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An Interview With:

DABO SWINNEY CLEMSON

COACH SWINNEY: Good to be back with y'all this week. Just a lot of excitement in the air, huge challenge this week for us. You know, this has been one of those games that I know a lot of people have been looking forward to for really the whole season and it's just, again, for us, it's the biggest game of the year, just like every week.

But this is easily the biggest challenge that we've had with that type of philosophy. These guys, it's a great football team, and as I said in my press conference here, very well could be the best team in the country, who knows. Very talented offense, defense, kicker is having a great year and quarterback is playing at an incredible level.

You know, it's a division game so there's just a lot to learn and two Top-5 teams, I think that's a special opportunity for both teams to be a part of a game like that, and defensively, very impressed with their personnel. They are explosive and balanced, special teams have dangerous returners and they hurt us in that area last year so it was a big difference in that game.

Overall, again, just our most complete challenge that we are going to have here and we are going to have to play a great ballgame but looking forward to it and continue our week of preparation.

Q. If you had one word to describe the way your defense is playing right now, what would it be and why?

COACH SWINNEY: Consistent. They are playing very consistent for us. We have had five straight games now that we have been stingy with points.

We have been holding opponents to 14 or less in these five games, that has not happened since 1989 or 1990, so just being very consistent, much more consistent with our execution, and

we've still got some things that we have got to improve upon, but that's the biggest thing.

Last year at this time, we were very inconsistent from an execution standpoint and just doing all the little things that we needed to do. But that's been the biggest improvement. Guys are where they are supposed to be and have a good feel playing with high energy and we are just much more experienced on that side of the ball than we've been in a while.

Q. In terms of the Coaches Poll, are you in favor of the BCS only making one-third of the standings?

COACH SWINNEY: I could really care less about all that stuff, because I don't have any control over that. I think the Coaches Poll is good. All those formulas and how they figure out all that stuff, I don't waste two seconds trying to put any energy into that.

All I know is if we win our games, then good things happen, and I can live with whatever the results are. Just that's the only focus I've got is just trying to win games.

Q. For the coaches that do the poll, how much thought and time do you think they put into the poll?

COACH SWINNEY: Well, I'm one of them. I try to take pride in it. I've got a good feel for teams, especially the early part of the year, I don't think anybody really knows, but I try to keep up with it.

You know, I'll take some time Saturday night and really kind of study a little bit and see who did what from my previous week's poll, and I do it. Been doing it now for the last couple years, so I try to take some pride in it, but I can't speak for everybody else.

Q. Florida State has always been a big game for your program but what does it mean to be now hosting a game where both teams are ranked so high?



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COACH SWINNEY: It's great. These are the type of games that you want to be a part of, whether you're a player or a coach. You want to be at the highest level and be in the game.

So it's a lot of fun to be a part of it, and you know, this is our fourth Top-10 match up in our last nine games, including we played three in a row at one stretch.

So our guys understand what comes with this type of matchup and the stage that you get. It's fun. It's exciting. You know, every week for us, again, is the biggest game of the year but some are just a little more special. You don't get an opportunity to have this type of match up every single week.

Some games you've got a little more room for error. This is one of them where you don't have much room, very, very small margin for error. But again, that's what makes college football great, and it's great for our conference. We're sitting here with three undefeated Top-10 teams.

I think we are the only league out there that's got three undefeated teams, and to have two of them have to match up, and not only match up and play, but be in the same division, I think it's great.

I don't have any doubt that regardless of the outcome of this game, Clemson and Florida State are going to be very much in the picture the rest of the year. This is two really good football teams that are going to do everything they can to win this game and have a hard-fought game, I'm sure.

Q. As you've gone higher and higher, over the years, was Florida State, given all the success they have had in the ACC and nationally, were they the kind of program that you've looked up to a little bit?

COACH SWINNEY: Well, I know when I came to Clemson when I first got here in 2003, Florida State was just kind of the standard at that time. When they were joining the league, they had quite a run going there under Coach Bowden. They had, I don't know, 13, 14, 15 years or so of winning ten-plus games and certainly one of the best teams in the country and a couple national championships to go along with it.

They certainly were kind of the standard. But Clemson has a great tradition, as well. We've won more ACC titles than anybody, Florida State is second. So two great, traditional teams within this conference and also nationally.

It's good for Clemson to be back where we want to be as a program and that's being one of those top teams every year that's consistently competing at a high level and consistently in the mix. You know, you get a little luck, catch a break here or there, you have that special year.

But we want to be one of those teams that year-in, year-out, Clemson comes to everybody's mind. Our brand is out there, and when people sit down to write out their Top-10, Top-15, we are one of those teams that should be there, along with Florida State.

Q. You talked a little about Tajh Boyd yesterday and the effect he's had on your program. Can you talk about what he's meant to the program and the lasting effect a guy like that can have on your team, even when he's gone?

COACH SWINNEY: He's part of the bricks and mortar around here. He and I came in here together. I mean, we started together. '09 was his first season, my first full season; he redshirted that year.

My big thing with him was I've got this job and here's the vision for the program. I didn't really have a track record at the time as a head coach obviously and I was like, you know what I need a quarterback, somebody I can build this thing around.

He trusted me and he came here, and like I said, he's been a part of all the bricks and mortar that's taken place. And we've really built a great foundation over the last four years, a great foundation that can sustain consistent success; so that when Tajh Boyd is no longer here, we can continue to do well.

It's been a great journey to watch that young man come in here and have the type of career that he's had, grow into the man that he is and just embrace being the starting quarterback at Clemson like he has. He's been such a great ambassador, and his impact and legacy will last a long, long time here at Clemson university. There's no doubt about that. We're very proud of him.

Q. You have three games in the Top-10, I think four in the Top-16; is this all indicative of the ACC making a move nationally? Do you feel this is a game-changing season so far where you guys can really take off and

strengthen yourself as a conference?

COACH SWINNEY: Well, that's what we've been needing as far as from a national standpoint. Listen, our league has been good, and there's been a lot of good football played. It's just been very – there's been a lot of parity. We haven't produced a dominant team, the 12-0, 13-1, whatever, 11-1 type team like some other conferences have always had one or two teams that have at the end of the year been there.

So, it's good, because we need -- at the end of the year, we need to have a couple of teams vying for the BCS bids. This is the type of conference that it is. And again, it's good to see us starting to develop some of those teams that have separated a little bit, but it's a long way to go and have to be consistent with that.

But proud of our conference and what's going on and hopefully at the end of the year, we'll have a couple teams playing in those BCS Bowls, because that's the type of recognition that you want for your conference.

JIMBO FISHER FLORIDA STATE

COACH FISHER: Excited to be back and playing this week. Just came off the bye week. Thought we got a lot of things accomplished and improved fundamentally. Got some work on done some things we needed to improve. Having great preparation for Clemson this week and looking forward to an outstanding football game.

Like I say, this is an important game for both schools. It has been for a while with the Atlantic Division and for the ACC in general and also nationally. We are very excited to play in this game, looking forward to competing in the game and also know Clemson has a great ballclub, very well talented and well-coached and should be an outstanding contest and definitely going to have our A Game to come out of there with a victory. But looking forward to the opportunity to see what happens.

Q. You didn't play a lot of up-tempo against Maryland, but how much did you practice up-tempo and how much do you think it will help you against Clemson?

COACH FISHER: I think it definitely will help because a lot more people are doing that but again Clemson does it so well that it's still more

difficult. But we practice against it every day. We went against it on our scout teams and rapid pace and all those things, simulate. But still getting out there in game time action and making those calls, it definitely helped and should prepare us for that.

Q. In terms of the Coaches Poll, are you in favor of the BCS only making one-third of the standings?

COACH FISHER: I think it's very important, I do. I think we take it very seriously and I think it's a very critical part of being part of the standings, I really do.

Q. Florida State has the two primary in-state rivals, but I'm wondering with the kind of games you're playing against each other now and the stakes, what has the Clemson series become to Florida State?

COACH FISHER: I think it's become a rivalry, because it's a very important Atlantic Division contest, I mean, there's no doubt. It is a rivalry because of the importance and how good both teams are. Like I say, you have a rivalry, it's usually when both teams are very competitive and both teams have success and it will decide something, and this has definitely become that in my opinion.

Q. In this kind of game, two Top-5 teams, obviously the kind of game that Florida State has played in quite a bit over the years under Coach Bowden, what does it mean for the program to be back playing these kind of games now regularly?

COACH FISHER: I think it's very important. I think last year, I think we were both Top-10 also I think when us and Clemson played; one was 4, one was 9.

I think it's a sign that both of us are establishing ourselves back in national prominence again, and it's great for our kids to experience that; and the more times we're in those situations, I think the more successful we have a chance of being.

Q. You have a top-five game, and three teams in league in the Top-10; is this the type of scenario playing out that can really help the ACC and propel you to a different level?

