense because you don't know who he's taking with him?

JIMBO FISHER: No, I have some ideas and thoughts and I'll share --

Q. Would you know by the Bowl?

JIMBO FISHER: Yeah, could be. Some different thoughts and how we do things, and we'll get organized and I'll get back on that trail tomorrow. Thanks. I was trying to enjoy something for five minutes. I can't even enjoy -- now I'm back to that mode.

Q. You had a couple guys, Chris and Brandon, who couldn't get on the field but obviously played big roles in you getting here. Just what it means for those guys to --

JIMBO FISHER: They were just happy, man. They were on the sideline cheering and pushing and going on. That's their ring, too. It was great to see them there and be a part of it, and I was happy Jacoby was over there. There was a bunch of guys, and I was extremely happy for

them, and they were being the best teammates they could just like they always are. Huge.

Q. What did your boys think about dad's job today?

JIMBO FISHER: My two boys? They will have 38 things we did wrong. He's worse than I am. Ethan, golly, he's amazing. He's going to be happy as heck. He'll love on me.

Q. What did you mean early in your speech where you said when you're a champion you act different, you think different?

JIMBO FISHER: You understand what it takes to get there. It's not an arrogance, but it's a confidence, and you understand the process of how you get there. Once you've crossed that threshold, there's a different feeling about you, and sometimes you can see things differently. I mean, it's like getting in a fraternity that other people have and there's a lot of people that have been champions, but I think as a program and an organization and the culture around you about excellence, and I'm not talking about just playing, I'm talking about how you act as a person, how you carry yourself, how you represent our school, how you act as a student, and these guys are -- we graduated the last two classes 84 and 92 percent. We have 11 graduates on our team out there right now that played in that game, guys already with degrees. We won games because of character. We have great players, but I mean, once you're a champion there's a responsibility to me of how you've got to act and represent yourself and think, and I think it's huge, and I think once you get there, you understand that.

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An Interview With:

**PAUL JOHNSON
TEVIN WASHINGTON**

PAUL JOHNSON: It was a heck of a football game. I was awfully proud of the effort that our guys gave. I thought they played with some heart and some intensity. And we just ran out of time. We had our chances, didn't finish enough drives in the first half and had to kick field goals, and they're a good football team. They've got really physical, fast guys on defense, and they played hard, too.

Never happy when you lose, but I told our guys that I was proud of their effort, so we'll take that and try to move forward. I thought our defense played their tail off, especially in the second half.

Q. Coach, can you just talk about what the difference was in the second half with your defense? Seemed kind of like a night and day type thing.

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, you know, I think that we didn't do a whole lot of adjusting our change, we just kind of turned the dial up a little bit and guys played. You know, we made some plays, created some turnovers and gave them some negative plays, and when you do that, it makes it tough.

Q. Florida State did a good job of taking away the perimeter, they really closed fast on those plays.

PAUL JOHNSON: They did. We were having a hard time getting the linebacker picked up. He was playing really deep, and he was scraping out in the alley a lot. We didn't always do a great job of blocking the other guys on the perimeter, either. We missed them several times. Like I said, we could drive the ball down, but we didn't hit any big, explosive plays, and when

defenses can do that to you where you have to do it five, six, seven yards at a pop, it's hard to be consistent enough to get it down there and keep it going, especially if you have to drive long ways.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about the plan with Sims in the middle? Seems like you guys had a huge amount of success getting him free.

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, that's because they were running a linebacker to the perimeter. He was playing deep, and scraping out of there, so they were playing the inside box with four guys, and David ran the ball really hard. I thought he ran real hard. We had a little bit of a numbers advantage in there, but we just never could break it. We'd make six or seven yards, but we could never come out of there and break it for bigger plays.

Q. I guess one of the kind of strange plays was the two-point conversion. I was just curious what your thought process was there.

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, we needed to go for two to get the thing to four in case there was a field goal or whatever because one did us no good. You know, it probably wasn't the best play call. It's something that we put in for this game. You know, the way they lined up I thought we had a chance, but you know, just didn't work.

Q. When you look at the team hanging in this game, what does that say about this squad?

PAUL JOHNSON: Well, you know, it's like I said, I told the guys, I thought they competed and they played with some effort, and they had been challenged, you know, not just by me, everybody challenged them. Everybody has told them they're not very good and they don't belong, and I think they wanted to show that they did, that they did belong. Like I said, they came out and they played their tail off, played with some effort and some heart.

