

**December 6, 2013**



An Interview With:

## **COACH JIMBO FISHER FLORIDA STATE**

COACH FISHER: Very excited to be representing the Atlantic up here this week, very proud of our side of the division and very fortunate to be here and happy to be here. Our kids are really looking forward to the opportunity and looking forward to the challenge of playing against a really great Duke team. Duke has done one heck of a job this year. Very fun to watch on film. Extremely well coached and played extremely hard and make plays, and David has done a tremendous job there and we know we're going to have to play an "A" game to be able to compete with them and play with them, but our kids are looking forward to it. We've had a great week of practice, and again, very happy with the things our team has accomplished so far, but we have a lot more to do and looking forward to this opportunity which we have tomorrow.

**Q. Have you ever had a situation where you played two quarterbacks either when you were an offensive coordinator somewhere or two quarterbacks where you used them depending on their talents in a game situation? And how is David making this work from your vantage point?**

COACH FISHER: Well, I think he's created an identity, and I think that's when you have -- the thing with playing a one-quarterback system or two quarterback system, what is your identity as a football team and what does each guy bring to the table that allows you to be successful? One's a great runner. One's a great passer. Well, all of a sudden, you start looking at what they're doing, they're both throwing -- one of their weakness becomes a strength and the other one vice versa. So they've become a two-headed monster and they've created a lot of problems, and

it's what their identity is. And yes I've had that happen in the past. We used to use Dayemeune Craig a lot when he was young in goal-line, short-yardage situations, running situations when we had he and Pat Nix with some great teams at Auburn, and we used it because that was the dynamic that worked. Just like you had Wally Woodham and Jimmy Jordan back at Florida State in the late 70s and early 80s. They had that dynamic. David, what he's done, he knows his team, he knows what his players are and what their strengths and weaknesses are, and both those guys are very capable of leading that team, and he's done a great job of mixing and matching that.

**Q. I ask this kind of facetiously, but with the kick six at Auburn Saturday, with what you went through yesterday, do people realize that you're No. 1 in the country for the first time in 13 years?**

COACH FISHER: I hope not. Kind of makes it peaceful. But no, it is -- we're happy to be where we're at, but we also know that we're not thinking about that right now. What we're thinking about is running through the finish line. When you run the 100-meter dash, being No. 1 at the 90-meter mark doesn't mean anything. We have to keep our form, stay true to form and the way we practice and prepare I think we will, and be able to run through the finish line to be No. 1 at the end of the regular season and then go into the bowl games, which we are. That's not what we're focusing on right now, but it really hasn't been a big distraction, and kind of glad about it.

**Q. If anybody, who does Duke remind you of that you guys have played in this 2013 schedule?**

COACH FISHER: Obviously nobody because they're the champion of their division, and when you're a champion I think you're a little bit different. I don't know if Duke is similar to anybody we've played because I think what Duke does, Duke plays tremendously consistent. They make

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very few mistakes. They've become so athletic in the back end with their skill guys and their secondary guys allows them to make plays and they're very physical up front, so I don't think we've faced anybody that plays as consistent as Duke does in my opinion and is well coached and the way they have their players playing.

**Q. You talked about their consistency. What does Duke do offensively that's going to present the biggest challenge to your defense?**

COACH FISHER: Well, I think they're multidimensional. They can throw it and run it, and any time you can do both, and then they create the quarterback runs on top of that which gives you an extra blocker, which is like playing with 12 guys. So I think that diversity -- and then they're able to execute all those things in which they do. So I think from that standpoint it makes it very tough.

**Q. Your team comes in a four-touchdown favorite. Obviously the players are going to pick up on that. What do you say to them to keep them focusing and not take Duke too lightly?**

COACH FISHER: The same thing I've said all year. Lines don't mean anything. At the beginning of the game the score is 0-0. Every day it's 0-0. You have to win today. You have to win the game. You have to do the things you have to do, and it's not about our opponent, and no disrespect, it's about how prepare and how we play and how we approach things and that's been our motto all year, is to take care of our own business, control what we can control. It's how we play and how we think, and we want to play from the first play to the last play, we want to get better as the game goes on and want to play every play as if it's our last one.

