

November 27, 2013



An interview with:

**COACH SCOTT SHAFER
SYRACUSE**

COACH SHAFER: First of all, great to be on. We look forward to another Northeast rivalry matchup, and a new matchup in that it will be an ACC matchup now. I think it's a great new beginning for the ACC conference. You've taken an old rivalry game and going head-to-head against a great football team in Boston College.

With that, any questions.

Q. You talked about that rivalry. Steve Addazio has obviously had some history with Syracuse. He's a fiery guy, likes to pump up his group. Personality-wise there's similarities. What can you say about his coaching style, what you can expect from him?

COACH SHAFER: They're a well-coached football team. He's done a great job over there. I think we both appreciate what this game is, since to some degree we're humbled to be coaching in this game.

It's a game that we've all watched for years and years. It's great to have that matchup back. It's great to know that we'll have that matchup now that we're both back in the ACC.

It's a rivalry game. It's a situation where you feel there's a lot of respect from both sides, both teams, and all the people that have watched these games for so many years up this way.

Q. As far as Terrel Hunt finally got his first touchdown in the ACC, we've talked about him before, but what can you say about his development as this first-year quarterback you've had so far?

COACH SHAFER: I think it's still a work in progress. I think he's done a nice job working hard to get better. But as so many facets are at this point in time in our program, we're trying to just get

better weekly, daily. Terrel has been a good example of that. He works hard at it. He takes coaching.

But still a work in progress. Really leads with his work ethic.

Q. Can you give me an idea of your impression of what Drew Allen has brought to your team this year.

COACH SHAFER: Yes. Drew is a very good, hard-working kid. Loves the game of football. Was looking for an opportunity to try to compete and play.

The thing I've been most proud of with Drew is even though things didn't work out the way I think he had hoped as far as getting the nod as the starter for the whole year, he's been a very good team player, very unselfish young man that's been brought up the right way by just two great parents. Andy and Julie, they're high-character individuals.

Even though there's some sting because it hasn't worked out maybe the way they had hoped, there's a lot of respect for the game that you can see by the way Drew has supported his team, been in a situation to be ready to go when called upon.

Really have appreciated his selfless approach to the game we both love so much.

Q. Scott, you've taken an interest in local high school football and the local kids. Did you get to work with Tyler Rouse kid at Boston College now?

COACH SHAFER: First off, I didn't physically get to work with him in camps. They've done a great job. They have a wonderful coach over there who has been there forever. He's an SU grad, a former player here. I got to know Tyler through the recruiting process.

To be honest with you, fell in love with the kid. The kid is just a great kid from Baldwinsville. He played with Nick. He set records. He's a great player. We just happen to be as deep as deep can

be at runningback. Didn't have the opportunity to offer him.

When he got the chance to get the Boston College offer, he was waiting for someone to give him that chance. I was happy for him, I was very happy for him. He's a good kid. He works hard. He's an impressive player. Couldn't be happier.

He's got to carry the ball a couple times this year for them. I think he's had maybe 17, 18 carries for 60 yards or something like that.

To be honest with you, I'm just happy for him. I really am. He's a great kid. He's from the area here. Like I said, we were just loaded up at runningback. We had some other needs on this team. We had to go out and offer kids at other positions. So that's kind of how that went down in that recruiting.

Q. Coach, I have to ask you. Andre Williams has rushed for 900 yards in the last three games. I think you're 27th in the nation. Can you talk about defending him, the problems he presents.

COACH SHAFER: Sure. It will be a daunting task, a task that we're looking forward to putting in front of us. But Coach Addazio, that offense, has done a great job.

They have a great back in Andre Williams. He is definitely one of the best in the country, one of the best to play the college game. He's going to end up being statistically in that situation where people are going to say, Holy cow, this kid was one of the best. I think there's on 15 or 16 that have more yards in a single season than Andre does this year.

Like I said, it will be a difficult task and a great challenge for our kids to go out there and try to slow him down.

He's going to get his yards. He's a great football player. We just have to play good, sound defense and do a good job leveraging Andre and make those yards hard to come across.

But he's fun to watch on tape until you realize you got to try to defend him. I've been around a lot of great tailbacks over the years. I think about Michael Turner who played for us over at NIU. Michael and Andre are similar: good, strong backs with good breakaway speed.

Couldn't be more impressed with the kid. He sounds like just a great person as well. It will be a great task for us, but one that we're looking forward to as a challenge.

Q. You are the only team in the ACC that still have bowl-eligibility up in the air. How big a factor is that as far as motivation, the one more win getting you into a bowl?

COACH SHAFER: Well, it's big. It really is. That's one of those goals.

When we went into the season, we were picked down in the ACC rankings for this season pre-season. One of our big challenges was to find a way to get to bowl-eligibility.

So here we are. It's great to be playing a game that's meaningful in November. How appropriate that we have our seniors' last game in the Dome against an old northeast rival. What better way to go at it and try to finish the season with reaching that goal.

Q. You alluded to the nature of this rivalry. Is it your hope that the league recognizes that and makes this be a rival game for both teams, meaning the end-of-season finale for both teams?

COACH SHAFER: I'll let my higher-ups make those decisions. I do think it could become something that's really neat. We can really spice up that flavor of the northeast in the ACC by making this one of those games that everybody is looking at.

I know Coach Addazio and his staff would probably feel the same way. We got great respect for the programs up in this part of the country. We're fighting our buns off to earn that type of respect in the ACC. It will be a great challenge from year to year.

I think it would be a great thing. I know the ACC people are hopeful that that will be something that people can look at and say, Hey, this is a great matchup, just like the other rivalries in the conference.

Q. I know you probably have the unique ability to comment on this. Still not having seen Andre in person, you've seen Tajh Boyd, these are two of the top offensive players. If you had your vote, where would you cast that right now?

COACH SHAFER: It would be a tough vote. We have great players in this conference, the two you mentioned. Jameis Winston. It would be a toss-up there.

I love the run game. I have great respect for tailbacks. I think you have to be the toughest of

the tough to play that position, especially the way Andre has run the ball 320 times. You got to be a tough guy.

I'd have a hard time not heavily considering making him my number one vote because I think what he does week-to-week with that many carries is extremely impressive.

Q. What they do, Boston College with Andre Williams, it's not like they're disguising the fact they're going to give it to No. 44.

COACH SHAFER: No. But you've got to give him a lot of credit, too.

Three things:

We know Andre is a great player.

Second thing is, if you watch their offensive line, they are one of the better offensive lines in the country.

The third thing, Coach Addazio and his staff, from a scheme point of view, have done a great job. Even though it doesn't seem to the blind eye on the outside as anything more than just handing it off right and left, there's a lot more to it.

They're running as many ways as possible, creating different surfaces on either side of the line where you have to get lined up and be sound about where you are when you get there. Once you get settled in on when you're set and ready to go, they'll switch the strength to the other side real quick, snap it fast, run some other scheme that's related to those power gap schemes, football schemes, but they're drastically different from the point of view of how to defend it.

Different people coming at different angles. That's where I think they've done a great job with their scheme.

An interview with:

COACH DABO SWINNEY CLEMSON

COACH SWINNEY: I'd like to wish everybody a happy Thanksgiving. Just a special privilege to have the opportunity to do what we do. Hope everybody has a great day tomorrow with your families and loved ones.

Also I want to make an announcement and a congratulations. Today at 10:00, I believe, the ACA has announced Chad Morris has been named the assistant coach of the year. What a great honor. Just can't be a more deserving guy. All of

our coaches, in my opinion, are coaches of the year. I'm so happy for Chad.