Q. In a way it was kind of a synopsis of the way the whole season has gone, the defense plays better, offense plays in spurts and then you're just not able to finish. Is that how it felt?

PAUL JOHNSON: Yeah, you know -- yeah. We played a couple pretty good football teams, you know, it's not like we're lining up playing junior colleges. I don't know what the Alabama-Georgia score was today, but I'll bet it was pretty close, and this team has lost two football games. They're pretty good, too. One of the games they lost they turned it over six times.

So you know, it was a struggle. They're pretty good defensively. They haven't given up a whole lot of points or a whole lot of yards to anybody, so everything you got was a struggle. I thought our defense did play much better. The second half is the way that you'd like for them to play all the time; that's the standard. But they played much better tonight, and we didn't finish drives. Any time you have to kick three field goals when you get in the red zone, that's not good, and we got ourselves in the 3rd down situations or 4th down actually that it was just 10, 12, 9, so you've got to kick it. The odds of making it is not real good.

Q. I guess it had to be encouraging in some ways to see the way the team responded, particularly coming off that Georgia game and playing another tough top 15 team this week.

PAUL JOHNSON: You know, the team responded the way I thought they would respond. You know, this team really hasn't ever quit. I mean, some people might want to say that, but they haven't ever really quit.

Now, have we been as consistent and played with the kind of emotion and energy every game, I'd be the first to say no and I think they would, too. But this team has been fairly resilient, and it did not surprise me at all that they came out and played hard. I knew they would.

Q. What kind of got going for you guys? What started working the second half?

TEVIN WASHINGTON: I thought we stopped killing ourselves and drives and we started making the routine plays more. That's pretty much how the game went. I mean, first half we kept killing ourselves on the perimeter and missing blocks or whatever, missing a read here or there, key situations we need to make plays in. Second

half, I thought we did a better job of finishing some drives when we had a chance.

Q. Tevin, when you look back on this game you guys fell behind early. How tough is it to dig out from a hole when you fall behind 21-3 in the first half?

TEVIN WASHINGTON: I think you've just got to keep playing. If you keep playing, I feel like the ball is going to bounce your way a little bit. It always does. It eventually always comes up in games like this, so we just tried to keep playing.

Q. You had two real close calls, the pass to Jeff where he stepped out of bounds and then the route that Robby ran. Talk about those plays and how close they felt to you.

TEVIN WASHINGTON: That's how it goes sometimes. I wish they went our way, but it didn't. They made the call the other way, so you've just got to run with it.

Q. Tevin, can you tell us what you saw on that two-point conversion play?

TEVIN WASHINGTON: Actually I went to Coach and thought the play we put in, I thought it would work, because usually when we send that motion, the corner usually fires, and it should have been -- I thought it was going to be an easy conversion, but it went the other way. He dropped back and contained us, and I didn't have nowhere to go with the football.

Q. Tevin, I'm curious how -- it's still very fresh, but how do you kind of look or make sense of the season where you guys came so close so many times and still are left with a 6 and 7 record?

TEVIN WASHINGTON: I mean, I guess it would be bad if I felt like we didn't put our best effort forward, but I felt like overall as a team we put everything we had into those games, and I mean, I'm pretty much -- I know I put everything I could into games and I feel like the team did. Everything you feel like you do everything you can to help the team win, you've got to walk away knowing you did everything you could.

PAUL JOHNSON: We've still got one left. We're not through.

Q. As a senior and knowing that you guys started the year 2 and 4, how does it feel

to have come back and played in the Conference Championship Game and had a performance like this tonight? How does that feel to you as a senior and your classmates?

TEVIN WASHINGTON: I mean, it hurts, I mean, losing. Any time you lose, it hurts. But we came a long way, I think, from where people wrote us off early on and were still able to finish fairly pretty good in November and the middle part of October. I mean, I just feel like we did the best we could, and we left it all out there on the field.

Q. The last drive, I guess, a couple minutes left, it felt like the game was going to go your way. What was your confidence level in the huddle and what you saw on the last play?

TEVIN WASHINGTON: Last play we had an option route with the A back. I thought if I would have made a better throw and put it on his outside, he would have had a chance to catch the ball and get up the field. I kind of left it inside and got undercut and they made a play on the ball. My confidence level was the same as it was when we started the game. I felt like we was going to go down and win the game.

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