**Q. Talk about the wide receivers you guys have, sophomore wide receivers. What do they bring to the game this year?**

COACH FISHER: Well, I think first of all, it's experience. I think with Kenny Shaw, Rashad Greene and Kelvin Benjamin are our top three guys. I think you have experienced guys that have played. I think all guys can run. I think they are great change of direction guys. They have ball skills, and they can go over the top, they can go underneath and they can run with the football and they are very unselfish, they are very good route runners. And the thing I like about all of them, all three are intelligent. All three can be moved

around in different positions, they can learn and they understand football. Football makes sense to them so they can understand the zone coverage, how to sit in the hole, when it's man, how they got to separate, when they get inside leverage man, outside leverage man, I think their football IQ makes them very fun to coach and allows them to execute at a high level.

**Q. You've talked a lot about the unselfish nature of this team and the way this team plays together. Is that chemistry as good as you've been around?**

COACH FISHER: Yes, it is. I've been on some great teams, but I don't think there's any team that's more unselfish than our team is, and I think the secret to our team is the love, trust and belief they have in each other and they generally play for each other and they care for each other, and to me that's the secret to everything we're doing and allows them -- they want to do well because the guy beside them is counting on them.

**Q. Along that same line, your best player and most famous player may be a red-shirt freshman, but what about the upperclassmen that kind of is the level head that makes every day that they do go in 0-0 and do understand the process?**

COACH FISHER: I could say every one of them, and I really do mean that. We have some definite leaders. I think Telvin Smith and Lamarcus Joyner are extremely strong leaders on the defensive side of the football. Timmy Jernigan is emerging into one of those guys. Jameis on offense, things like that, Cam Irving, Stork, Rashad Greene is a tremendous leader that way. Devonta by example.

I really could say that about the whole football team. They truly buy into what we're doing and selling, and that team concept, and that's just the way they all approach every day.

**Q. Over the last couple of weeks what we've seen from Jameis publicly has been very much the player we've seen all year, very calm, very gregarious, very charismatic. I'm wondering if you've seen a different person or different attitudes from him behind the scenes over the last couple of weeks, stress among the team, stress from him?**

COACH FISHER: No, I really haven't.

He's been the same guy, and like I said, he believed in the process, and he believed in himself, and he's been the same guy. It's been a remarkable maturity level presented by him to be able to compartmentalize and handle things he can control and not that anything was lightly or he didn't take it seriously, but like I say, in our life everybody has issues or something going on in your life, and the ones that can compartmentalize and function and handle them when they have to handle them are the ones that are very successful, and he's very mature like that. He took everything extremely seriously, but he also understood he had a responsibility as a student, as a teammate to handle himself the way he did, and it's been remarkable the way he's done it. I have seen no signs, and he and I talk quite often.

**Q. To that point, is there a different mood around your team today than there was 24 hours ago, 48 hours ago?**

COACH FISHER: No, really not. It's the same football team we were then.

**Q. Playing in so many lopsided games this year, your starters haven't had to see too much of the fourth quarter. In what ways does that present advantages and disadvantages heading into postseason play?**

COACH FISHER: Well, I think advantages. It definitely let our young players develop. They key to any team is the development of your youth and your second- and third-team guy and not in practice but in a game, that you're able to get them out there on the field when the scoreboard -- you know, in practice, if you get beat, that scoreboard, it doesn't change. In a game, that scoreboard changes on defense or if you make a play on offense or whatever, and I think being able to get them -- and I think you saw, even our fans if people were to ask me your twos and threes didn't play as well early in the year, are you disappointed? I said, no, they're good players. They just need to get on that field and relax. Each of those games occurred, you saw them get on, they executed at a higher level all the way through the season. You saw our young guys develop, which is key for injuries, it's key for personal battles at which you push the upperclassmen to play better, and I don't think there's been any disadvantages. I really don't. We've played a bunch of fourth-quarter games. We played one last week once we got into it. That Florida was an extremely physical, athletic game, and the way we

practice because we're always good on good every Tuesday and Wednesday and we got inside drill, we go seven-on-seven and we go team good on good so we get that fastball look. It's the way we practice. They get four quarters of work. I think it's been a tremendous advantage for us to developed our young players on our football team.