It's a great honor for him, a great compliment to our staff and to those guys, Tony, Danny Pearman, Robbie Caldwell, Jeff Scott. Really happy for Chad Morris. Again, just a great, great honor for him.

But excited about this game this week, the last week for us heading into our post-season. It's definitely our biggest game and our biggest challenge to this point.

South Carolina is obviously a great team. They've had another great year. It's an exciting matchup in that first time ever to have a top-10 matchup, I think that's a real compliment to both schools for where the programs are.

This is a really talented offense. Defensively as good a front as there is out there, in my opinion. Playing very well.

Again, great opportunity for us. Just going to be a huge challenge going on the road. We're going to have to play very well. Our focus, again, is trying to finish out the very best we can, continue to stay in the mix, provide ourselves with the best possible post-season opportunities.

With that I'll take your questions.

Q. Sorry to get off subject, but I'm trying to ask a couple coaches from around the country sort of their views on what Alabama, a school close to your heart in ways, has done over these last five years, how impressive it is, whether they could go down maybe as the greatest dynasty in football if they can finish it out this season.

COACH SWINNEY: I think coaches probably have a greater appreciation than anybody because we all know how hard it is to win any game, much less win as consistently as they have.

They've been very dominant. They've obviously got great tradition and history there. They have recruited at a very high level. It starts with having great players. They certainly have great players and great depth, and they coach them up. It's been an impressive run, that's for sure.

We'll see how they finish. But if they are able to go on and finish, win it out, win three national championships in a row, they certainly deserve to be in the conversation for whatever dynasties are out there from years past because that is incredibly hard to do once, twice, three

times in a row. Hat goes off to them.

Q. Third-down defense, you've preached it all year long. Especially this game. It's been so critical. When you look back at what happened in last year's games, what needs to improve to get off the field on third down?

COACH SWINNEY: We got to win the competitive matchups. It's not just getting off. We have to do a good job offensively on third down staying on the field, too. We were really poor in this game last year on both sides, to be honest with you. We missed some huge opportunities.

The biggest thing, it just comes down to execution, not just knowledge of our plan, but applying the knowledge on game day. Comes down to matchups. They won some huge matchups on us last year in some critical situations. You have to tackle. You have to play really, really well on the perimeter. It was obviously a huge factor in the game. They were over 50% on third down.

Most of the time if you're really poor on third down, you probably don't win games. Then you throw in the fact that you turn it over, you don't win the turnover margin, it's hard to win against bad teams much less a great team like we're getting ready to face.

We got to execute our assignments better, play smarter, win those competitive matchups on both sides of the ball in the trenches. We need to get pressure on the quarterback, also on the perimeter. Guys making plays on offense, our line protecting our quarterback, and then defensively our secondary competing.

Q. Have you noticed your offensive line taking it personally the way South Carolina has had their defensive front the last couple years?

COACH SWINNEY: I don't notice anything. We haven't played the game. All I notice is our guys are practicing like they have been all year, practicing well, working their tails off to try to go execute the game plan and play the very best they can this week. That's the bottom line.

You can be all mad if you went on Tuesday or Wednesday, but we got to get our plan down and go play. Our guys know that we've gotten out-played. It really has nothing to do with this year. It's about what we've done. This year is a different team, we've had an excellent year. I

think we're playing with a lot of confidence right now.

This game will come down to the trenches. We got to run the ball, protect our quarterback, stop the run, get pressure on their quarterback. It's pretty simple when it comes down to it. Getting it done is a whole different deal.

Q. I know Williams-Brice and Death Valley are the two most impressive places to play college football. Does the home field have much impact in this rivalry?

COACH SWINNEY: I mean, it can, depending on how the game is going. It certainly can, especially early. I know here at home, when we get early momentum sometimes, it can really affect the crowd. Maybe late in the game, in a tight ballgame, the crowd can affect maybe a procedure penalty or something like that, cause the other team to lose some focus. That's always a challenge when you're on the road at a very loud place.

For us, the crowd doesn't play the game. We've got to go out there and be really focused on our assignments, playing the way we know we have to play to give ourselves a chance to win.

If you play the game the way you're capable of playing it, hopefully you can frustrate their crowd. It can work both ways. But that early momentum I think is very critical in a game like this.

Q. There are four ACC/SEC matchups this weekend. You guys are the headliner of that. Could you talk about what it would mean to do well. You started off the season beating one of the SEC powers. Can you talk about the ACC reputation versus the SEC, what this weekend can mean to the ACC.

COACH SWINNEY: I think a lot of that has been addressed, to be honest with you. People talk about it all the time.

I think the ACC has produced a national championship contender this year with Florida State. I think we're a team that's still in the mix. Anything can happen. I think we're one of the best teams in the country. I don't think there's any doubt about that. Been in the top 10 from start to finish.

That's what we've needed as a conference. That's what the SEC has done. They've had one or two teams each year. That's

kind of the case with them this year. This year it's Alabama and it's Auburn, their two dominant teams in the league.

The head-to-head matchups, 2-2, ours was a top-five matchup. Georgia, they had a catastrophe over there and still had a good year. They deserve a lot of credit for being able to get done what they've gotten done with the loss of superstars from that football team at the very beginning of the year.

It will be great. We want to win those matchups. Hopefully we can take care of our part.

Going back to last year, I think this is our fourth top-10 SEC team in a row. We've had our share. South Carolina last year, LSU, Georgia, South Carolina this year. Seems like every time we play one of these SEC teams, it's a top-10 team.

I think we're 2-1 in the last three. We want to get to 3-1. That's what we're worried about.

An interview with:

COACH JIMBO FISHER FLORIDA STATE

COACH FISHER: Very proud of the way our team competed this weekend in the game against Idaho. Thought we did some very nice things. Thought some of our young players got some great time in the game, played very well. Very proud of the development of our young players, and our organization is helping us progress. Feeling much more comfortable in the depth in the competition going on for jobs and what is happening.

Have a tremendous task ahead of us going down to Gainesville this week. Florida is an extremely talented football team, very well-coached team. They will bring their A game to the table, no doubt about it.

In rivalry games, it's always very critical to keep emotions in check and be able to play and function and execute. Execution will win the game. But you have to play at a high level because Florida is a very physical, dominating team and can play very well.

Looking forward to the challenge. It will be a great challenge for our football team this weekend.

Questions.

Q. What was the adjustment for Jernigan switching?

COACH FISHER: I think being sometimes with the nose guard situation, we'll play some zero nose and things. You have to be taking on a few more blockers. Don't always have to make as many plays. Got to be a little unselfish. Sometimes you have to define how you're in your gaps a little more. I think it was just a little bit of an adjustment early.

Once he's grasped ahold of it, he's playing tremendous football right now.

Q. How important is it to have that really good nose guard for the 3-4? Is that a little bit more important than it is in the old scheme?

COACH FISHER: There's no doubt. You have to dictate if they single block, you're going to really disrupt things. If they single block, you're going to really disrupt things. If the double-team, then you're back, people get to run free.

You see with the New England Patriots, Wilfork and all those guys. Those guys are big-time critical guys when you run that kind of defense.

Q. There are four ACC/SEC matchups this weekend. I just wonder what it means to the perception to the ACC if it can take care of business this weekend. It's 2-2 heading into this weekend.

COACH FISHER: I think anytime you have those non-conference games, if you can be successful, it makes your league look that much better. I mean, it really does. I think they're critical games. They're critical for all of us because we're all fighting for championships in important situations.

For your league, the perception of your league, if you want your league to be perceived well, you have to play well in those games.

