

December 7, 2013



Florida State – 45
Duke – 7

An Interview With:

**COACH JIMBO FISHER
JAMEIS WINSTON
TELVIN SMITH
LAMARCUS JOYNER**

COACH FISHER: First I'd like to say hats off to Duke. They had a tremendous season, and they played a great game today. They were a great opponent. They gave us a lot of problems. We were able to overcome some things early and then continue to play well and got control of the game the second half. My hats off, David did a tremendous job.

Very happy for our team, our university. This championship means a lot to us. This is where we want to be every year and we have to get here to keep achieving and going to BCS games and the other games in which we want to get to, but the ultimate goal is to always win your conference and I think this conference is a great conference. We have 11 bowl teams this year eligible so the competition has been wonderful.

Been challenged in a lot of different ways, but I'm very proud of this team. We lost 11 seniors last year that got drafted or 11 players that got drafted, 14 guys that signed contracts, but to me it shows a testament to our assistant coaches, how the new group, the six guys who came in with the guys that stayed and how they got these guys ready to play and how the senior leadership of this football team grasped the new guys and what we're trying to believe in, and we're developing a culture and a program that develops consistency, and hopefully we can continue to win consistently. Very proud of those senior leaders and our

assistant coaches, I think they did tremendous job this year.

Just excited, again, I loved the way we competed in the game. I thought we played very hard. I thought we made mistakes, but sometimes that happens in championship games and we had to overcome. We kept going to the next play and the adversity we had we dealt with and moved on, and we need to play well and we made the plays we needed to make to win the game.

Very happy for these guys, very proud of our team and very proud of these assistant coaches.

Q. In some ways are you glad that it's probably going to be Auburn that you're going to face, having an SEC champion?

COACH FISHER: It honestly didn't matter to me who it was. I just wanted to win this game and play. Ohio State has a tremendous program and great history. Auburn does, too. I've coached there, I know them, either one of them, but I'm just glad that Florida State is there.

Q. Talk about the first half. What happened in the first quarter? Everything didn't look like it was working very well.

COACH FISHER: Well, it wasn't. We missed a couple throws. We had a deep ball we could have hit. We just had 80 -- we were just a fraction off, just had some balls go off the fingertips, a ball underthrown here and there. And that's football. You're not always playing your "A" game. I thought our defense was the key to the night and I thought they played tremendous and kept things in check and then the offense got going and got really hot and made the plays. We had a fumble. Uncharacteristically we had a fumble in the red zone down on the second drive of the game at about the 2 or 5-yard line, somewhere way down in there, and Devonta Freeman, who never fumbles the ball, it was the first on he's had all year. That's ball. Sometimes you have to overcome those things and you've got to move them behind you, and I thought we did.

Q. You guys were held scoreless there in the first quarter. Was it something that Duke's defense was doing right or something that you didn't like from your offense?

COACH FISHER: Both. I thought they played very well and played very hard and like I said, we had a fumble on the 2. We had a dropped ball. We had an underthrow. Just things -- they stay sometimes the ball don't go in the cup or don't go in the basket every now and then. That's why defense to me is the key. You've got to be always great on defense, and offense we've been tremendous all year and then we had a game at Boston College where the defense slipped and the offense picked it up, played for them. This year early we weren't playing as well on offense. On the other side of the ball, the defense did a tremendous job and then the offense caught up. That's team ball, and that's the way you have to play.

And that's why I think this team is a good team, because it's a complete team.

Q. In the second quarter I think it was 7-0, Lamarcus makes that great interception.

COACH FISHER: Right, after that great punt return.

Q. Talk about what that did for you guys?

COACH FISHER: Well, I think it changed momentum. Lamarcus' interception changed the momentum and got it back for us and it allowed us to go back down and score a touchdown, and then we had the two-minute drive right before half which we've done all year. One or two games all year we haven't done that. But that play by the defense to change the momentum by Lamarcus, it was a great play by a great player.

Q. Coach, when you took this job, is this what you imagined, or did you imagine more?

COACH FISHER: No, this is what I imagined. We always imagine more. We haven't gone to where we want to go yet. But what I love about what we're doing right now, we're becoming a program. I've always said that teams come and go. Programs sustain the test of time. Like I said, we had 11 guys drafted last year, 14 guys signed pro contracts, we're able to come back with the senior leadership sitting right here beside me and some young guys that incorporate in the program

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and our assistant coaches and that's what we want. We want to be a program, not a team, we want to be a program, and that's always our goal at Florida State.