COACH FISHER: Now we are getting the national recognition and the teams, we won some

important games and I think it is very critical and I think it's great for the ACC. It brings awareness to it and I think the rest of the country will be able to see what kind of quality football is played in the ACC.

Q. Curious what you see from the defensive line and how you feel you match up with them up front.

COACH FISHER: I think it will be a very tough match up. I think we have a very good offensive line but I think they have a very good defensive line. I think Vick and Crawford and all those guys, they are deep. They play a lot of guys. They rotate a lot of guys.

I think they are a very physical football team, and very dominant. They lead the country in sacks. You don't be able to do that without being able to create a lot of pressure and have a lot of talent and be very well-coached.

Q. What do you see that's made them so much better defensively this year?

COACH FISHER: I think they are older. They are more mature. I think they are comfortable in their scheme.

I think a lot of things, just like us offensively and defensively as we are growing through the year, I think guys have been in the system longer and they understand it. I think that allows, as you understand something better, it allows your talent to come out and you play much faster, and I think that's what's happening with them.

Q. Our secondary with (Lamaricus) Joyner against Boyd, do you think that's one of the great matchups for this weekend?

COACH FISHER: Oh, yeah, I think it is. I think everybody has to be able to cover everybody. We'll use people in different matchups during the game depending on situations and what we do and we'll make some multiple coverages; we have to. Because if you don't, Tajh will just eat you alive because he makes so many good reads and the receivers know what is going on.

So it will be a very critical matchup, there's no doubt and we'll have our hands full.

Q. How difficult is it for the visiting people to play in Death Valley, because it's noisy when you watch it on TV, how do you prepare for that?

COACH FISHER: We do regular crowd noise like we would for any other game. You have to learn to be mentally tough, and it is a very tough environment, it's a great atmosphere. And that's one of the advantages of playing a home game, just like Doak Campbell is when people come here.

I think it is very critical. I think to understand to be a great team, you have to play well on the road and you have to handle those situations, so I think it's something that is in an athlete's mind and repertoire that he has to understand and deal with that and most of them do.

Q. How is Winston's practice this week? Is he mentally ready to go for this big game?

COACH FISHER: I hope so. He's practiced well and he's practiced like he has all the other weeks. He seems very relaxed and focused on what he has to do as far as his execution and it's been a normal week of practice.

RANDY EDSALL MARYLAND

COACH EDSALL: Well, we have to get a lot better this week. We have to make sure that we don't have turnovers like we did last week and limit our offense in terms of the number of possessions we have; and know that we are going to be playing a well-coached, very disciplined Wake Forest football team that's riding high right now coming off their victory over NC State.

So we look forward to the opportunity to go down there and work to try to get another win.

Q. Talk about your place kicker, he's from down under, talk about his development over the couple years.

COACH EDSALL: Well, Brad Craddock came here from Australia and was more of a punter. He did both but he was probably more of a punter than a place kicker.

We had a need for a place kicker and he's worked very, very hard. All the credit goes to Brad for how hard he's worked and what he's developed

into so far. Just been very pleased with his progress from a year ago to this year. He's really striking the ball very well.

He's kicking with a lot of confidence, and you know, hopefully that will continue. But you know, he's a great kid to be around and just very, very happy for how he's performed so far.

Q. And how is the update on C.J. (Brown), is he ready to go this week heading into Wake Forest?

COACH EDSALL: C.J. was cleared. He was cleared on Sunday. He practiced on Sunday. He practiced yesterday and did everything. Had two good practices. He's ready to go and he'll take all the snaps.

Q. Talk about Wake Forest, what did you see on film on their offensive line and offense?

COACH EDSALL: I think offensively, you know, Tanner Price is an outstanding quarterback, and I'm very impressed with Michael Campanaro in terms of what he can do there offensively. He's just an outstanding receiver and a punt returner, and their offensive line is really coming together and really gelling as the season goes on.

So, again, it's going to be a tremendous opportunity for our defense to go against them and to do everything that we can to limit what they do.

Q. In terms of the Coaches Poll, are you in favor of the BCS only making one-third of the standings?

COACH EDSALL: I'm not -- I'm not really in favor of polls. I think it just should be what people do based on what they do on the field and strength of schedule and who they are playing.

So you know, to me, I think what happens is, is when you get into polls with number of people voting, you get bias; whether it's conference bias, people might rank somebody in their conference a little bit higher. I don't think you get really the true data that you need.

So I think you need to have independent people, which is what they are doing, and let them put the decisions in their hands, because they are all quality people and they are people that have the best interests of the sport and the criteria that they are looking at.

So, you know, that -- I like what they are going to have is just to have that committee and let them do it and take the raw data of watching film

and doing those sort of things and coming up with the teams that deserve to be there.

Q. How much time do you think coaches put into the poll?

COACH EDSALL: Excuse me?

Q. How much time and thought do you think the coaches really put into the poll, into doing the poll?

COACH EDSALL: Well, I used to vote on it, and I know that I didn't have enough time to do it. And then I decided that I didn't have the time, because I can't see everybody else play. I can't do a fair evaluation. I have got too much to do with my own team.

I just don't think -- we as coaches can't evaluate all 119 teams to see who deserves and who doesn't deserve and all that. You've got enough work to do with your own team to be able to determine who is better 1 through 25, in my opinion.

Q. Considering all you guys have been through the last two years, how much would it mean to you to become bowl-eligible here in mid-October on the road?

COACH EDSALL: We are not -- we are just focused on trying to get win No. 6. And again, we are just going to evaluate the whole season in totality.

And again, alls we are trying to do is win each game that we play and after you win them, you put them in the bank and at the end of the season, let's see where we're at and hopefully if we do what we are capable of doing, then we'll be able to achieve the goals that we have set for ourselves.

Q. Campanaro has caught 16 passes in one game, 12 in another. Can you talk just a little about the various ways, schemes and things they use, to get him open, and how do you scheme defensively to try to contain that?

COACH EDSALL: Jim and his coaches are outstanding coaches and they do a good job, and they have designed ways to get him the ball in a lot of different areas are short, intermediate, deep, lined up into the boundary, lined to the field, motioning, all those things.

So, again, they make it difficult on you, but there's things that you just have to know and then

there's sometimes they put him in places where he's a decoy, as well.

What you've got to do is just put together a game plan that you think is going to give you the best opportunity to neutralize him and Tanner Price.

Q. And sometimes when you pay so much attention to him, they have got a couple of other receivers who can slip past you deep, too, don't they?

COACH EDSALL: They do. Orville Reynolds and John Armstrong, different guys, yeah. They have got ways to get guys there. So again, it presents a tremendous challenge for us.

SCOTT SHAFER SYRACUSE

COACH SHAFER: Looking forward to heading down to Georgia Tech. It will be a great opportunity for our kids to get down to Atlanta, a great venue, and give us our best shot to go after a well-coached Georgia Tech team. With that, any questions.

Q. Your ability to run the ball has been evident the last two weeks or so, is that the best defense against these guys, control the clock and continue to keep that up?

COACH SHAFER: To some degree I think it is. You know, Coach Johnson does a great job.

And you're not going to get as many shots on offense as you do against a lot of teams because they do a good job of controlling the football. You're looking at 60, at best maybe 70 plays in the game.

If we can move the ball, regardless whether it's rushing or throwing the ball, but continue to have good drives and keep them off the field, it's definitely a big part of the success in this type of a game.

Q. On the flip side, what's your evaluation of the passing game been?

COACH SHAFER: Ours or theirs?

Q. Yours.

COACH SHAFER: I think that we have struggled a little bit the last couple weeks.

You know, obviously Clemson did a great job, very talented team. They covered us up pretty

good. And then last week, we missed a couple opportunities here and there, and we were running the ball well.

So it's a combination of things, but I think we need to continue to ramp up our passing game. I think Terrel (Hunt) is a work-in-progress from week-to-week. But he's shown signs of steady improvement and we just need to keep going.

Q. Do you get too concerned about becoming too one-dimensional or is it one of those things where you're like, look, we are running for over 300 yards a game, that's our game plan, that's our fine.

COACH SHAFER: Well, you have to be multiple this day and age. I'm sure Coach Johnson will have a good plan to try to stop the run.

A big part of that is adjusting to the elements throughout the course of the game. If people take one thing away, you have to exploit the other, so you want to try to create some balance and that will be key as we progress forward, not just in this game but for the rest of the season.

Q. I was wondering how the process is going of kind of getting people at Syracuse, fans, alumni, things like that, to think ACC, rather than Big East or something like that. And does a week like this, where Clemson and Florida State have the spotlight, Miami is in a Thursday night game, can that help speed up the process to kind of imprint the ACC on the Syracuse fan?