Q. I know absolutely you don't look past Florida State. Will you peek a little bit if the scores are coming, there's four teams you could end up playing a week from today?

COACH FISHER: I promise you, I will after the Florida game. Florida is way too good to be worrying about somebody else.

Q. How critical has Christian Jones

been in letting your defense become as versatile and multiple as you like it to be?

COACH FISHER: He can stand up, get down, rush. He's that body type, has that type of athleticism and strength. Hybrid guys aren't the true word for those guys. Those guys are versatile, having that many talents, it is critical.

A lot of your top defenses, when you see them around the country, they have guys like that. It's very critical.

Q. This week we have to vote on All-ACC. We have to pick three teams. Usually we're okay on the skill guys, but offensive linemen drive us crazy. You have the best offense in the league. Make a case for a couple of your guys.

COACH FISHER: I don't want to get into all that. I feel we have a very good offensive line. I feel all of our guys are All-Conference caliber type guys. There are other great players throughout the league. As a coach, you study tons of them. I think all of our guys have a chance. Stork is one of the best centers around. The two tackles, Cam Erving. We talked about Bobby heart earlier. We talked about Bobby Hart. Bobby Hart played tremendously this year. I think Bobby Hart had a tremendous year. Cam, Josue, and Tre' are very talented, big, physical guys inside. All those guys.

Again, that's the key. The guys that put their hands in the dirt are very critical for us.

Q. On the other side of the ball, I know there's some linemen with great numbers for tackles for loss, total tackles and sacks. A guy that doesn't have great numbers but is a huge impact is Jernigan. You spoke about him earlier.

COACH FISHER: I promise you this, I'm glad I don't have to talk to block Timmy Jernigan on Saturday. I'm glad I have to block him on Monday and Friday. Those other guys are all tremendous problems. But Timmy Jernigan in my opinion is as dominating as anybody in our conference.

An interview with:

COACH RANDY EDSALL MARYLAND

COACH EDSALL: We're looking forward to the opportunity on Saturday to go down to Raleigh and work to try to get our seventh win. Hopefully we can have a good rest of the week and be ready to go when we get down there.

Q. When you look at them, they've lost seven straight games, but been fairly competitive against some of the better teams. They gave Clemson, for instance, a struggle. What do you see has been their problem? How dangerous is NC State?

COACH EDSALL: Well, I think NC State is a very good football team. I think they're athletic. I think they're well-coached. I think they've got very good players. I think when you just take a look, they've had some consistency issues. The quarterback got hurt. Mitchell is back. He had a great game last week.

Again, it's a team that has a lot of ability and a lot of talent.

Q. You're coming off a really tough loss. Is it tough to recover from that or bounce back from that?

COACH EDSALL: No, I don't think so. I mean, the kids know this is the 12th game of the season. They know that we're going down into a tough place to play. We've got our goals and things that we want to accomplish. That's what our focus has been on.

(Indiscernible) was over with when the game was over. You couldn't do anything about it. You move forward. That's what we've done and that's how we've prepared this week.

Q. I wanted to ask you about All-ACC. We're pretty good on skill people, looking at numbers, making choices. Linemen give us problems. Can you make a case for a couple guys, especially offensive linemen. Can you give us some guidance from your team.

COACH EDSALL: I think we're a young team up front when you take a look at Ryan Doyle, his first year starting for us. DeOnte Arnett. Sal Conaboy has had a consistent year for us. Andrew Zeller is in there playing, his fourth or fifth start. Michael Dunn, who is a redshirt freshman, who is playing this year.

I think our guys have made improvements. I think they're getting better. Sal is probably the guy that has been the most consist of all of our guys.

Q. How do you think your players have handled the emotional ups and downs of this season?

COACH EDSALL: I think our guys have been very resilient. I've been very proud of how they've come and worked. We've been through a lot. They've been through a lot. Again, I think we've grown up a lot.

Again, it's still a process. We're better and improved. That's what we're trying to do again this week. We're trying to get better and improve.

Again, we've had to fight through a ton of adversity. We got ourselves to a point where we're bowl-eligible. We're looking to get to the point of a seventh win.

I'm proud of the guys, what they've been able to accomplish. But we still have more to accomplish, and that's what we're looking forward to doing. When you have that, you have to have a short memory. You have to go each and every day. When that day is over, you learn from it, move forward. That's the mindset we have. That's what we're focused in on this week.

An interview with:

**COACH AL GOLDEN
MIAMI**

COACH GOLDEN: We're in the middle of our preparation, getting ready to go to Pittsburgh, first time seeing them as a coastal opponent. Great challenge for us, great opportunity.

With that I'll open it up to any questions that you have.

Q. Obviously major weather issues on the East Coast today. I know it's 48 hours before you play. I know the Miami Dolphins were famous for not performing well in cold weather. Have you seen your team in adverse weather conditions before? Probably going to be cold Friday. Is that a concern going up there in these conditions?

COACH GOLDEN: I think more than a concern, I think it's a challenge. It's a challenge to the way we want to operate. It's a challenge to our

mindset. I don't think there's any question. It's a challenge to everything that we want to be as a football program.

We want to be a team that's process-oriented. We want to be a team that focuses on two-acres and a ball and blocks out everything externally. In this case the weather is one of those external challenges.

It's going to be a great challenge to our team's mindset, mentality and their commitment to each other for four hours on Friday.

Q. I know the passing game is very important to you guys. If it's tough conditions like that, how big an adjustment do you have to make offensively to perform?

COACH GOLDEN: Well, again, I think we all know it's going to be tough conditions. It's going to be tough conditions for both sides. We just cannot allow any excuses to come into the game.

We got to make sure we're throwing the ball well. We got to make sure we're catching the ball well. We have to protect the ball when we're running it.

I don't think there's any question that we cannot allow an excuse mentality to creep in here because at the end of the day it's going to come down to protecting the ball well and finding a running game against obviously the great Pitt defensive front and connecting on the passes that you throw. We can't have a lot of incomplete balls because it's cold, windy, whatever the case may be.

We know there's going to be elements that are going to be a challenge on Friday. We have to accept the challenge and execute regardless.

Q. You started out 7-0, ranked 7. Things haven't gone well since then. Has it been a product of better competition or things you're not doing now that you were doing earlier?

COACH GOLDEN: Again, it's always a function of us. Some of the things perhaps we were doing better earlier in the year, like taking the ball away, playing better red zone defense. Certainly we did that better against Virginia this past week. Hopefully we'll be able to continue to do those things.

It can't be about the opponent ever. It's got to be about the things that we're doing and what we're not doing. We haven't converted as



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well as we needed to on offense or third down. That's really hurt our time of possession and left our defense out there.

All three units are responsible. We have to continue to play better. Hopefully we'll play better than we played last week, as well.

Q. Last week there was talk about Dorsett possibly playing. Are you still holding out hope he'll be able to play Friday?

COACH GOLDEN: I still am holding out hope. Can I say right now definitively? I can't. I wish I could. He'll be practicing today. I think the biggest thing is that he feels comfortable and confident. If we see that today, we'll move forward. Ultimately it will be the young man's decision because medically he's cleared.

Q. Their guy Aaron Donald is one of the best. Can you talk about the problem he presents.

COACH GOLDEN: Again, when you see players like this, you admire them. Obviously you have to deal with them on game day, which you have to find ways to do that.

You just admire players like this because he's just not a talented kid, he's a skilled kid. He's a young man that knows how to play double-teams really well and he plays with a motor, of course. They move him around to get him in the right position to rush the passer. He's got excellent pass-rush skills, as well.