**Q. We use the saying in the media even keel, and watching Jameis this season, whether he throws a touchdown or an interception, he seems so even keel, if you will. Can you talk a little bit about his maturity and development throughout this season?**

COACH FISHER: Because he's not an individual. I think you see guys that aren't even keel when they become selfish. I think this guy is about our football team. He is one of them. He wants to play well so our team does good. There's an difference in wanting to have the individual awards and playing well, or you want to play well so your team has success and I think he truly embraces that and understands the responsibility of the quarterback position. He understands you can't get too high, you can't get too low, you've got to play the next play and we talk about those things a lot, but he's able to go out and execute that, and he's a very fun guy to coach that way, and he's the same way in practice. Now he gets emotional, and he loves it and he's compassionate, but he can compartmentalize that and really bring himself right back into the moment and understand what he has to do.

His intelligence level and ability to comprehend the things he's in and embrace the situations is really remarkable. To me that's one of his greatest strengths.

**Q. Again about Jameis, when did you kind of realize, at what point in the season, that he was maybe going to be something special?**

COACH FISHER: Well, I mean, he had a great spring, he had a good summer, he had a great two-a-days and you wonder when he got into those games, and I think he went on the road and played very well at Pitt and he kept playing two or three or four games, and we kind of all looked at each other and said he gets it.

But why I thought he got it, he kept having success, but his preparation never changed. His approach, his process never changed, and that happens with a lot of guys. To me when you have

adversity as a player you don't play as well, sometimes you go work harder. To me what really reveals a player in my opinion is when they have success and you have high success and everyone is patting you on the back and doing this and doing that. How do you react? Do you get away from your preparation, do you get away from all the little things and he never did that. And you know that third, fourth, fifth game, you see him having success and everyone patting him on the back, but at the same time he's right back up there on Sunday watching film. He's right back up there on Monday and at 8:30 he's knocking on my door and wants to know when I'm watching him with the staff and he's already watched practice. Today, these three things I did wrong, right? I need to work on this.

That never changed, so to me that's when I really knew because his power of preparation and understanding how important it was to prepare never changed.

**Q. This week a lot of people have talked about strength of schedules for the unbeatens, you and Ohio State, a lot has been made about that versus a one-loss SEC team. What do you say to people who question an unbeaten team's strength of schedule at this point?**

COACH FISHER: Well, I know in the ACC we have 11 teams bowl eligible. I don't know if anybody else has that, so I would say our strength of schedule is pretty good by playing in this conference. We have 11 teams going to go to bowl games, and that has a lot of non-conference games involved in that, so to me it talks about the ACC, and I think our conference has to take a backseat to nobody. I think we have great players, we have great coaches, we have a great commissioner, we're organized well, we're run well. I think it's a tremendous organization. From our standpoint, and I'll tell you, you go undefeated or you don't lose a game -- we all turn things for our own individual needs. It's very funny. When we have a loss, we've got the greatest schedule in the world. When we're undefeated, we're undefeated, it shouldn't matter. It's all perception about how we want to spin things for our individualism of how we want things. That's for everybody else to debate. We're right where we're at. We're going to control what we can control and hopefully play well tomorrow.