Q. Jimbo, is your quarterback the best player in the country?

COACH FISHER: I'm going to say this: If he isn't, it's a short roll call, I'll promise you that, but he's one of them. He's a very dynamic player. He's fun to coach. What I love about him, you see his emotions. You see his competitive fire about him. But that guy is so smart and makes plays and even though he wasn't on his "A" game today he was able to come back, but to me he's a tremendous, tremendous player.

Q. Two straight championships now I think 18-1 in the league the last two years. What does that mean, just the championships and sort of building on that?

COACH FISHER: Well, it's consistency. It's legacy. It's what this group is leaving behind to the next group, a standard of the way you do things, and that's what I'm interested about, how you conduct yourself, how you carry yourself and how you represent the organization, that's what these seniors and the past seniors, the group before that left did also, and that's what I'm extremely proud of because now those young guys, they know what to do. There's a blueprint there. Keep doing that.

It's my hats off to these guys right here to my left.

Q. Can you take us through a little bit about what happened on Kelvin Benjamin's long touchdown there? It looked like there was some spacing that was a little odd.

COACH FISHER: No, that was what we called a dog route, and that's the push. We're going to push that angle on that safety, and we have the shot underneath, and if that safety sinks at all, we're going to drive it in the hole, and if he comes down, we're going straight directly over his head and we want to try and put two of them right there and split them like a scissors route right there in the middle. He made great read, the safety turned his hips out, he drove it in the hole and of course KB finishes like KB does.

Q. Lamarcus, being a Florida kid and

growing up there, you probably grew up watching some of those Florida State teams in the 90s. What does it mean to add to that and get back to the National Championship game?

LAMARCUS JOYNER: I mean, it means a lot. This program has been down for a while and Coach Fisher came in here and did a pretty great job of recruiting and rebuilding this program, and just to be a part of something special, to be able to bring this program back, watching this program when I was a young child, and to be a part of it and be a part of something special, there's no better feeling right now.

Q. Could you both talk about what you envisioned at the end of last year? Could you have envisioned this? And now what this will mean as you guys leave having left this as your final season?

TELVIN SMITH: We did envision this after last season because we felt like we felt a lot out there on the table. We felt like it was so much that we were supposed to accomplish that we came back and we had a little -- not a vendetta like coach said, it was just a reckoning. We tried to put ourselves back to where we were supposed to be. I hope that answers it.

LAMARCUS JOYNER: I said that at the beginning of the season, it was about us. If you look at the progress that we made over the years, Chick-Fil-A Bowl, Champs Sports Bowl, Orange Bowl, we kept getting better, we kept climbing the ladder, and that's what I envisioned to do, coming back as a senior leader to keep climbing that ladder.

COACH FISHER: I'm going to say this about these seniors. I've never been around a group of kids who played selfless. Actually, we have the same play. They don't care who makes it just as long as somebody makes it and they're the happiest in the world. This group of guys plays for each other, and as hard for each other as any group I've ever been around.

Q. Kelvin, why do you think you guys never had a letdown throughout the year, just bombarded everyone you played?

TELVIN SMITH: Our attitude. You know, that's what it starts with, our attitude. We came out and we said we've got one job to do, and that's win. Whatever happens we're going to win. Whatever it takes, believing in the man next to you. Love is the reason for the fight. That's what we've been going by all season. Our attitude.

Q. A lot has been made about your offense, you have a Heisman caliber quarterback but your defense has been great all season. What's the confidence level of this defense going up to play the No. 2 team in the country?

LAMARCUS JOYNER: I wouldn't say it's necessarily the confidence of this defense. I'll just say the power of preparation, the way we prepare week in and week out. That's where our confidence comes from. So when the game comes, it's easy.

Tonight is over. Tonight is done. We have to just do the little things that we've been doing all season, and by the time we're in California and ready to play in that National Championship, then I'll be able to say that we're confident. But it's all about the power of preparation and what we do throughout this week and the weeks that come to prepare for this game.

Q. Given what Jameis has been through over the last few weeks, what have you seen from him and what did you see from him tonight that tells you what he's made of?

LAMARCUS JOYNER: Everyone has a point in time when they're to be a leader. He has the natural ability to be a leader, and for a guy, especially to be a young guy, of this organization, to already have so much pressure and stress on him, and then to add on to the negativity and the way he embraced it and kept fighting for us, because he could have easily went into a tank, to keep all that weight on his shoulders and step up like a grown man just because of his brothers, he's a special young man, and he deserves everything that he gets.

TELVIN SMITH: Just maturity. You saw a kid mature over a season, and that's crazy like Joyner said, a young guy stepping into the role full of seniors. We're leaders ourselves, but like he said, he's rightfully a leader in his own right. All it did was give him a little more confidence just because he seen that everyone wants it and that made him go harder, not for himself but for this team, like Joyner said.