Again, I think this young man has really worked hard at his craft. I think that's the thing I admire about him. He's taken his talent and cultivated it into skill. The result is a heck of a football player, one that's going to be a great challenge for our offensive line.

Q. Tell me about your guys. Make a case for a couple of your guys.

COACH GOLDEN: Again, you always hear about who you leave out. I think I'm on record as saying that Linder is playing at a really, really high level right now. I'll leave it at that. The rest of it, you guys have to sort it out and evaluate it. I'm record on that one, so I stand behind that one. I think Brandon Linder is playing an elite level of football right now at offensive line.

Q. I know you play Friday, your fate in the Coastal Division will be up in the air. If you win the game, you still have a chance. I guess

you become a UNC and Virginia fan on Saturday.

COACH GOLDEN: Again, we're just trying to prepare and execute today and get better tomorrow, obviously play well against Pitt. The rest of it will take care of itself, will sort itself out.

It's really important for us to play well this week and try to get win number nine, then we'll move forward as a program. If we have the good fortune on Saturday, we'll go forward from there.

For us to speculate on any of that is just premature. It's really about playing better this week than we did last week and getting ready for a Pitt team on the road.

Q. If Duke wins, that game is at noon, are you worried your kids might drop off a little bit, put their heads down a little bit because they can't win the coastal?

COACH GOLDEN: Duke's game is Saturday.

Q. I apologize.

COACH GOLDEN: We'll be there Friday, too.

Q. I apologize.

COACH GOLDEN: You're good. I thought I was going to play a doubleheader (laughter). Everybody have a great Thanksgiving.

An interview with:

COACH JIM GROBE WAKE FOREST

COACH GROBE: We had another typical battle with Duke this past weekend. Seems like the majority of our games have gone right to the wire, and this one was no exception. Duke got us.

We're disappointed. I thought the game was really a well-fought game, one of those games where you really enjoy watching if you don't care who wins. Unfortunately, we came out on the short end.

Trying to get the guys back up and hopefully we can bounce back this week in Nashville.

Q. I was interesting, you guys are

playing one of four games the ACC is playing against the SEC this weekend. The ACC is 2-2 against the SEC, which is widely recognized as the best conference in the country. What would it mean to take care of business this weekend and win a majority of those games?

COACH GROBE: I think it would be huge. I think anytime your league goes outside to play, people take notice.

In this case with the ACC getting a little bit more national recognition this year with some great teams in the league, I think for the league to go against the SEC and win their share would be great.

Q. We have to vote on the All-ACC this week. As a writer, it's tough for me to come up with three offensive lines. Can you talk about some of your guys that might deserve consideration at those positions.

COACH GROBE: In the offensive line?

Q. Yes, sir. We can do skill people okay, looking at numbers, but don't have much to go on for the offensive line.

COACH GROBE: I would not think that any of my guys right now have played well enough to be All-Conference guys. A couple freshmen have played really, really good for us. Cory Helms and Josh Harris have played a lot of good football for us so far this year.

The rest of the positions, whether it's performance, being banged up, probably nobody up front for us. We've gone against some pretty good offensive line groups.

I don't think that anybody's got a better group of five guys than Florida State does. We felt like they had two or three of the best players in the ACC this year. I think Miami had a really, really good offensive line.

Those are things that jump out at you probably more than even individual players. You kind of come out of a game and feel like a group of offensive linemen were the strongest.

There's a lot of good guys in the league, but I know they're hard to pick because they don't have a lot of stats.

Q. Nikita, is he a contender for defensive player of the year?

COACH GROBE: He's played awful good for us this year. Last year he stayed banged up. For us this year, defensively, it's all started with him. I don't know about player of the year stuff, but

certainly for us he's been our real impact player on defense this year.

Q. How difficult is it to identify what their look is? They let their guys run around and be versatile in a lot of different ways.

COACH GROBE: I think that's the deal. Keeping things mixed up, kind of keeping you off balance a little bit. I think the key is guys that can make plays, get off blocks, do those kind of things. But I think kind of being able to keep you off balance is important.

Q. Was it tough for your quarterbacks to identify what they were doing? They had a couple of interceptions against you guys.

COACH GROBE: Yeah, I think that's one thing that is probably the toughest for quarterbacks, is to on one hand sometimes you just force balls. You're really trying to make plays and trying to get balls into tight spaces.

But I think at times people show up that you don't expect to be there, and that's usually because they've done a good job disguising coverage.

An interview with:

COACH PAUL JOHNSON GEORGIA TECH

COACH JOHNSON: Good morning. I tell you, it's clearly a big week here in the state of Georgia. Anytime we have our in-state rival, it's a huge game, quite a challenge for our football team.

Georgia has an explosive team, really good. Three of their losses have come to top-10 teams, two of them on the road by a small margin.

They're very talented. It's a game that our fans look forward to every year, and our players. We're excited to have a chance to play on Saturday.

Q. Obviously they've had to make a change at quarterback. What do you think about Hutson Mason? What kind of problems does he present?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, Hutson was a highly touted guy coming out of high school. If I'm not mistaken, he may have set the record for

passing yardage when he played.

He's been in their program for four years, so it's not like it's a young guy. He hasn't played a great deal while he's been there other than some mop-up time. We do know he's a good passer and has a strong arm because of what he did in his high school days here.

Q. Obviously they've got Gurley back finally healthy. He's got to be a threat on the ground. You have one of the better rushing defenses in the country. Can you talk about that matchup and taking that away from them.

COACH JOHNSON: Well, that's going to be huge, no question about it. Clearly he's a big part of their offense. He's one of the top backs in the country.

That will be something that we've got to try to mix in with stopping their control passing game. They get a lot of guys out. He really hurts you in the passing game, too. He's a big screen guy, a check-down guy. He can make big plays out of it.

Q. There are four ACC/SEC matchups. The ACC is 2-2 against the SEC this year. What would it mean for the league if the ACC takes care of business in those games this weekend?

COACH JOHNSON: I think it would be great for the league. Clearly that's something that gets talked about a lot. Their conference is heavily promoted. If our teams in the league could come out and win the games this weekend, it would be huge for the league.

Q. You mentioned Mason having a strong arm. Can he be the same vertical threat that Murray was in past games? Was that Clemson game for you a matter of going up some really good wideouts more than issues on your back end?

COACH JOHNSON: To answer the first part, we won't know if he's as good vertically as Aaron Murray until he plays for a bit. He's clearly very accurate when you watch the tape the little bit he's played.

Everything that I've heard being in the state for the last two or three years since he's been there, every time there's a scrimmage, every time there's practice, they're always raving about him.

I know a couple years ago when they struggled a little bit, people were yelling for him to be the quarterback. So clearly he's talented.

The Clemson game was a little of both. I think they do have some talented wide receivers

and we struggled on the back end. We had trouble playing the deep ball and gave up some big plays. We got caught in cover two once with a safety shallow. The other time we just didn't make a play on the ball. We gave up the deep ball. One we might have gotten nudged a little bit, but the others we just miss-played.

Q. Did you see Brendan Douglas as a B back in your offense? Did you find up finding other guy late in recruiting?

COACH JOHNSON: Brendan was really a late take for us. I thought he could play either/or. We had recruited him to play B back. We got another commitment. When a scholarship opened up midway through, it wasn't like it was after Christmas, because I thought he was a really good player. So we felt like he could play both, but primarily B back.

No, we didn't add anybody. When they change on you the last weekend, it's pretty hard to add somebody.

Q. How would you rate your offensive line compared to some of your good offensive lines from the past? Have they progressed like you wanted them to?

COACH JOHNSON: Ironically these guys, I guess three of them, actually four of them, this will be the third Georgia/Georgia Tech game they started in.