**Q. You mentioned why Jameis didn't look distracted these last three weeks, but why? He had some of his more accurate games the whole season the last three weeks?**

COACH FISHER: Because when it's time to play football, when it's time to go to school, he compartmentalizes and handles his responsibilities. Like I told him the other day, I think he handled things extremely well, and I think it's a true trademark to him because he did not let his individual situation affect his team, and to me that's what a man does. Just like when people have issues in life and you're the head of the family. You're sick, something is going wrong, but you have a family counting on you every day. I always tell our kids, you want to be treated like a man, act like a man. Let the boy inside you die if you let the man come out, and I think he understands that he had a responsibility to his team, that they worked very hard, and that was his responsibility to be their quarterback and be their leader, and he handled his individual situation on his own time, his own merits, and I think he did a great job of understanding and compartmentalizing those things.

**Q. When you talked about Jameis going and watching practice and then coming to you and telling you what he did wrong, is that normal? Have you had other quarterbacks that do that?**

COACH FISHER: I've had a few.

**Q. But not many?**

COACH FISHER: You don't have them to that extent. You don't have many that are driven and that are -- being talented is a gift. Having a great attitude and being driven is a choice. And I think that's what he does. He's making good choices about what he wants to be and who he wants to be, and he understands that he is taking the God-given talent he has and pushing it as far as he can, and I think he respects the great players of this game, and he understands how hard they had to work to be in those positions, and I think he respects that and he respects the game enough to know that.

When you start to get bigger in this game as a coach or a player, it'll bite you hard. The game has been around a long time.

**Q. Your team has its eye on the prize**

**no doubt. How do you keep them focused on this game? You're here in Charlotte for the ACC Championship, a big game this week?**

COACH FISHER: That's the next step we have to take. And to win your own conference championship, if you can't get focused on that, we have an issue. We've been able to focus one game at a time, and like I said, what we can control is the only thing we can control is this week, how we play, how we prepare and that's how we compartmentalize that and do it and handle it and stay true to our process, and we've done it all year. I don't expect us to change now.

**Q. Has Jameis ever mentioned the Heisman to you? Has it ever come up?**

COACH FISHER: Not one time. Not one time.

**Q. Talk about the running backs, how they're doing.**

COACH FISHER: I'm extremely happy. We have depth. Devonta Freeman, who made all conference, has been -- I said from the beginning of camp, from the two-a-day camp on he's been tremendous, from the first practice, he's had a great year. James Wilder, who got banged up early in the year, played hurt a lot this year and has really gotten healthy now, is playing extremely well, big and physical. Carlos Williams, I think the sky's the limit for, the guy has moved over and I think is a home run hitter, speed, power, hands. This guy, if he continues -- I think has a tremendous future in the game in Ryan Green, and then Chad Abram is kind of like an unsung hero on our football team. Chad has done a great job at fullback, I think he'll play in the league, I think he'll get a shot somewhere. He's got tremendous hands, blocks well, so those guys have been a -- and not self -- you talk about unselfish, all those tailbacks, coach, how many carries? Not once has anybody asked for carries, and when one guy is on the field running the other two are the biggest cheerleaders on the sidelines you got for those guys. You watch them on the side. They don't care. Our team has a motto. They don't care who makes it. We don't care. They don't care who makes it. Whoever is in there makes it, just so our team makes it, and that's what they go about. They're each other's biggest cheerleaders and they help and support each other all the time and they have been a tremendous, tremendous group and a fun group to coach.

**Q. Your team hasn't been in very many close games late. How do you go about preparing them for what could possibly be in practices leading up to that?**

COACH FISHER: We prepare against our defense every day and we play each game and we handle each moment. We put them in pressure situations and how they handle that, and every game is 0-0, so I'd say it's pretty close when it starts. I'd say that's a pretty close game, about as close as you can get, when they start.

**Q. Is this team personally ahead of schedule where you thought it would be at this point?**

COACH FISHER: No, I don't ever try to put parameters on a team because a team -- here's what I'd say. This team only has a one-year life expectancy, so they'd better hurry up. That's the only amount of time that a team is together. Each team's life expectancy is one year. That's why it has to develop its chemistry, its own identity, its own personality. This team did that very early, had some tremendous leaders and carried on, and it believed as one all the way through. I think every team has to have an urgency to develop that. You can't be ahead of schedule. You've only got a one-year life expectancy, you'd better go quick.

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