COACH SHAFER: Well, I think first off, we have a great fan base. People up in central New York do a lot of things. We have a highly-educated group of people up here that lives in this community, and they are multi-dimensional.

But they have been great to us. We had a great showing of support at the Clemson game, and, you know, for our fans, the biggest thing is, trying to put a good product on the field that they can be appreciative of and say it's ours and they own it. And that's the goal here.

And then outside of that, and then it goes back to controlling the things that we can control on a daily basis, and that's the way we play on the football field, so the focus point starts there.

The second part of it would be the excitement of being in such a great conference, and I think each year and each game we play, as

the fans become more and more familiar with the brand of football in the ACC, I think it will continue to ramp itself up to the point where, you know, our fans are anxiously excited about each week that we play, as well as we get into all the other sports.

I know basketball, we had such a great run in the Big East, and what a great conference it was in the basketball court. But now I look at some of the matchups that Coach Boeheim will be going into, and I know as a fan living here in central New York myself, I'm excited to see our boys go up against Duke and North Carolina and work up-and-down the Eastern seaboard.

So I think it's an exciting time to be part of a great conference.

Q. Can you use this week maybe to, will it help in recruiting? Can it help to say, look, this is what the ACC is doing, and you can be a part of it at Syracuse?

COACH SHAFER: I think every game is that, once again, as we move up and down the coast.

But Georgia, especially for us, we have some good Georgia football players. We have some young kids that are playing well from Georgia and have great futures ahead of them. But for us to go down there and compete in that environment, it will definitely help the recruiting.

Q. Paul Johnson was saying yesterday that he was not able to find any games where either you or -- had played an option team like his; is that actually the case?

COACH SHAFER: I've been so many places in so many years. We've played option teams back when I was at Northern Illinois. Coach Grobe was the head coach at Ohio University and they did a great job of running the option and all the different things that you can do out of it.

But I haven't had an opportunity to coach against a team at the level that Coach Johnson has his kids. I've always admired Coach Johnson and the job he's done, everywhere he's been, especially at Georgia Tech.

You know, he's as smart a coach as there is out there, and you know, we have a great challenge upon us. We won't know until we get on that football field Saturday whether or not we have a good plan, and the key is execution. It will be a hell of a challenge for us.

Q. Did you kind of basically take the same game plan that you had back then, or did you really kind of start over?

COACH SHAFER: No, that was enough years back that there will be changes made and that sort of thing and I wouldn't want to put anything out there in Atlanta about what we're doing, anyway.

Q. With this process, I'm guessing you looked at a lot of Georgia Tech film and other teams that they have played and talked to people that have played against them to get a sense of -- to know how to best teach this week?

COACH SHAFER: Yeah, you take all the different people that have played them and you try to figure out the best way to go about it. You take pieces and parts, but the most important thing is what fits your personnel group, your kids, and gives them the best chance to be successful against a well-coached Paul Johnson team.

Q. When did you actually start this process of trying to formulate a plan? Was it in the spring?

COACH SHAFER: Yeah, it was probably a couple weeks after I got hired. I started going through teams we were going to play, and obviously that one was really important because you had to think outside of your comfort zone, outside of the box and take a look at a very unique offense and a group of coaches that really know what they are doing under Coach Johnson.

So early on we started looking at it and started talking to people that have defended it or run it in similar ways and try to come up with ideas that fit the personnel that we have on our team.

Q. Working on a future story about Cameron Lynch; do you have a good Cameron Lynch story you can share with me?

COACH SHAFER: Oh, boy, I don't know. Not necessarily one that jumps out at me right now. I think the world of Cameron. He's a very good student. He plays really hard. He's been extremely productive this year, and I've been proud of the way he's worked since the day he got here.

He's always been strong. We inherited a kid that knew how to move weights in the weight room before he even got here and Coach Hicks has done a nice job of ramping up his ability to get

stronger and faster every year he's been here.

But he's an excellent team player and he's got a great personality. He's fun to coach.

Q. Your two runners, (Jerome) Smith and (Prince-Tyson) Gulley, how are they similar, how are they different, and do you try to -- how do you determine the number of touches each one of them will get in a game?

COACH SHAFER: You know, we feel like -- well, to answer the first part of the question, they are both very similar when it comes to their vision. They both have very good vision. The difference between the two is Jerome is a big, strong back, a little bit faster than people realize. He's physical, north/south.

Whereas when you go to Prince, Prince has the ability to put his foot in the grass and cut it back on you quickly, as well as bounce it. He's a little bit more of a scat-back, but he's developed into a good inside the tackle runner, as well. So both have great vision. One is a little bit bigger, stronger than the other. But I've been pleased with the way both of them have played.

But I think it's a good combination because it starts off with the similarities, the vision side of it, and running the different types of tracks that we ask them to run. They can see it and take it front side or back side with similar abilities, the difference being just the jump cut type of thing that Tyson can put on tape.

But just pleased that both of the kids and their performance thus far in the season and look forward to continuing forward.

Q. And do you go into a game thinking, well, I'd like to see a certain number of touches for Smith, a certain number of touches for Gulley, or do you just sort of do that by feel affording to how the game goes?

COACH SHAFER: Yeah, it's more how the game goes. We want both of them touching the ball a bunch, but depending on the game plan and depending on the defensive game plan against us, some of those things can change as we go, and you're always in that position to adjust to the elements as we move through the game, first quarter, second quarter.

And sometimes the game will be such that one guy has more touches than the other by coincidence. It just kind of depends on the flow of the game and how it's going. But both those guys have the ability to get a hot hand, fast. So we want to give them both an equal opportunity to do so.

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JIM GROBE WAKE FOREST

COACH GROBE: We are excited to be back with a week getting ready to play. We had an open date this past weekend and I think that was probably good for us.

It gave us a chance to -- we didn't have a lot of major injuries, but I think some of our guys were bumped and bruised pretty good, so gave us a week to catch up on some of those things. Mentally, it was nice to have a weekend to be off, so it's exciting for us to get started again. We have a really good team in Maryland coming to town.

Q. How much different do you think Maryland is with C.J. Brown in the lineup, what does he bring?

COACH GROBE: Well, I think both quarterbacks, C.J. and Caleb (Rowe), both throw the ball really, really well and they have a great group of receivers to throw to.

But I think the difference, obviously C.J. is a little bit more of a runner and they like to get him carrying the football more, but I think from a scheme standpoint, we are preparing for all the things they do, and your thought process would be depending on which one is in, one is going to run the ball probably a little bit more than the other.

Q. Last time you guys were out, it seemed like your offense finally got clicking a little bit. What was the difference for you guys in that game?

COACH GROBE: Well, I think we played with a little bit more energy. I thought we kind of bounced around a little bit better. I think we have found a couple things that have been good to us. I think we are kind of settling in. We probably asked Tanner to do too many things early in the season and some things that he wasn't real comfortable with.

So I think we're starting to get a beat more on where our guys fit the best and we'll see going forward if that continues to be the case. But I thought, you know, probably more from anything else, Tanner played better.

Q. In this day and age of these up-tempo offenses, how difficult is it to build a dominant offense in college?

COACH GROBE: Well, I think the key, all the up-tempo offenses are different. It's kind of funny. Some press you so fast that you can hardly get lined up and others kind of call themselves up-tempo, but basically they are checking at the line of scrimmage at the sideline to figure out what play they want to run based on the way you line up defensively.

So there are a lot of offenses that call themselves up-tempo, but I think the decision to go up-tempo is probably determined more by your personnel, whether you can move the ball and score a lot of points. You really don't want to be an up-tempo offense if you don't have the right personnel because you're a quick three-and-out and putting yourselves right back on the field.

So I think probably personnel is the key to being up-tempo and having the kind of personnel that can score points and move the football pretty effectively.

Q. I know you guys are worried about your game this week, but how big a week is this for the ACC, with the Clemson/Florida State game, Miami playing on Thursday night? And for a league that's taken a lot of shots over the years for its football, is it gratifying that the league is getting some positive attention for the sport?

COACH GROBE: Well, I think so. I think the key is that we've got a couple teams ranked in the Top-5, and Miami is really pressing right now being undefeated. They are a heck of a football team. I think the thing that we've lacked the past few years are teams that are really getting in the conversation as far as the National Championship is concerned.

So I think having three teams that are being looked at right now as teams that might make a run at it certainly give the ACC more credibility. I've always felt like the ACC, top to bottom, is a great league and tough every week. Every week is a tough out. You've got to play to win, and that's all the teams from top to bottom.

But this year I think having two or three marquis teams that are taking the lead has been really good for us.

Q. Can you use that out on the recruiting trail when you say, hey, look, what the ACC is doing and you can be a part of it if you come to Wake Forest.

COACH GROBE: I think when kids are looking at schools, one of the things they want to look at the school -- and of course from our standpoint, we are looking for kids that are not only looking for playing football at the BCS level but academically; being at a school like Wake Forest with a great academic tradition.