We have one guy it will be his first game. I think it's been hot and cold like a lot of things. Jay Finch, Will Jackson and Ray Beno, and Shaq Mason, this will be Shaq's third game, but they've all played. This is who we've had as the offensive line for the last three or four years.

Q. This rivalry has been a little lopsided lately.

COACH JOHNSON: A little (laughter)? I think it's been a lot lopsided.

Q. Fair enough. How important is it to turn that around for Georgia Tech fans, to get back on an even footing there?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, it's been huge. Probably not going to get back on an even footing in my lifetime. But to get this thing back turned around where we've got some wins would be big. It's certainly a big game for our fans and our school and everybody involved.

Q. I always wonder about rivalry games. Does it impact recruiting, especially in-state?

COACH JOHNSON: I think possibly it has an influence on the recruiting. The thing here in our state is the two schools are quite different, different with what they offer in degrees, just different in a lot of things, different leagues. Unlike North Carolina, North Carolina State, they're in the same league. There's a lot of differences between the two schools here.

But certainly I would think it probably has some effect.

Q. I know you were just talking about your offensive line. We have to pick All-ACC this week. Offensive line is tough for us. We have three lines this year. Can you make a case for two or three of your guys being All-ACC?

COACH JOHNSON: I think you can always make a case for the guys. I think Shaq Mason, our right guard, has played really well. He's probably the most consistent guy we have up there. Jay Finch at center started every game for us. Will Jackson I think has played every game. Those three guys have played more than anybody else.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

November 27, 2013



An Interview With:

**COACH LARRY FEDORA
NORTH CAROLINA**

COACH FEDORA: Our football team is excited about this next opportunity. We've got Duke coming in to Keenan Stadium and the Tar Pit. They're the 24th team in the country and on a seven-game winning streak. We're excited for our seniors playing their last home game in Keenan Stadium. Should be a heck of a football game.

Q. Just curious, since the Miami loss, it seems like you've talked a lot about the improvement in your defense, and I'm curious, going up against Duke and Jamison Crowder in particular this week, is he maybe the toughest guy since that Miami game that individually your defense has faced?

COACH FEDORA: Yeah, I would have to say that. That guy is a phenomenal player. He can beat you in so many different ways. I mean, whether it be in special teams or on the field as an offensive player, they're definitely going to get the ball in his hands.

He is a guy that we definitely are concerned about, and we'll always know where he is on the field.

Q. With the defense, the improvement you've seen week to week, what do you attribute that to? Is it just confidence or what have you seen?

COACH FEDORA: Well, the confidence has definitely built from week to week, but I would say more than that, it's guys trusting each other and just doing their job, not trying to do anybody else's, not trying to do anything outside the system, just staying within the system and doing their job, and then making the plays that come to them.

Q. I just wanted to ask you about Duke using two quarterbacks and how much difficulty is that? How much do you have to be aware of which guy is under center?

COACH FEDORA: Well, you definitely have to be aware because they don't do the same things. They do -- some of the offense is the same with them, but when one is in there he tends to do a little bit more the other way. We always have to be aware of who's behind center at that time, and then our players have to learn the tendencies of both.

Q. The other thing, last year everybody focuses on the Crowder catch at the end, but they won the game because they ran the ball on you very, very effectively. Can you address that, and how difficult will it be to reverse that this year?

COACH FEDORA: Well, I mean, that's really the number one thing for us is to stop the run, and that's been every week we've talked about it, and that's going to continue to be the number one thing going into this game. They did a really nice job of running the football against us last year. That was the difference in the football game.

And I would say they are much better on the offensive line this year than they were last year.

Q. I was going to ask you about the running game. It seems like having a guy like Marquise Williams has helped your running game. You're able to run the zone reads and really both as a quarterback threat and a running back threat. Can you talk about what he's brought to your running game?

COACH FEDORA: Yeah, it really opens up your running game tremendously because now the defense always has to be assignment sound as far as all the quarterback runs and what the quarterback can do, and so that tends to loosen things up a little bit for the running backs. It also makes things a little bit easier on the offensive line.

It's nice to have that dual threat back there.

Q. I was thinking, you guys had a quarterback situation very much like theirs, a primary passer and a primary runner before Bryn got hurt. It's like they had to go at one point with Brandon Connette all the way. That's kind of what's happened with you guys, isn't it?

COACH FEDORA: It has, a little bit, you're right. There's some similarities there that -- I understand what they're wanting to try to accomplish and what they've had to do, and they've done a really good job of complementing both quarterbacks.

Q. One of the questions we've been asking some people, each of the coaches coming on, is just to help with the voting for All-ACC this week, if you would talk about some of your linemen, a lot of the writers get to pick out the skill people pretty well, but when it gets down to offensive linemen and defensive linemen sometimes they don't see who are the stand-outs. If you would talk about some of the stand-outs from your own team.

COACH FEDORA: You bet. James Hurst would be the one that we would start with. I think he's had 40 consecutive starts, 40 or 41, whatever it is, something like that. Just a tremendous player for us at left tackle. I don't think there's any doubt that this young man is going to go on and play in the league as long as he stays healthy. He's one of those kids that you kind of don't think about because we never worry about it. It's just going to be consistently done at his position. It's not something that's an issue or ever something as a coach you're going to have to worry about. He's going to get his job done. He always does. He's not a real vocal guy, but he leads by example and has a lot of respect on our football team.

Our center, Russell Bodine, has had a really good year for us. We've also moved him over to guard in some situations to help us up front and to get some continuity going, and he is a big, strong, physical center that has done a really nice job for us.

And then I think I would have to point out our right guard Landon Turner who is a big massive guy that can move people and does a really nice job for us, also.

Q. I remember you speaking before the NC State game talking about leading into a rivalry game like this and striking a balance between obviously the hype that comes into it and the excitement that your players have with obviously keeping focus and staying on your assignments. It seems like given the situation, five-game winning streak, and given that Duke is doing so well, as well, that seems like it might be ten-fold this week, the same situation. I'm just curious about the atmosphere in practice this week. How have you kept people focused?

COACH FEDORA: We talked about it early on, and that's one good thing is we've already experienced it once and had some success with it, and so our guys understand it now. Yes, they know they're going to be hyped up, they know they're going to be excited to play, but they have to be locked in and do their job. That's it. If you do your job and you do it with great effort, good things are usually going to happen. And then when things don't go our way, you can't panic. You can't worry about it.

Early in that game we threw an interception on the second play of the game, they take it down and they score. We can't worry about those things, we've just got to keep playing.

Q. You've got a couple of seniors in your defensive backfield, Tre and Jabari who were thrown into the fire when they were freshmen and had to play a lot early. I'm curious if and how they have helped your other young defensive backs here in their freshman season.

COACH FEDORA: Well, those two have so much experience that there's really nothing that they haven't seen, and they've been throwing into a lot of situations, especially early, that I think they're very comfortable in every situation now. I think just that confidence and that calmness that they are able to portray and give to those young guys has helped them. That's why I think you see Brian Walker getting better. I think you see Des Lawrence getting better, I mean, really because now they go out there and they're not worried about things. They know if they just do their job and not worry about anybody else, they're going to be fine.

COACH PAUL CHRYST PITT

COACH CHRYST: Obviously was a big win for us up in Syracuse, gave us a sixth win, so good to be bowl eligible, but more importantly it was good to go on the road and be able to get a victory. Certainly got a heck of a challenge Friday against Miami, but we've had a good week of preparation, and I know our kids are excited and looking forward to playing.