Q. Can you talk about how physical it was out there? There were a lot of big hits. Probably a lot of people are going to be sore tomorrow.



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TELVIN SMITH: We like to say it's a physical game because we make it that way. We like to go out there, force our will upon them. So that's what we try to go out there and do. We did get a few hits there which got under our skin a little bit, but we move on to the next play, and like I said, we forced our will upon them.

Q. Coach, this game was very physical from start to finish, a lot of big hits. Can you talk about the physicality both teams brought to the table?

COACH FISHER: Well, you have two teams: We're 12-0 and they're 10-2. Let me tell you something, no matter how much you throw the ball, how this game spreads, they put pads and a helmet on for a reason. I know one thing at Florida State, we're going to butt you in the mouth and we're going to be able to butt you right in the throat and be able to play football. You've got to. You can throw it and be skilled, but you got to be physical and you got to be nasty. You got to play the game clean, but this is a man's game and you have to be that way and we like to practice that way and we like to play that way and Duke did, too. My hat's off. They had some great hits, clean hits. Unfortunately they had the one at the end. I don't think the guy did it on purpose, it's just -- that's ball. The guy made a hit. That's football and the way things go, but they didn't get to this championship by being soft. They were a very physical team. If you're going to be a championship team, you cannot be soft.

Q. On the same lines I asked Telvin, how special is it or rare is it to have a team that really doesn't have a week off, a game off, and just kind of pummels everyone?

COACH FISHER: I'm blessed in two reasons. I love to go to work and go to my staff room, because I love the coaches I coach with. I love to go to practice and go in that team room and go on that field because of these guys right here. This group right here, whatever I ask them to do, whatever I say, and sometimes I say it not in a good way, they understand that, but they know we love them and they know I care for them, because we're trying to coach the player they can be, not the one they are. This group understands that we've learned lessons, but this leadership group up here, that's why. They don't allow it and there's other guys in this group, too, now, there's a whole another group of guys that does the same thing. But this group is a tremendously fun group to

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coach, and it's a fun group -- it's even more fun off the field. They're actually funny, believe it or not.

Q. You're going to be playing an SEC team for the national title. They've won seven straight national titles in that league. Some people say you've built your program like an SEC program. Any truth to that?

COACH FISHER: I built our program like I thought we needed to build it to win a championship. We don't model ourselves after nobody. We're Florida State, we do things the way we do them and the way I think you have to play to win a championship and the kind of team you have to have to win a championship. That's the way I think we tried to build this team.

Q. Jameis, what was the Duke defense doing in that first quarter that was able to keep you in check?

JAMEIS WINSTON: We beat ourselves the first quarter.

Q. You've got a month off coming up now. What do you have to do to keep yourselves going because everything is clicking perfectly right now?

COACH FISHER: That's the unique thing about bowl games. We've had a philosophy where I've been, we've had a lot of bowl success here the last three years. We have a routine and a plan and I've got some guys that have been through this before that I'll talk to and try to get some notes and take some ideas from and how to go about this. But that's the unique thing about college football. You play the season and then it's a one-game schedule. We'll regroup next week, let's these kids get back to school, let them heal up a little bit, and then we'll get to conditioning and we'll get to practice and give them a schedule and handle it that way.

We've had a pretty successful run in our bowls games where I've been and what we've done here, so we've got a pretty good thing. I'll talk to a couple folks that have been in this game and know how to handle it.

Q. Today you set a few ACC records including a season passing record. I know it's not about individual stats here and you guys still have a lot to play for, but what does it mean to get your name in the record books?

JAMEIS WINSTON: It means a lot, but as a teammate and having the guys right here beside me, our team is trying to make history, we're not trying to look at individual stats and things like that. We're trying to do something so much bigger than this, and then obviously the defense put us in a predicament for us to break all those records because defense wins championships, and they definitely won this game for us today.

Q. Jameis, can you talk about your emotions this week and culminating tonight, what that meant to you to be able to end the week like this and win the championship?

JAMEIS WINSTON: Well, this whole week it was very high emotion because we wanted to win this championship so bad, and we talked to the guys because we ain't won a championship like as a team, like we ain't won the championship in so long, like individual, like undefeated championship. That hasn't happened in a long time, so we were looking forward to having an undefeated season, and it really wasn't about the game, it was about how we went out there and prepared and how we fought and how bad did we want to win this.

Q. Coach, looking at the opening portions of the game, you mentioned you guys were just a little bit off, I little bit overthrowing --

COACH FISHER: But Duke was playing good defense. They were in position to make plays.