But I think that a lot of kids tie the conference to who they want to be recruited by, and there are a lot of kids that may not be offered by a Clemson or a Florida State, but they want to play in the ACC. And certainly the more attention that we get, especially nationally, helps recruiting -- not really for much maybe Wake Forest, it's more national recruiting schools. You know, we are more of a regional school. But I think the more attention the ACC gets, the better it is for everybody in recruiting.

Q. Talk about the wide receiver (Stefon Diggs) for Maryland. What do you have to do to stop him on Saturday?

COACH GROBE: Well, I think stop the other guys. You know Diggs is going to catch some balls. He's a big-play guy and he gets everybody's attention. Got our attention last year, actually caught a ball at the end of the game that beat us in the stretch in the fourth quarter.

So we know he's a dangerous player but the Long kid is a really, really good player. They have got two big-play guys in (Deon) Long and Diggs. But the other guys we've seen, they have a ton of people that have caught balls. I think the problem is if you just try to focus on Stefon Diggs, you're making a mistake because there are so many other guys that can hurt you.

Q. Talk about Coach Edsall, what kind of coach is he? He's getting the program up and running and they are having the best season so far under him; do you see any similarities when you first came to Wake Forest like he's doing right now?

COACH GROBE: Well, we've gone against Randy, not only at Maryland but when he was at Connecticut. Always had battles with him. Always felt like they were one of the best coached teamed that we've played.

So I think that is kind of a hallmark with Randy Edsall's program. He's got a well-coached team. I think that's what happened, Maryland, we have always felt like is a very talented football team. They have always had good talent but I think the kids are starting to fit into his system and I think they are comfortable with it.

It's amazing, when you've had kids in your system for two or three years, all the calls that you're making that they have heard over and over and over become almost second nature. We like to think that when our players are kind of bored with what we are doing offensively or defensively, that we have got it taught pretty good.

I think you're just seeing a Randy Edsall football team right now where the past couple years, they have been picking up his system, and that's what I think you're seeing right now is just a more experienced group that are comfortable with what he wants them to do and they are just playing great football right now.

Q. How do you get yourselves ready for C.J. Brown, who is a mobile quarterback, in the pocket, and he can move around even if he has nobody to throw to?

COACH GROBE: Yeah, it's a problem. We have some quarterbacks in our league, Tajh Boyd is that way and there are some other quarterbacks that can beat with you their feet and with their arm. It's an issue. You're trying to figure out ways to have the right coverages and have the right pressures up front.

But then you've got to figure out, okay, where are our rush lanes and where is C.J. Brown going to be, because he is dangerous when you cover everybody as when you leave somebody open.

That's the problem with a guy like C.J. Brown is he throws the ball so well, but when you do a great job covering him, your job is just halfway finished because when he takes off and runs with the football, he's so dangerous.

PAUL JOHNSON GEORGIA TECH

COACH JOHNSON: Good morning. We are excited to be back home after two long road trips. We've got -- I've been really impressed watching the Syracuse team on tape. This is the first time I really had a chance to watch them.

Since they changed quarterbacks about three games go, they have become a very good football team. They protect ball. I think they ran for over 300 yards the last two games, rushed the ball extremely well.

The quarterback is very mobile, and defensively, we've got a good linebacking core, a couple of guys up front on defense that are really good players, and they are playing well right now.

So this will be a tough game for us on Saturday.

Q. I know the competition has gotten tougher in the last couple weeks, three losses, but is there any other common denominator that you've picked out on film that's giving you guys trouble?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, we have been our worst enemy. When you go back, you start with the Virginia Tech game, certainly they played very well on defense but we had six or seven motion penalties and just put ourselves behind the 8-ball and turned the ball over.

And the same thing, you go to Miami, it's a one-point game, we miss the extra point with five minutes to go. Could have been a tie game and then we just self-destruct and turn the ball over, penalties. And really more of the same at BYU in the fourth quarter.

The biggest thing we have got to do is not beat ourselves, and that would at least give us a chance and get started with the penalties and the turnovers and giving up the big plays defensively. And we've got off to some horrendous starts defensively, as well, so we need to start the game better.

But as you said, the competition has been pretty good. The last three games, we've played some really good teams and I think we've got a good team coming in this week, too.

Q. Is there anything that you guys do as a coaching staff or say to make sure that things don't go unraveled there?

COACH JOHNSON: No, I don't think things are going unraveled. I think that's for you guys to talk about. We've probably had the best practice we've had all year yesterday. We didn't have class; we're on fall break, and the guys were flying around. Yeah, I'm not worried about that. We just need to play well and win a game.

Q. WHAT does the film show you about their one, two running punch, how those guys are similar or different, and what they present for your defense?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, I think that they are a good combination. They have got a guy who is a bigger, more physical guy, and then a guy who has got great quicks and speed. They are both physical backs, but the one guy is listed at 220, 225, and he looks bigger than that on tape. Plays much bigger. And then the other guy is more of a -- catch-you-in-the-seam and crease you and bounce around. He's a little quicker, not quite as big.

But I think you have to give their offensive line credit. And the other guy that's really I think helped them a bunch is their quarterback. He keeps plays alive. He doesn't take -- hard to sack him. He pulls that thing down really quick and takes off with it. So it's hard to give him negative plays.

Q. One player who at least statistically seemed to play well at BYU, Adam Gotsis as nose tackle, he had four tackles, a couple of sacks. How has he come on for you this season?

COACH JOHNSON: I think Adam's playing well. This is his second year playing. He's from Australia. He's a good athlete.

Our defense played very well in the second half at BYU. The first half was not too sporty but the second half we played very well defensively. We've done that a couple of times where -- what we have got to do is play 60 minutes.

But Adam has got good ability. I think he's learning the game and he's played very well for us.

Q. I thought there are a couple of Australian kickers in the league. I didn't know there was a defensive lineman. How much teaching have you had to do with him? How much knowledge did he really have of playing the game when he came in?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, he played last year as a true freshman, and he had some knowledge. But clearly, the more he plays, the better he gets with his hands and understanding and all that.

But, you know, I think the speed of the game slowed down for him a little bit after having played a year. I think he would be the first to tell

you, last year, the thing was going a hundred miles an hour.

LARRY FEDORA NORTH CAROLINA

COACH FEDORA: We are extremely excited about playing in Chapel Hill on a Thursday night in front of the entire country against a great Miami team. And so we are busily preparing for it and really looking forward to this game tomorrow night.

Q. With all of the high-scoring offenses, up-tempo offenses today, is it more difficult to recruit and build a dominant defense right now in college football?

COACH FEDORA: Well, you know, I think as you look at the landscape across the country, obviously scoring offense has gone up over the past probably five to seven years tremendously.

So I think what it is, it's changed the way defenses are trying to play; and also, it has changed the type of players that you have to recruit defensively. You're going to probably try to go with more speed and athleticism than just pure size on defense because you get some of these big guys that are put out in space, and they get exploited.

So, you know, it definitely I think is more difficult, but I do think that it's -- the game is always evolving, and one side is always a little bit ahead of the other, and eventually the other side catches up and then the other side changes again.

Q. I think Miami has something like 23 plays that have gone 25 yards or more this year. What's the biggest key trying to limit some of those big plays Miami likes to make?

COACH FEDORA: Well, you've got to stop the run. That's where it starts. You're going to have to stop the run, or they are going to crush you with the run the entire game. And then they are going to take their chances and hit you over the top. And that's what they make a living with is the big plays.

So we've got to make sure we keep the ball in front of us, but at the same time, you've got to get up there and you're going to have to have safeties involved in the box to be able to stop the run. And so our safeties are going to do a great

job with their eyes and their reads and we are going to have to play flawless.

Q. With the buzz that's surrounding the ACC this week, between your game with Miami and the Clemson/Florida State game, can this attention and the attention it's going to draw the rest of the year, should these teams continue to compete well, can it help everyone in the ACC down the road?

COACH FEDORA: I don't think there's any doubt about it. I said at the beginning of the season that the ACC was in the best shape it's ever been as far as strength from top to bottom and it just going to get better.

There's no doubt, we've talked about being recognized and getting respect nationally and to do that, you have to do the things that are going on in the ACC right now.

And so if we continue to do those things as a conference, then we will earn that respect.

Q. Will North Carolina be able to kind of build on that respect individually? Can you get your recruits, can you get players, people that you are recruiting to say, you can be a part of it, and you can do that here at North Carolina.

COACH FEDORA: You'd better believe we can. I mean, we have got so much to sell here in Chapel Hill at the University of North Carolina; all of that positive buzz around the ACC only adds to what we have to offer.