Q. Obviously most of the Eastern Seaboard is experiencing nasty weather today. I just wonder what the weather is supposed to be like Friday, and how do you think it might impact the game?

COACH CHRYST: You know, we had some weather yesterday. Today it's actually pretty nice. The guys and people down in Heinz Field do a great job with getting the field in great shape, and the forecast isn't for any precipitation or anything, so I think it should be a good day for football.

Q. I just bring it up because I guess I grew up like a lot of people watching some of the great Dolphins-Steelers games and it was in Pittsburgh and it was cold.

COACH CHRYST: That would make it a great day. I don't know, right, I think those stories you can write after the game, meaning how it played out, but you really don't know anything beyond that.

But it really is, it hasn't been bad at all. It's been nice. So looking forward to that continuing.

Q. Let me go on another tack. I've been asking some guys about All-ACC. We've got to vote this week, and with the new teams in the league, we've gone to three teams. I think we do account for skill guys; Donald is going to make it and all that, but offensive line is always a problem for sports writers. We don't have numbers --

COACH CHRYST: Right.

Q. So help us out with your guys. Who on your team should we give strong consideration to?

COACH CHRYST: Yeah, you know, I think probably the one that's most worthy of it

would be Matt Rotheram, our right guard. Our left side quite honestly has been a revolving door, our left tackle, left guard. I've liked what our center has done. He's a younger kid and probably more valuable to us than -- but I think Matt would be worthy of it, and I think right tackle TJ Clemmings, I like what he's done for us in his first year of playing, and I think he's put himself in position by gaining that experience in another year, but I think TJ could be good. But I'd say Matt would be the one.

But you're right, you've got to base it on -- we had some guys but you knew it was on reputation because you weren't giving up sacks, but I think Matt has been probably our most consistent offensive lineman, certainly worth consideration.

Q. And with Aaron Donald, obviously he's going to be All-ACC. Could you make the case for him for Defensive Player of the Year in the conference?

COACH CHRYST: I think you really could. And when you say that, you know there's some -- I wouldn't want to name them right now, but there's probably eight to ten guys that I think truly impact -- when we play against them, and it's hard because we don't get a great feel for -- you watch and you state so much prior to and when you play them obviously, but then after that unless they show up on film in crossover opponent, but absolutely I think Aaron is -- that's what I've liked about the accolades that he's gotten to this point. I think they're truly deserved and they're through production on the field.

A lot of his statistics I think have come -- every play is important, but have come at key moments, too, and I think that's the mark of a great one. I think he's always thinking, and we're facing some this week, but he's one of those guys where you truly have to game plan for and guys that can truly impact in a different way the game. I think those are the ones that are worthy of not just all-conference like you mentioned, but when you're talking about players of the year, I think he's absolutely worth being in consideration. And we should; he certainly means the most to us, and I'm sure other people feel that way. And I'm not trying to compare him to someone else, but I think absolutely the right thing is to look at him as a Defensive Player of the Year candidate.

Q. I just wanted to ask real quick, the win last week, that was you guys' first road win going back to September. Did something click there away from home, and what kind of momentum can that give you guys coming into this last one?

COACH CHRYST: Well, you know, I don't think -- I think a lot of those happen, you know what I mean? I think -- you know, you saw the game; it certainly wasn't pretty, but guys just kept playing and there were some plays made at opportune times, and what the momentum is, certainly I think we feel good and appreciative of the fact of getting that win, and we've got to go -- it's hard to say what it's going to do because we've got to go do it first, but I don't know how to answer the last part, if there's momentum from it.

We've certainly had good practices and feel good, but it's a new week and a new opponent. We'll see.

Q. I know on defense everybody focuses on Aaron because he's had a phenomenal year, but you've got some other players who have played pretty well there. Could you talk about them, as well?

COACH CHRYST: Yeah, I think that we have. We've had -- I think you could almost pick each guy that's had his -- certainly his moments. I think that really Ray Vinopal has been playing his best football and he's put that in probably three or four games back-to-back on that. I think that our young D-lineman Darryl Render has been playing well for us. Brian Murphy had a stretch and then kind of got dinged up, and hopefully he'll come back. But I think we've got a lot of guys that have had kind of those one or two good games, and I think that's a key for us. If we can get everybody clicking on all cylinders, that'll help.

But certainly AD has, and rightfully so, garnered most of the attention, and I think there's been moments where a lot of guys have had that, but no one has played at the consistent level like AD.

Q. There were a couple plays in the Syracuse game where Aaron, they tried to double team him and he just split the left tackle and the left guard with a swim move and still make a tackle for loss in the backfield. Syracuse's offensive line coach said, a lot of times that move is discouraged because it opens up a guy's chest. Did you ever try to discourage that with him or did you know he

could do that right from the start, or what do you think of that move?

COACH CHRYST: Yeah, he can pull it off. You're right, I mean, there's some things that he'll do -- he's got great ability to take a double team and turn it into a one-on-one, and he'll do some things that -- you don't discourage it. He's got to understand where he's at in the defense, what his role is, but then I think it's important for all your players, you want to make sure they understand their assignment and their rule on it, and yet you've got to let them play the game. They've got to be able to trust -- and if they do it and put it on tape or they can do it and they understand and they're not just going rogue on you, and that's why you appreciate AD. He's not just out there playing his own game and other guys having to play off of him. Really we don't discourage it. In fact we encourage him to split it like you said and tackle for loss or sacks.

Q. Did you encourage it right from the get-go or did you have to see it on tape a couple times and go, okay, we're okay with you trying that?

COACH CHRYST: When you practice against him all the time, you get a pretty good sense of it. It's pretty much been from the get-go.

COACH FRANK BEAMER VIRGINIA TECH

COACH BEAMER: Playing, of course, the in-state rival this week. I think a very dangerous, talented football team. You want to talk about the defense and how well they've played at times, had some injuries here and there, and taken them out of their rhythm, but I agree totally. I think they're impressive.

And then they've really got some good playmakers on offense, two quarterbacks that I think give you something different to prepare for, and so this is a -- I think it's a tough game for us and one that we've got to go in well prepared ourselves.

Q. I want to ask you, you had such high expectations for Kendall Fuller and Brandon Facyson coming in this year, but are you at all surprised or maybe impressed is a better word with how consistent they've been for you?

COACH BEAMER: Yeah, I've used the word impressed. Two guys that have really just -- very mature for their age, year in school, very smart. The game makes sense to both of them. They both just played exceptionally well for us.

Q. It's turned out to be I imagine pretty important because of the injuries to Exum and Fuller. You couldn't foresee that, but did you expect them to play as big a role as they did somewhere?

COACH BEAMER: Well, they kind of were forced into that. Like you said, we've had some injuries there. When you talk about Kyle and Exum, that's two guys that you're counting on very heavily to do big things this year, and both of them ended up hurt. And so they were forced into it, but they didn't blink an eye. They stepped right up and took charge.

Q. I know we've asked you about it earlier in the week, but how you've had a few days to think about it a little bit more. Are you still set with Kristensen at kicker?

COACH BEAMER: Yeah, I think we are. I think the most consistent kicker we've got, and right now Branthover will probably kick our long field goals if the ball is outside the 25, but I think anything inside the 25 we'll go with Kristensen and feel good about it. I'll tell you, before this came around, Bruce Garnes was always out there with me, we'd go in the stadium for about the first three or four periods, and Bruce and I talk quite a bit about how consistent -- what a good kicker Kristensen is. He got his opportunity a little bit before we were planning on it, but I think he gets good height on the ball, his flight is very consistent, so, you know, I think he's looking forward to it, and I'm looking forward to seeing him.