Q. Of course. Given what's happened over the course of the last week, there will be at least some people that maybe deduce that that may have had something to do with what Jameis has been through recently. What do you feel about the struggles that were had? And Jameis, how important was it for you to be able to bounce back from whatever it was that had you a little bit off and make some plays?

COACH FISHER: I mean, I don't think it had any -- he's been under things for the last couple weeks and he's played well, but that's ball. Sometimes you're on and sometimes you're off. I think his mental focus has been really good. Like I said, Duke made some good plays, but that's the mark of a good player. I like to measure players when they don't have their "A" game, when everything -- anybody can play when you're on, but when you're just a hair off and things aren't going just right, to me that's where you find the greatness

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of players who can recover, bounce back, make the adjustments and then go make the plays and not let it bother them. The thing about him that I'm the most proud of, he wants to make plays not because he wants to make them for himself, he wants to make them for the guys around him, and that's the way he plays.

JAMEIS WINSTON: I'll speak for myself that I came into the game very over-hyped. I haven't been that hyped for a game since probably the Miami game, which I threw two interceptions in. When you come into a game like that with high intensity and just wanting to do it so bad, just wanting to do the best you can so bad, and then like you said, it's not an individual thing because we got a victory, so at the end of the day, if I had a bad performance, it doesn't matter. We're still ACC champions, and nobody can take that back.

Q. Jimbo, you've spoken about your level of affection for this class. It was the first class you recruited as a head coach. This is your last game with them, your last few weeks of practice. Is there part of you that's going to focus on that?

COACH FISHER: Can't afford to focus on that right now. This group will be with me forever, just like a lot of our players. I love my players. And to me that's what the key is. It's not about making them win games, it's about making them grow. If they grow as people then they grow as athletes.

But this group is a very special group. Lamaricus Joiner, when he committed to me; when Telvin drove me nuts on signing day and he had to pull over in the doggone -- what was it, Burger King parking lot, and I had to talk him back into coming back to us. He was with us; he left us. I remember all those things.

But I knew this was a special group of guys and always will be to me. These guys are very special, and they -- like I say, the things I wanted to put in this program, they took and put in this program. They were the ones who put it in there. All I can say is do it. They reinforced those values and the trust which we had in each other and were tremendous. This is a very, very special group, and when it's all over, I might be a little sad.

Q. Could you talk about continuing the legacy of Bobby or at least getting to this point?

COACH FISHER: Well, you know, everyone asks me how are you going to replace Coach Bowden. I said, I won't. There's only one Coach Bowden. There's only one man that walked that sideline, the winningest coach in college football history, and the integrity he did it with, he was my hero. I learned a lot of things from Coach Bowden.

But to me Coach Bowden put some things in place that allowed us to -- we had slid a little bit, but he put things in place with the history and the tradition to be able to rebuild and refocus and be able to bring that back to Florida State, and I'm very proud of that, again, for our players, our fans and everybody else. But also that Coach Bowden, the legacy he left that we're trying to carry that on. Like I tell these guys, they've got to leave a legacy to the players behind them. Coach Bowden left a legacy to us as coaches, and that's our job.

Q. 15 years ago you were a 33-year-old quarterbacks coach at Auburn about to lose your job. What are your emotions about playing Auburn, and did you know anything about the BCS in 1998?

COACH FISHER: We knew a little bit. That first year we were undefeated. I always tell Florida State this: We should have had half of that National Championship in '93. We were the only undefeated team in the country. We were undefeated. But that was great years at Auburn. I enjoyed my years at Auburn, I really did. I was 27 years old when I went there. I was a quarterback coach and got to coach some great players and great people, and that's part of this business. You move on in where you go, and we're looking forward to whoever we play, and it looks like we probably will be playing them.

It'll be a great opportunity. I know a lot of those folks, and as I said, that was where I cut my teeth in Division I football.

Q. Jameis, can you just talk about how good you feel right now compared to the way you felt Wednesday during practice or whatever when you had all that pressure on you going through the week, and now that it's all over and you've got an ACC crown?

JAMEIS WINSTON: Oh, it's a blessing, man, because I think my teammates were more relieved than what I was because it meant a lot not only to me but a lot to them. Of course it was a process, but we've got to keep moving forward. As

a team-wise, we have got a main goal, and our main goal is getting that National Championship.

Q. Florida State didn't get a lot of hype at the beginning of the year. Was there a turning point in the season when you felt like you were the best team in the country, or did you feel like you were going to be in this position at the beginning of the year?