Q. You're expecting Bryn Renner to be ready to go?

COACH FEDORA: I am. He's had a really good week of practice. He's moved around great. Has not talked much about any pain. He gets treatment every day and he's doing the things that he's supposed to do and he's practicing the way he is; I expect him to get out there and do a great job.

Q. Would you like to get Marquise some snaps or would that just depend on how the game goes?

COACH FEDORA: No, we plan on -- Marquise will definitely play in the game. I mean, he's going to be part of the game plan in various ways, and so, yeah, we anticipate Marquise playing tomorrow for sure.

Q. With the spotlight so bright on Florida State/Clemson, Miami is the third unbeaten team in the ACC. What makes them an unbeaten team to this point in the season?

COACH FEDORA: Well, one, you know, they have got a lot of returning starters from last year's team and they had a good, solid team last year. I think they were young on defense. They made quite a few mistakes last year and now these guys have grown up on defense.

Now, they are not making those mistakes. They are in position to make plays and they are making the plays when the opportunity arises.

Offensively, they have improved tremendously in my opinion and the offensive line, and you know, they still got the running back, the quarterback, the receivers that can fly. So what's made them who they are this year I think is just the improvement in the offensive line alone.

Q. Back to the defensive question again, you mentioned about having to recruit different type of players, is there particular positions that are hardest to kind of find the type players that you need to compete against these up-tempo offenses now on defense?

COACH FEDORA: I think what it has done is enabled some more tweeners to get on the field. That guy, that linebacker that's 6-foot, that's 215, 220 pounds is finding a way to get on the field, you know, in your nickel packages, your dime packages, all those kind of things, as teams are spreading you out.

Where in the past, if a team played just straight pro-style, played in a box, you wanted that guy to be a 6-2, 6-3, 230-, 240-pound linebacker, so those tweeners had a hard time getting on the field. Now those guys are athletic enough to match up with receivers or tight ends that are flexed out, so that enables them to get on the field.

Q. Fair to say that a lot of folks in and out of the program expected more to the start of the season. From your perspective, what's been the problem? What happened to you guys so far?

COACH FEDORA: You know, it's a multitude of things. You're right, none of us are satisfied with where we're at and disappointed with where we're at right now. I do think that we are getting better. We just haven't found a way to get over that hump and win the football game lately.

We've made too many mistakes in really all three phases of the game. You look at the number of penalties we've had, we've had three straight games where we've had a touchdown called back for a penalty. We haven't consistently run the football on offense, and if we are not able to do that, that's going to make it very difficult for us.

We've got to be able to run the football, to have some success on that side of the ball. And defensively, we've just given up too many big plays at inopportune times.

Q. These things, when you kind of reflected during the bye week and got back to work, that are correctible in time to get back on track?

COACH FEDORA: They are all correctible, no doubt about it. I mean, they are all correctible, and we still have a lot of season to play. And we are playing with some kids that are growing and learning as they go.

But yeah, we have got a lot of season to play. I'm far from believing this thing is over with. I mean, we've got a lot of work to do, but really, our focus is just on being 1-0 this week. If we get over the hump and do the things we need to do, then we get ready for the next one.

But the focus, really, has been more on how we improve and what we need to improve as a football team. It's been disappointing that we have not had a game changing play in our special teams. We've had some called back, but we haven't had any that we have put together and that's been disappointing because of the amount of emphasis that we put on it.

Q. I know it was a small sample, but T.J. Logan did get some touches for you, curious as to how you evaluated him and if he figures to work more into your running back rotation.

COACH FEDORA: It was great to get him out there in the game and get him some touches and get him back into the flow. I still don't think his legs are completely under him. I don't think he looked totally comfortable running the football or doing anything out there really the other day. The only way that's going to happen is to put him out there.

I kind of compare that, you know, watching early in the preseason and watching him in games, and he looked like he was the same speed as everybody else out there and you watch him now

in a game, and he looks like he's faster than other guys. And I think that's going to come for T.J. You know, he's still learning and -- he missed six weeks because of that injury. I mean, he wasn't out there for six weeks. Wasn't repping. He's way behind. He's going to catch up quick.

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An Interview With:

PAUL CHRYST PITT

PAUL CHRYST: Well, it's been good to get back on the practice field and have an opportunity to bounce back after last week's loss. But looking forward to playing Saturday night and certainly got a lot of respect when you watch the film of Old Dominion and what they do. A good team last year in the playoffs, and so we've got to make sure that we clean up some of the things that have been problems the last couple weeks. But it's good to be back on the field and getting ready for Saturday's game.

Q. Just wondering how do you guys get your run game back on track.

PAUL CHRYST: We've got to run the ball better (laughing). You know, I thought we had -- certainly we've got to get it back. I think that when you look at the last two weeks, we haven't run the ball like we'd have liked to, and I think there's some things, just as you look as it, we can do some things I think schematically to help our players a little bit and then I think how we play the game.

And just last week was tough to run the ball when you're that far behind the chains. So we've got to avoid the lost yardage plays certainly, and then we've just got to keep working at it and help the guys get better at it.

Q. On the other side of the ball, Aaron (Donald) obviously has gotten off to a terrific start to this season, a mid-season All-American a bunch of different places. What is he doing this year that's made him better and more productive than a year ago?

PAUL CHRYST: You know, I think he certainly was a really good player last year, but I think he's also, like you want all your players, he's

found ways to just keep trying to elevate his game. I think he's a year further in just his preparation and knowing what people do. He's kind of stayed who he is. I don't feel like he's redefined himself necessarily, but I think some of the little things that he's just getting that much better at.

Q. I was wondering how you felt the transition to the ACC was going in terms of alumni, fans, and the branding issues, and whether you thought maybe a week like this where there's so much attention on the ACC can help Pitt long-term down the road?

PAUL CHRYST: Yeah, you know, I'm probably the worst one to ask, a coach in the middle of a season, how those effects are. So I think I'd be commenting more on kind of the big picture, certainly the excitement and that. But specifically with this week, I don't know if I'd really have a great pulse on it.

Q. When you've looked at the tape of the last couple of games with some of the sacks that y'all have given up, I know a lot of people just like to put it all on the offensive line, but evaluating how much is on them, how much did Tom maybe hold onto to the ball too long, how much was it maybe backs or receivers not making a block they should have?

PAUL CHRYST: Yeah, you know, obviously spent quite a bit of time going back over it, and I'd say that it's almost right down to this, because we looked at not just sacks but pressures and hits, and if you were to assign a number to it, it's almost exactly with the percentage of guys in there other than the receivers. The receivers, I think we had them for the whole season. They've got two on players, but the line has the most accountability to it, but you're also talking about five guys in protection.

Everyone showed up on it, and it's probably -- it was almost equally distributed as far as the number of people in there. But certainly the



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most has been on the line, but that's because you've got five in on every protection, where a lot of them the tight end isn't involved on some.

The good news and the bad news is we're in this one together. We're all to blame and we all can be part of the solution, though.

Q. So what is the solution after looking at some of the tape?

PAUL CHRYST: You know, I think there's a couple things we've got to do. Just technically we've got to make sure that they're understanding on some techniques. We can help them if they get better at this technique, whether it's staying inside or if it's -- the other thing is just knowing when they've got help where their help is coming from, making sure they completely understand it and play accordingly, and then with the quarterback it's understanding where kind of the rhythm of it, the timing of it. I'd say the quarterbacks and the receivers, the ball has got to come out at this point here, and then play calling and schematically this fits this and this doesn't.

I think we just try to look at everything, and there are solutions. Now, whether it's just because we've identified them and are working on them, it's not like we just started that this last week. We've just got to keep helping them grow and get it, and we've got to do everything we can as coaches to help find ways that they can feel good and the bottom line is it gets corrected.

Q. How is Devin (Street) feeling today?

PAUL CHRYST: Saw him earlier today. He says he's better today. That was good.

Q. So he's pretty much getting better every day then since Saturday?

PAUL CHRYST: Better every day.

Q. Old Dominion has a quarterback (Taylor Heinicke) who's completing 75 percent of his passes this year and 70 percent over his career. What's the tape show you about him?

PAUL CHRYST: You know, he's obviously a good quarterback. I like the way he plays the game. I think he's got a good group around him, but he certainly knows what they're trying to do and distributes the ball. He's accurate. When things are -- when it presents itself, he can extend the play and can be dangerous throwing and running with that.

But I think you just look at him and he's playing the position. He looks like he's truly

playing the game. Obviously they've got some good weapons around him, and he gets it to them, but I think when you just watch him, you say, there's a guy quarterbacking. He knows the situations, he competes. I think like anything, when they're doing well and when you mention those numbers, when you complete 75 percent of your passes, I mean, you've got confidence and you're also talented, and you see that on film.

FRANK BEAMER VIRGINIA TECH

FRANK BEAMER: Yeah, we're on an off week, and I think it's really coming at a good time. I think from a get-our-offensive-line-healthy situation, it's good. And then every game we've been in, it's been a grind. I think that takes its toll on you mentally, and I think to have a little time mentally to get away from it and then get caught up on academics and so forth.