Q. And just with the struggles you guys have had just on the coverage teams, Miami had those two returns that you guys had fumbles on, Maryland has a punt return, have you guys done any changes or has there been any tinkering with those coverages?

COACH BEAMER: Well, I hope we can get a clipping call, and if we do, I don't think Maryland has a punt return if they don't clip us in the back.

Q. I was wondering, you've gone against Jon Tenuta's defense, a couple of his different defensive styles. Can you talk about

game planning against an attacking style like that?

COACH BEAMER: Yeah, he makes you work, and you don't get a good breath the whole week. He kind of scares you where pressure is coming from, who, what, when, where. You know, he makes you coach the week you're getting ready to play him.

Q. I just wanted to ask you about the division title race and the fact that you guys are in it, in your own hands if Duke loses to North Carolina and they play right before you guys. Will you listen to the final score or pass that around?

COACH BEAMER: No. You know, we said going into this game, we talked a little bit about that or talked about what we could do and what could happen if so and so did so and so before our last ballgame, and I came into our team meeting on the day after that game and said, look, the only thing we're going to talk about and think about is Virginia, and that's the only thing we can control, and whatever else happens, happens.

I think if you can keep your mind on what you can control and not have it all over the place, you're probably better off. That's going to be our approach to this thing is not worry about anybody else, worry about ourselves and how we're getting ready -- how we're going to play against Virginia.

Q. One of the oldest clichés in sports, just throw the record book out the window, they've lost eight straight games but it's a rivalry game, obviously. Clichés are clichés because they sometimes apply. Does that apply this week?

COACH BEAMER: Yeah, they've got some people back healthy. You look at their stats, and I mean, they scare you. And they should, because I think sometimes when you get some injuries going, it's hard to get into a rhythm. Because they're getting a lot of those people back, we know exactly what kind of football game we're going to be involved in here on Saturday, and we've got to make sure our kids understand that, too.

Q. Just curious, is it kind of strange to prepare for a team that's having maybe its best defensive player entering the game only for the third quarter with Harris? How much do you

take that into account, the fact that he's going to be playing --

COACH BEAMER: Well, they're going to be missing a good player the first half, I can tell you that. But they've got very capable people back there, and I think that's just part of the game. We've got to try to attack whoever is back there and do what we do.

COACH MIKE LONDON VIRGINIA

Q. I want to ask you first, a lot of the quotes or the comments coming out of Virginia Tech on Monday certainly were not bashful talking about the rivalry, the dislike for Virginia. As a head coach, do you take any of that stuff and pass it on to your players? Do you like for them to kind of see that?

COACH LONDON: You know, the talking back and forth, stuff like that you can say -- guys talk about each other, goad each other in terms of the competition part of it, but I don't get caught up into words, things that are being said. You play the game on the field. We have the utmost respect for Virginia Tech. I have the utmost respect for Coach Beamer. He's done a lot of good things and is one of the winningest coaches in college football. All the words back and forth don't amount to anything that's important. What's important is playing well on the field.

Q. I also wanted to ask you, their corners, their young guys that they're going with now, Facyson and Kendall Fuller, what have you seen from their play all year?

COACH LONDON: Yeah, they're two very talented young players. They attack the football very well. They play the ball in the air well and they'll come up and tackle for run force, and they also play coverage.

Again, you look at them and you're impressed with two young guys that have a lot of years in front of them.

Q. We spoke to Steve Fairchild earlier. Were you aware of the flak caused by some of the comments he made on radio? He said they were all made kind of in humor. Are you aware of that?

COACH LONDON: I'm not aware of any comments. I don't read stuff most of the time. No,

again, as far as us playing a Virginia Tech team that's a very good team, my personal relationship with Coach Beamer and some of the coaches on that staff have been professional over the years. So again, all you can do is just handle the situation on the field and not in the press or not in the message boards or chat rooms or whatever they call it.

Q. This is a week we've got to vote All-ACC, and I've just been asking coaches to talk about some guys on their team that might deserve it. One guy that's kind of been under the radar, at least down here, but his numbers are great, is Parks, and I just wonder if you could talk about the kind of year he's had.

COACH LONDON: Yeah, I think without a doubt I think Kevin is a consideration for All-ACC because of his production not only running the ball, catching the ball. His numbers here over the course of the years he's been here at Virginia, and just the overall production. When you look at things like that, players that played in games and made significant contributions in those games to their team, you definitely have to consider Kevin as being one of the best players at his position, at the running back position here in the ACC, but we're very proud of what Kevin has done for us here, for the school, and the opportunities that are still afforded to him with another season of eligibility.

Q. What qualities make him a really good running back?

COACH LONDON: Yeah, if you see him, you've probably been up close and seen him. He's very stocky. He's got big legs. He's got a low center of gravity. He's been able to fend off the initial blocker and continue to fight for extra yards. But he's a running back that sees the hole well and can accelerate through the hole. You look at this point of the season and the number of carries, I can't remember him being dinged up or hurt like most running backs are. He's been very resilient and very tough. He's got this game and he's got another season of eligibility to improve upon his numbers.

Q. Going back to your statement that you were going to find a spot for Greyson Lambert in the game Saturday, what if David Watford is lighting it up and everything is going well? Does that other plan momentarily go on

hold?

COACH LONDON: Well, we'll see how that goes as the game goes. To predict that right now is hard to predict, but there are plans, as I said, to play Greyson, give him opportunities. We'll have to address that as the game is going on, given the different scenario that you just raised.

Q. You'd be happy to have that scenario I'm sure.

COACH LONDON: Whoever is productive and whatever is moving the team, that's the main focus.

Q. I want to follow up on the All-ACC. The toughest part for us voters is the offensive line, and Moses was a preseason All-ACC guy. Has he played to that level, and is there anybody else we ought to look at?

COACH LONDON: I believe Mo in the last half of the season here has improved in a lot of things. You always have room for improvement, and yes, he did come into preseason with a lot of notoriety and things like that, and I don't know if he would agree that he was playing up to his ability, capability, but as I said, the last few games here he's graded out well. He's done some nice things on tape. Scouts have come back in again based on the play that he's been doing to this point.

So his best football, again, can be achieved through the success and the improvement from game to game, and obviously this game is a very important game for him in his development and his evaluation because he's going against two very good defensive ends, two very good players. I'm quite sure that their ends are ready for the challenge. It's been stated and it's understood, and now guys have to go out and just compete.

Q. Let me ask you real quick about Logan Thomas. His good games have mostly been wins. His bad games have mostly been losses for Tech. Do you see something when he struggles that opposing defenses are doing, or does he just seem to have some off days?

COACH LONDON: Yeah, that's hard to say. Again, I have respect for Logan. I think he's a talented, talented player because of his size and his ability. You know, sometimes in some games the surrounding cast may not play up to their potential, whether wrong routes, dropped passes, breakdown in communication with the protections, and then ultimately everything points back to the

quarterback because you look at his numbers and look at all those other things. But we all see that Logan is a very talented young man, and when they're catching the ball and they're moving the ball and he becomes a weapon within the offense because he's a main part of the offense, and on the other hand, as I said, if the surrounding cast members aren't doing their part, it can make whatever wins, loss, or whatever issues may occur in the game, it can make that look like a suspect.

We just have to concentrate on the game plan that we have and try to do things that limit or minimize his ability as much as possible. But like I said, he's a very talented guy, and I give a lot of credit to him and going through adversity and handling it and coming out on the other end.

Q. How different does this offense look with a new offensive coordinator? From an Xs and Os standpoint do you see a dramatic difference?