JAMEIS WINSTON: Yeah, the turning point was the spring, the spring football when we started, and we knew we were going to have a special year ever since then, and then it just -- I can speak for all of us. I think it really just carried on because most people think of Florida State, this team always lacks -- this team is sort of say villains, but we're out there working just as hard as everybody else, and in my opinion we've got the hardest practices in the whole country. I don't really agree with we were overlooked or something like that. I just think that people were waiting to feel our presence. People were waiting for Florida State to do what we're doing right now.

TELVIN SMITH: Yeah, people are always going to doubt us or have a feeling of upset or something. But that's why we have that chip on our shoulder. That's why we play the way we do, and that just drives us, that feeds us, and that's what it did the whole season, it just fed us, and now we're here going to the big one.

LAMARCUS JOYNER: It just goes back to spring training, fourth quarter drills. I mean, training together and all, just seeing the nation doubt us and being able to come to practice and work every day and look Telvin and Jameis and Coach Fisher in the eye and say I love you, Coach; I love you, Jameis; I love you, Telvin. And then you go find yourself telling someone you love them every day, then you just build a brotherhood, and we started believing in each other. That's when I felt that we was the best team in the country, and I said that early on at the ACC kickoff that it didn't matter what people said about us or think about us, it was all about what we felt about and thought about each other.

Q. Jameis, you mentioned in this game and also in the Miami game that you had come out a little bit over-hyped. Obviously moving into the National Championship game, that's the kind of environment that obviously will be very hyped, as well. What do you think are

some steps that you can take to make sure that you come into that game really under control and not over-hyped like what you were talking about just a little bit earlier?

JAMEIS WINSTON: Poise and leadership. I learn from my mistakes. Obviously I've got to get better in that aspect because I am young and of course I get hyped and try to get the team into it, but I've got to have poise, I've got to have more leadership where I don't have to be the loud guy all the time. That's what we've got Telvin for. But obviously I've got to achieve more, I've got to keep getting better, and that's one thing about being a quarterback; you're going to have days like that. You're going to throw some picks, and then like I'm not trying to have an excuse because Coach Fisher always says, we don't got pockets in football pants, so that's probably a little excuse about the Miami game, but obviously I've got to prepare more and just get better. I'm just glad we did it.

Q. This sort of is very similar to what the gentleman just asked, but is there anything specifically that you think or do with yourself that makes you center yourself out when you're that over-hyped?

JAMEIS WINSTON: I mean, Coach Fisher, he puts me in my place. He puts me in my place.

Q. For example?

JAMEIS WINSTON: I mean, I can't really -- he does it in so many ways. He's like a father. Sometimes a father got to beat you, sometimes a father got to yell at you, and sometimes a father has just got to cope you.

Q. Can you explain all the emotions you've had over the last few weeks and how much of a burden was lifted over the last 72 hours with the win and the result?

JAMEIS WINSTON: I don't feel it was a burden because actually the football field is our sanctuary, so every time I stepped on the field, every time we step on that field, everything outside of us, everything that happened our side of our family is just zoned out because that's what we did in the Syracuse game when everything came up, we took the initiative as a team, like hey, let's focus, let's get this done, let's make it happen. It was a process because we knew that we had one goal set on our mind, and right now we -- we haven't reached that goal yet, but we're headed there.

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Q. When you play Auburn you'll be playing a team from the SEC, a conference that's won the last seven BCS titles. As college players do you view that conference as kind of the standard bearer yourself and what would it mean to be the team that possibly ends that streak?

LAMARCUS JOYNER: In my honest opinion I feel like it's not the ACC conference versus the SEC conference. It's Florida State versus Auburn. It's a bunch of great, talented group of kids over here versus a great, talented group of kids. It's all about eliminating the clutter. There's no doubt in my mind that they're a great football team, but it's us versus them. We don't really look at it from that standpoint because at the end of the day you've got to line up and play in between the white lines for 60 minutes.

TELVIN SMITH: I always like the core we always talk about, but we say a team has no face. So when we say that, we're not looking at them and saying, oh, they're Auburn, or we're not looking at them saying, oh, they come from the SEC or whoever it may be. We got out there and compete against ourselves. They're a good team, like Joyner said, so we're going to go out there and prepare for a great game, a great team.

JAMEIS WINSTON: We've got the utmost respect for everybody that we play. But at the end of the day, like Joyner said, we're Florida State and they're University of Auburn. Me being from Alabama, I'm going to be excited to play this game. Coach Fisher coached in Alabama, I'm going to be excited to play this game, and there's a man that me and Coach Fisher both love on that coaching staff, his name is Dameyune Craig. We're not going to get involved in all this SEC/ACC stuff because we done made it to where we are and we're not done yet. We fear no one. Our opponent has no face, so we don't care.

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