I think it's coming at a good time. We're going to get out and practice today, short practice, and then we're going to get out and get recruiting here the next couple days, try to do some things that's real critical for the football program.

Q. I'm just wondering, these days with all of the up-tempo offenses you have to face, how has that changed your approach to defense?

FRANK BEAMER: You know, I think from our standpoint, having several defensive linemen that are capable of playing, I think that's where you really need some folks. But to me it's just something that's there. A lot of teams are doing it. We do it some. We did it a little bit more last year, and I think there's something to it. I think dictating tempo, and I think you get from a substitution standpoint and so forth, there's some very good things that it allows you to do.

The other side of it is I think you need a good defense because if you're in and out, it's how much you want your defense on the field, too, and how much you're going to allow them to be on the field. So there's pluses and minuses both ways.

Q. So is the depth really the biggest thing, that you need more depth going against these type of offenses?

FRANK BEAMER: Yeah, and particularly I think your defensive line. I think where they're pass rushing and -- I think that's where you'd better hope you've got some extra people.

Q. Just curious, obviously last year didn't go the way that you had wanted, but going into this year did you feel you would be back as a top-25 team and pushing for the Coastal again?

FRANK BEAMER: Well, I think we're really fortunate to be where we are. The schedule, we play good teams and we play probably more freshmen and guys that had not played before than at any time in my time here at Virginia Tech. But I do credit -- now, the young guys that are playing are talented, and it's evident by the two freshman corners that we're playing. But I really think we've worked well. I think our coaching staff has done a great job, and the players have done a great job. We've been fortunate, the ball bounced our way in some of the ballgames.

We realize we're fortunate to be where we are, but if we're going to stay there we've got to keep grinding and keep working.

Q. You've heard the last few years the shots that have been taken against ACC football at times. How good or gratifying does it feel to have the spotlight on the ACC this week for positive football?

FRANK BEAMER: Oh, I'll tell you, it's fantastic. I see where it's all access at Clemson and at Florida State, and the fact you put Louisville in there and we've got four teams in, what, the top 10 I think it is, or top 11, top 12, whatever it is.

You know, it's good, but I think -- I've said all along, just give us enough time, and this is going to come around because the coaching is good, the recruiting is good, facilities are improving, and so I don't think there's any question that the ACC is going to hold its own against the competition.

Q. Do you think that this spotlight that you see, and if you guys continue to play well that it can trickle down and help the teams that aren't playing as well in the league because maybe recruits who want to be part of the ACC but can't necessarily be at Virginia Tech or Clemson decide to go to another school in the league?

FRANK BEAMER: Oh, absolutely. I think you hear a lot about the SEC. You hear a lot

about teams within the SEC, but you hear a lot about the SEC, and I think it's the same way here. You're going to hear about teams within the ACC. But I think the whole conference benefits.

I think keeping up with the Joneses or whatever, the competition within makes everyone better, so yeah, I'm all for it.

Q. The ACC has had a number of seasons recently where it's been very, very balanced, a lot of parity, any team can win it. Does that hurt the perception of a conference nationally? Do you need a dominant team to have people take notice of your conference?

FRANK BEAMER: Well, I think if you're going to be talked about on a national level that you've got to have a team or two teams or three teams that's up there in competition for the No. 1 spot. So yeah, I mean, I think competition has always been good, but if you're going to get into the conversation for the national level then definitely you've got to have some people to talk about.

Q. Last year by Virginia Tech standards your defense was probably down a bit. How did you approach this season team-wise as far as building that back to the level that you're used to?

FRANK BEAMER: Well, you know, particularly a couple games last year we had the lead late, took the lead late and lost it, and that's not Virginia Tech. But I think you learn from those experiences. We didn't play great defense early in the year, but as we went along and got more experienced and so forth, we played better at the end of the year.

And then we got a lot of those guys back, and there's just nothing like experience in this game. You've got to have good players, but when you've got experienced good players, that's the ticket. You know, that's what I feel like we've got, and I think we do a good job here of coaching them and putting them in the right position, but you've got to have some talent to make the plays when you put them there.

Q. Overall are you satisfied with the improvement that you've shown there this year?

FRANK BEAMER: Yeah, I mean, we've played well for the most part. You know, I think it's

really been a vital part of our wins. But the other side is you've got to play as a team, and offensively we haven't turned the ball over, we've punted the ball very well. Our field goal production has been good. So you put all those things together, don't turn the ball over, play defense, punt it well and keep field position going your way, and you've got a shot to win. That's been the story of us this year.

MIKE LONDON VIRGINIA

Q. Mike, it seems like you've gotten some more production offensively with yards and points the last few weeks. Do you feel like you guys are getting close to a breakthrough on that side of the ball?

MIKE LONDON: I believe so. You look at the numbers and how they've increased, and you look at -- it goes back to personnel, guys that have been out that are back in. We made a receiver move not too long ago that resulted in the receivers doing a good job blocking downfield, second-level defenders, and the quarterback getting better as a first-time starter. So I think a lot of things are gelling. You want to improve, and that's been the main focus.

Q. You got a big game from your tight end Jake McGee against Maryland. 114 yards, that was the most for any Virginia tight end since 2005. Was that one of the kind of things that just sort of happened during the game? And more than that, did that determine that he might be a valuable weapon for you?

MIKE LONDON: Without a doubt. When you begin the season, you talk about going into the season our playmakers and guys you want to get the ball to, and Jake is one of those guys. You feel you can play him as an on-the-line tight end or a tight end that's off the ball or a tight end in the slot position. When you move him around a little bit. Then you have coverage issues with whether it's a linebacker or safety that's on him.

Jake has done a great job in catching the ball. He's made some phenomenal catches since I've been here and even in the past game. Sometimes the reads dictate that, sometimes -- there was a couple of them that were catch-and-run opportunities, so it wasn't like

sometimes the tight end would run a route and curl up and you're throwing the ball. There were a couple he caught it, got past the defender and continued to run.

As we look at him and look at our receiver situation, we don't have a go-to type receiver, we have receivers by committee, and we spread the ball around, and one of the targets because of the match-ups has been Jake.

Q. Moving to Duke just a bit, they got Anthony Boone back at quarterback last week. He had a really big game. What are the kinds of challenges that he poses to your defense?

MIKE LONDON: Well, he does a great job with the system that Coach Cutcliffe has. He's an older guy that's been in games and has been very productive for them. You know, you can characterize Boone as a guy that runs your offense and perhaps throws, and then of course you have the other young man (Brandon Connette) that comes in and does a great job running the ball. They have a two-headed attack that bodes well for them.

But when you look at how he played this past game, he did an outstanding job. Looks like he's healthy, he's back 100 percent, has an opportunity to play, and I don't know about the other young man, whether his situation is going to be able to play, but they run a system that features misdirection. They have a great receiver in Crowder. He does an outstanding job. So there's a lot of weapons that they have that they utilize in their overall offense.

Q. What's the biggest challenge -- you were so close to winning up in College Park, and from a confidence standpoint what's the toughest part in getting a team back on track for a game in less than a week?

MIKE LONDON: Well, it's all about redirecting your energies and focusing on the task at hand. You can go back and you can look back at what happened and what didn't happen and go back and forth about how you played, the different plays, the 3rd and 21, the goal-line situation, the wide right, and you go back and look at those things and you can wring your hands about them or you can turn and focus your energies on what's ahead, correcting those type of things, knowing that, listen, we're a play away, a play or two away from just having these opportunities be on the plus

side for us.

So our focus and energy has been directed towards a very good Duke football team that's coming in here, and they've had some good wins and they're coming off a game that -- one of their leaders that they lost is back. We're at home, and again, we're improving, and our focus is on getting better to make sure that those close plays become positive plays for us that end up with Ws on the other side.

Q. Where do you feel David Watford is making strides? Do you feel he's turning the corner right now?

MIKE LONDON: Well, I believe that he's making strides in terms of just the overall operation of running the offense; making decisions as far as the ball, being able to discern -- we've had more opportunities for him to run with the ball, use his legs. But he's done a great job of -- just as you watch the final drive and things that have gone on, that he's done a great job of having poise within the pocket, with his teammates, and with how he directs the offense.

It's a maturation process that we see in front of us that's unfolding as the games, as the season goes on, as practices go on. He continues to get better, and that's his thing. He doesn't let the highs get him too high or the lows get him too low. He just wants to get better and he wants to take the team and put them on his back and take the team to victory. You admire that about young men, and as I said, he's one of our leaders, and the guys will follow him wherever he wants to go.

Q. Kevin Parks is having a very fine year for you so far. Two things: One is how did you slip into Salisbury and take him away from North Carolina schools, but second, just the way he's come along during his career there and how he's matured as a player.

MIKE LONDON: You know, Kevin was actually part of the committed class when we were coming in, and we kind of had a chance to maintain the relationship with him, with some of the coaches that were here left over on the staff, particularly Anthony Poindexter, and continue with a lot of the reasons why he wanted to come to Virginia: The academic opportunities, a chance to play, and I think that that was something that just resonated with him and his parents.

You're right, he's done an outstanding job of understanding what's asked for in the running game particularly when you see a little bit of the

pistol effect, when you see some I-back stuff, throwing the ball, coming out of the backfield, so he's done really nice things with his skill set. He's a tough runner. He may not get out and run away from you, although he's had some long runs in his career thus far, but he's very tough, and he's so low to the ground, big legs, and more than anything, he's a great individual, great young man.

Kevin obviously has done a nice job, has a chance to climb up into the Virginia record books before his career is over, and we want him to get better, as well, with the games we have left.

STEVE ADDAZIO BOSTON COLLEGE

STEVE ADDAZIO: Good afternoon. Obviously we came off of an exciting, tough game here down at Clemson last week, where I thought that we played obviously an outstanding football team. I think Clemson is one of the finest teams in the country. I thought our program went down, on the road, and we played really hard. On offense we made some plays. Uncharacteristically we turned the ball over and had a few penalties. I thought on defense we made a lot of plays, we forced some fumbles, we had two 4th down stops. So some positive things happened.

We were very, very disappointed coming out of that without a win but feel like we are still taking steps forward. We've been in quite a gauntlet here with some of the teams that we've played, but I think it's prepared us and made us a better football team. We're working right now real hard on North Carolina, which is a fine team, and obviously getting prepared to play them a week from Saturday. But enjoying this bye week because we're pretty banged up after the type of physical teams we've played and need this rest.

Q. Steve, I think that the physical way that you guys have played this year most notably against Florida State and Clemson has really opened a lot of people's eyes throughout the league. How have you kind of gone about trying to instill that mindset to your players and to get them to play that way?

STEVE ADDAZIO: Well, I just think that that's the history of Boston College, and there's a lot of pride here at Boston College, really a great

desire to get back to being that physical, tough Northeast football program. Coming in here, that was a real important starting point, and I think my job as the head football coach, my staff, the leadership working, on down, is we're going to set the rate for the pack, and that's going to be one of high energy, high octane, tough. Our practices are tough. Everything about the program is going to be tough, and we're going to build that.

And I think the kids have responded really, really well. I think we do play very, very hard, at least we have to this point. We're a physical football team. I think you know when you play us you're in a real football game, and I think we've competed at a very high level, and obviously we're in the process of really learning how to close some of these games out, which is another step for us here right now that we've got to get to.

But that footprint, that culture, that's something that's very important. I think we've done a good job of getting that started.

Q. You mentioned you feel like the gauntlet that you've played has prepared you and made you a better football team. How so?

STEVE ADDAZIO: Well, I mean, each week -- when we played USC, they were one of the top 20 defenses, a very, very talented defensive football team, and we went out there, and I saw the foundation of our offensive and defensive lines because you need to win up front, and I saw that starting, even though it didn't reflect that necessarily in the score obviously. And then moving forward, we played Florida State, which is just a phenomenal football team and a great defense. I thought we did some really good things there.

And then last week we played Clemson, and I think Clemson may be the finest defense to date. They're very, very stout and very good up front on offense. So I thought you saw on both sides of the ball, we're playing some outstanding football teams, two of the top five football teams in America right now, and we're able at this point, staying as healthy as we are right now, which we can't afford not to do, but we're going toe to toe, and I think that makes you better. I think the competition that you play against makes you better.

The thing you don't want to see is a lot of injuries because we don't have that kind of depth. But knock on wood, we lost Mehdi Abdesmad, our top interior defensive lineman, against Florida State, but since then we've been relatively healthy.

I think the competition is making us better. We're playing against fast, physical, big, strong football teams, and I'm hoping the second half of the season that's going to help us.

Q. Since you're the only team in the country that's faced both Clemson and Florida State, I hope you don't mind indulging a question about their match-up this week. How do you see them squaring off against each other? Just sort of evaluate that match-up just a little bit from your experiences playing them this year.

STEVE ADDAZIO: You know, a lot of people have asked me that, not just friends and family. But it's really hard for me to answer that. They're really both two outstanding teams. I mean, absolutely justified in the rankings that they have. No. 3 and No. 5, I mean, they could be No. 1. They're that talented.

They're each a little different maybe, but at the end of the day, they've got two powerful defenses, two explosive quarterbacks and teams that are loaded with playmakers. So I just think you're going to see one of the truly outstanding football games of the season. I think it's great for the ACC to have the quality of teams that we have in here, and now you have two of these teams on a national stage.

I can tell you from my years in the SEC and in the Big 10 and different places I've been that I would put these two teams up against anybody.

Q. In a game like this, is it some little thing that can make a difference? Not necessarily just a turnover or special teams play, but what kinds of things can a game like that turn on?

STEVE ADDAZIO: Yeah, well, I think you're right on the money. Games like these, with these kind of quality opponents, it's going to be field position, it's going to be turnovers. I mean, I'm sure each program is looking at it saying we've got to be able to be great on special teams, we've got to play the field position game, we can't turn the ball over, try to create turnovers on defense, because you're talking about from a talent standpoint, they match up really well, and of course home and away and those kind of atmospheres matter in this kind of game.

But obviously we have a bye week, and

like a lot of people I'll be watching that game. I know it'll be quite a battle.

Q. Just returning to your team and the way that you played this year, and you hung with both those teams well into the late stages of the game, your offensive line has been a strong point for you this year. Who in particular has stood out for you there this year?

STEVE ADDAZIO: Well, our two tackles, Matt Patchan and Ian White, are outstanding players. Our center, Andy Gallik. But really I think the offensive line and the tight ends have just done a great job.

I thought that we've really blocked people, and I thought against this past weekend was the first weekend where we made some plays, but we went against probably just an outstanding defensive front, and our guys really -- we had a harder time getting our run game going. But I would say that those two offensive linemen, those three offensive linemen, have been very, very consistent. They're outstanding. I think our offensive line is as good an offensive line as there is in the country to be honest with you.

DAVID CUTCLIFFE DUKE

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: I think the biggest concern or issue we have just as far as being something a little different for us, it's the seventh game of the year and only our second road game, so we've got to adjust gears quite a bit in that regard and focus ourselves into going and playing an ACC game on the road, which is always a huge challenge. Virginia is a very gifted, talented, big, physical team, which has always been a very difficult match-up for us in that regard. We have to work hard on being a physical team ourselves.

I think we used the open date a week ago prior to Navy. I think it really healed us, got us in a better frame of mind. Certainly I think our frame of mind is good, but after playing an option team, you still get yourself a little beat up. We do have Brandon Connette looks like he's better and back and capable, so that's been good news.

Looking forward to seeing how our team takes this next challenge, and we'll see what happens.

Q. Just from your perspective, wondering if you could say just how impressive it was to see Anthony come back and do what he did last week when he wasn't even expected to play.

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Well, he's a fine youngster, and I'll tell you, he's a very gifted competitor. He's a good athlete, obviously, he's a good football player, but he is such a fierce competitor. He and I have had a conversation about preparing himself as a starter while he was out, mentally and emotionally, and taking the time to go through his routine from a film study. I think he took that seriously and has done a great job of doing that.

So he went into the game mentally prepared and emotionally prepared, and for him to play as well as he did physically was pretty amazing.

Q. How does he make your offense better?

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Well, he really understands our offense. He gets us in the right play exceptionally well. He can run our offense from the line of scrimmage exceptionally well. He is a very accurate passer. He's a good decision maker, and then Anthony is a threat with his feet. He can extend a play, and he just gives us a ton of versatility as an offense.

Q. With all these high-scoring and diverse offenses these days in college football, how difficult is it to develop a dominant defensive squad?

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Well, there's not many of them out there, and we pretty much know -- you see where most of them are.

It starts with having mismatch problems up front. To be a dominant defensive team regardless of scheme, you've got to be able to mismatch people up front, and there's not a lot of those guys available and not a lot of those guys around.

The next thing that you have to have is a lot of speed on the field. There's a lot of open-field tackles that requires a great deal of athleticism, whether it be at linebacker, safety or corner. People that are comfortable with their front can play man-to-man as long as you've got the speed on the field and try to still outnumber people to some degree in the box, but it's hard.

Who would have ever thought -- and I'm not picking on them, it just hit me that night I was up late watching football when Southern Cal ended up giving up 62 points. In my lifetime if somebody would have asked me if I thought University of Southern Cal would ever give up 62 points in a football game, I would have bet no, no way.

And I think the other part of it is to be good on defense you really have to work on developing a mental toughness because you're going to give up plays, and it takes mentally tough people to keep your edge, and you've got to play defense with an edge. And to keep that emotional edge and still give up plays and sometimes big plays is a big challenge.

Q. Obviously we know you as an offensive sort of genius. How much do you tinker and go over to the defensive side to kind of help them adjust and adapt to these various offensive styles?

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: I'm doing it a lot more this year than I ever have. I really spent all of my time in there giving them an offensive coach's perspective, and then more and more thoughts on what has a chance to bother people. I look at all three phases completely on Sunday. I watch every snap of every team offensively that we play, kind of see what their approach is, what their plan is, and see if I can give them some thoughts as to what will cause them problems and what they're actually trying to do and what are the route combinations they're doing and then the run game, et cetera.

It's a new era of football. It's interesting. It's challenging. I think it's fun. I'm enjoying it because of the challenge involved in it. But there's nothing easy about it.

Q. Before your bye week you had consecutive games where you gave up anywhere -- well, two games over 500 yards and then another 469, and then you go against Navy and you stop them with 319, forced a turnover inside your 10-yard line. What was the difference for you defensively in the effort last week?

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Well, we had two weeks to prepare for the option. Our guys, the players and the staff, did a great job of utilizing our time.

But we went right straight to tackling and getting off blocks and did a bunch of fundamental work that we needed to do, and it allowed us to do it, and we did some full-speed work against our

offense because we had to. And we're better than we played against Pitt and Georgia Tech. I can promise you. We intermittently played good in those games. What it came down to was not playing 60 minutes, and that was the other focus.

I thought our coaches did a great job in the challenge that kind of came from me on both sides of the ball is the moment you step foot on the field -- the only way we're going to learn to play 60 minutes is we have to play and practice at a high level. For however much time we have planned on that field, if it's an hour and 50 minutes, if it's 95 minutes, if it's 100 minutes, perform at a high level, and I thought for two weeks we did that as well as we've done it since we've been here, and we've tried to continue that theme this week, because our problems have come in clusters where we just lose that edge. I mentioned it a minute ago, defensively you're going to give up plays. You're going to give up some plays today. But your level of play, your focus, your tackling, your ability to play blocks has to come with an edge, and you can't lose that edge.

I think we've done a good job of that on the practice field and hopefully we can continue that.

Q. You were mentioning the fact that you're on the road for only the second time this year. What kinds of things go into shifting gears for road games, because you've got four of your last six on the road. What kinds of things are different about that?

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Well, you're just not in the same hotel, you're not eating the same foods. You've got to remember, pack this, carry this. Just getting into the routine of road games. We've got a lot of veterans that I think will do that well, but the coaches got to change. You get everything done by Thursday night that you normally may do if you're at home on Friday, and recruiting is so different than it used to be, we only have a certain number of evaluations. Used to be every assistant coach hit the road on Thursday anyway. Well, that's not the case. We have a lot of coaches that stay here and are with the team, almost all of them until we get to open dates or occasionally we have a guy go out local.

It's just different than it used to be, and you kind of find that routine. We played well at Memphis, handled the road well. I expect us to do the same.

But you've got to get back into that groove,

and I kind of like the fact now that we're in it that four of the six are on the road. It'll be a little more normal for us. You just handle the distractions of the stadium and the crowd, and we should handle that fine. I expect a veteran team to not be bothered by that. I certainly hope so.

Q. You just talked about going back to fundamentals with your defense. Do you find recruits these days coming out of high school are less fundamentally sound and knowledgeable about defense than maybe they are offense and that maybe you guys have to teach defense a little bit more now because of that?

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: I think that a lot of coaches, offense sells tickets, and the best players sometimes nowadays want to play offense in high school. We've got defensive players that were offensive players in high school often. You're teaching them some of those things.

I think the fundamentals of the game require some contact, and we're all conscious about how much contact that we have at practice. People have limited circumstances, us included, with spring practice and contact. So I think probably the young men that come out of high school programs, and it's not saying anything negative about any high school program, that they haven't had as much blocking and tackling work as people in years past.

So not only do you want to teach safe technique, you want to teach effective technique. I do think that's a little more challenging today than what it once was.

DAVE DOEREN NC STATE

DAVE DOEREN: Excited to be in our bye week, and working on getting our team healthy and spending quite a bit of time working with our developmental players, the red-shirt guys, and getting our quarterback Brandon Mitchell back with us now, so it's been fun to see him out there for two days throwing the ball around. He's had good energy and good tempo. We had 11 starters that were at one point out of the last two games, so we're hopeful to get several of those guys back here in the next 14-day window before we have to go down to Florida State and play.

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Q. With all these high-scoring, diverse offensive styles out there today in college football, how difficult is it to build a dominant-type defensive team?

DAVE DOEREN: You know, I've never looked at it from that standpoint. I feel like you're still coaching the same things, just in more spaces. I think your packages have to be extremely flexible or you're unsound, and my upbringing is not to do a lot, to do what you do well and be able to adjust. Maybe because of just how I cut my teeth defensively, I don't look at it as that much more different. You're just trying to leverage the ball, tackle and do a lot more things in wide-open spaces. But obviously when the play count goes up, there's a chance if they snap the ball 30 more times they're going to score more points.

3rd down defense is a huge deal, getting your offense the ball back, and I still think time of possession, although some people argue it's not a big stat, it is a big stat if you want to have a good defense. I think that's something that's important.

Q. How much is depth a big factor now with the up-tempo styles that you see?

DAVE DOEREN: Yeah, it's critical. It's critical. You have to have depth, particularly on your defensive line. You have to have depth defensively. You've always tried to recruit depth from a secondary and linebacker standpoint because they're usually the guys that help you on special teams. But from a D-line standpoint you're probably traveling one more tackle and two more ends maybe than you're used to when you're playing a team like that.

Q. Just wondering if you had an update on how Pete Thomas is doing.

DAVE DOEREN: Yeah, Pete is doing better. He was pretty sore the day after the game. Today he said he felt much better. He's just trying to get the swelling out and range of motion back. It's his non-throwing shoulder so it doesn't impact him greatly from a functionality standpoint, it's more just about landing on it. We're trying to make sure he gets as much rest here in the 14 days that we have. I think by next Tuesday he'll feel really good.

But all we've done with him since the game is rehab it just to try to get the swelling out.

Q. You mentioned you guys have been hit hard by injuries. Who do you anticipate being back for you next week?

DAVE DOEREN: Brandon Mitchell will be back. Rashard Smith will be back. We're hopeful that (Darryl) Cato-Bishop will be back at defensive end. (Marquez) Valdes and Matt Dayes are back to 100 percent, and they weren't in the last game but they played. Those things will help us. Joe Thuney will be back. He couldn't play in the second half of last week's game, so we'll have our starting left tackle back again. Those are quite a few for us as far as playmakers and line of scrimmage part of it is very important.

Q. Obviously injuries impact any team, but how hard has it been for you the last couple weeks with so many of your key starters out?

DAVE DOEREN: Yeah, it's been hard. We didn't have a lot of skill when I got hired. We were short in those positions, and we recruited a lot of guys, but they're young. When your key players, for us, our starting left tackle has been out since the second game, and his backup is a guard playing tackle, and then he went out so we're down to our third tackle, played most of the games with Pete at quarterback, and he's doing the best he can, but when you lose your top target at receiver and then your next target at receiver and your two tackles, it's hard.

We still had opportunities to win games, with that being said. It's just like I'm telling my players, when you're in there you've got to make plays, and we've got to make more of them, and it'll help a lot getting some of these guys back that are used to making plays.

Q. With Brandon Mitchell back then, do you anticipate him being ready to go for Florida State? And if he's ready, will he be your starter?

DAVE DOEREN: Yeah, he will be if he's ready. He'll be the starting quarterback.

Q. Is he just now being able to move around pretty well?

DAVE DOEREN: Yeah, he's practiced the last two days and looked really good. We're still not doing everything because we're not out there very long. We've had shorter practices here just trying to get our legs back but still get a head start. But what he's done, he definitely took advantage

mentally of his time off, and he's very crisp and has a lot of bounce to him.

It's looked good, and I know the next 10 days will only help him get even more adjusted and ready to play.

Q. You had a freshman corner, Jack Tocho, who had a pair of interceptions, then he got hurt. What's his status?

DAVE DOEREN: He'll be back, yeah. He separated his shoulder. He's doing a lot better. He'll be fine.

Q. How would you evaluate his first starting performance then?

DAVE DOEREN: I don't think he could do any better. He broke up the first throw and intercepted the next two. The only thing that would have been better is not getting hurt. Jack has done a great job all year in our nickel packages. He starts on every special team. He's a 4.0 student from Independence High School, which is a state championship level program, and we had high expectations, and he's lived up to them.

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