COACH LONDON: Well, when you look at teams you look at coordinators, where they were, where they came from, and the offensive coordinator there is from Auburn, so you see some elements from that style of offense. They've infused it with, I'm quite sure, with some of the things that they feel that they can do with the skill positions that they have. There's some similarity, again, like I said, with where the coordinator has been before, but also some additions with what you know Virginia Tech to be, and that's the challenge is to play to the best of our ability with those schemes that they use.

Q. What went into the decision to move Canady back to safety for the first half?

COACH LONDON: Well, you look at different packages that you play, whether it's nickel, dime or some other issues that you want to address as far as coverage, and I'll just say that that's part of it. Him being back, being healthy now gives us a tremendous amount of flexibility, and we're going to try to take advantage of that.

COACH STEVE ADDAZIO BOSTON COLLEGE

COACH ADDAZIO: Just coming off of last week, we had an exciting game against Maryland. It was a real hard-fought games, two teams really battling, a very, very physical game. I thought Maryland has an outstanding football team and really are just a great prepared team, coached real well. We were very fortunate in the end to be able to kick a field goal to win the game in the end.

We go into this week, we're getting ready to play Syracuse, and the Syracuse-BC game has always been quite a rival game. My years at Syracuse it was a red-letter game for us, and really excited to really kind of re-stoke up that rivalry as two northeast teams within the ACC get to play each other.

We have a lot of respect for Syracuse. Syracuse has always been a very tough, physical football program, playing with a lot of pride. You watch their team this year, and they play really strong on defense. They're really a strong defensive team, a real strong blitz team with some outstanding football players, really well put together, well coached on offense. On offense they're a real strong running team. They have some outstanding skilled athletes and a quarterback that's a dual-threat quarterback that poses a lot of challenges.

We know heading into this game it's going to be a really rough game going up there playing them in the dome on senior day, and of course they'll be fighting for bowl eligibility and just a hard-nosed team. So this will be two evenly matched teams coming against each other, two strong run games, two aggressive defenses, should be a lot of fun, and we're looking forward to getting this thing started.

Any questions?

Q. We've been asking guys to help us out with our All-ACC voting that's got to be this week. Tough part is obviously offensive line. You have a guy, Patchan, that's twice been the offensive lineman of the week. Would he be a good starting point there?

COACH ADDAZIO: I mean, our offensive line is just one of the best offensive lines I've coached in my career. I was an offensive line coach for years. Absolutely Matt Patchan is an outstanding football player, really playing as good

as I've ever seen him play right now. I think Ian White, our other senior tackle, they're just two outstanding guys. Those are two guys that are going to play in the NFL. We're very, very fortunate here. They're tough, they're physical, they're smart, and they play really, really hard.

Q. Again, for weeks it's been kind of assumed Jameis Winston is going to be the Offensive Player of the Year, but with Andre rushing for almost 900 yards in the last three weeks, is he putting himself into that mix, too?

COACH ADDAZIO: I mean, I think Andre is just playing outstanding right now. He's a big part of our last four games in the fourth quarter, 47 plays in the fourth quarter over the course of four games, nine explosives, averaging 14 yards per play for 58 points. There's a lot of productivity there, and Andre is just really -- he's been playing well all year, but it just seems like each week he's growing, getting better, as is, I believe, our offensive line, and the two are working together hand in hand.

Q. I know you don't look at numbers, but he topped 2,000 yards last week. The week before he broke the ACC season record. Do you look at the NCAA chart and say how far can he move up in this game, in the bowl game?

COACH ADDAZIO: Well, I mean, I know he's obviously -- he's the heart and soul of what we do, so I'm well aware, and I know he's been really highly productive, and he needs to be so that we can have team success.

I am aware, obviously, that he's over 2,000 yards. But most importantly for me, the week-to-week thing, is the formulation of our run and play action game on offense, to work off of each other and to give an opportunity for Andre to be successful because that's where our explosives come from.

Q. I know he's not the running back everybody talks about, but Tyler Rouse is a local kid kind of coming home. What have you seen from him this year, and did you expect him to get on the field right away for you?

COACH ADDAZIO: I'm glad you asked. Tyler is just an unbelievable guy. That guy is one of the best competitors we have on our football team, and he's had an outstanding freshman year.

He's been on the field. He's carries the ball a few times. He's involved in special teams. We have a high level of trust in his ability, and he's going to have a great career here. So we're very, very fortunate to have him here, and you'll see him on the field in the dome, and I'm sure he'll be excited having a chance to go back towards his hometown and play. He's an A-1-A kid, a high-character guy with an unbelievable work ethic, and he's very talented.

Q. I know he's rooming with Andre, I guess, on the road and before games. Is that a philosophy of yours to take the youngest position player and room him with the oldest, or how did that work out?

COACH ADDAZIO: Yeah, we try to do that. The running back room with -- you've got two young guys, Myles Willis and Tyler and then Andre, and it's just a great blend and a great chemistry. Tahj Kimble, those guys get along very, very well, and Andre is a great role model and a great human being, and it's just a collection of really good guys in there. I really like the chemistry within the power of that unit. So it's been great.

Q. And last one, I know when Syracuse hired Scott there was a push from some for you to get the job up here. Did you ever reach a point where you envisioned yourself head coach at Syracuse versus head coach at BC?

COACH ADDAZIO: You know, obviously I had a great -- I just loved -- when I coached at Syracuse, I loved living in Syracuse, had a great experience in Syracuse, and so I always held Syracuse in the absolute highest regard. I just -- as a Northeast guy, it's a tough, Northeast program, so those were some great years.

You know, and obviously I'm here as the head coach of Boston College right now, and I'm just absolutely thrilled. Sometimes you say to yourself, it's like a dream come true here.

You know, I've been very, very fortunate. I've been at some really good places with some unbelievable people. Having a chance to be with Paul Pasqualoni at Syracuse was truly one of the greatest things for me as a person and also in my career.

COACH DAVID CUTCLIFFE DUKE

COACH CUTCLIFFE: As Mike just mentioned, there's a lot at stake, obviously, in that regard, and then I think everybody does realize it's enough, that it's just Duke and North Carolina. As we look at it, I don't think -- I know as we look at it, this is the biggest challenge we will have faced all year long, a North Carolina team that's playing extremely well, on their own winning streak, so it has the recipe of being a huge challenge for our team, and I hope our team will embrace it and give us their best effort. That's what you certainly expect in an environment like this one. With that, I'll take your questions.

Q. Just curious, when you're facing a punt returner like Ryan Switzer, do you see guys snap to it and pay a little more attention?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, yeah, we've asked obviously our guys to do that. He's had a tremendous year, and he's had one called back, in fact. He would have had four. And I don't know if I can ever remember a guy doing that. He's strong, he's fast, he's quick, he catches it very well. So you really don't see a weakness. So we'd better be zeroed in.

Q. I know a few days ago in your press conference you talked about the three phases of your team and how you've kind of seen them come together, at times almost in the same game. Have you seen that on tape with North Carolina, the defense and offense all coming together?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Absolutely. They're the same kind of team. They're getting key returns and they're a good kicking and punting team, and certainly have improved on both sides of the ball. Both sides of the ball are making significant plays throughout a ballgame, and I think they've hit their peak at just the right time.

Q. Have you seen anything specifically with their defense over the last -- I guess the defense has been playing better the last four weeks. Have you seen anything on film or anything?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, all the way back to Boston College, and I'm sure part of it is

like anything else. People get healthier, guys are feeling good, you kind of get all your rotation in place. They're playing a lot of people. They play very hard. I think that once you start playing well, your confidence builds. They've got experienced, good football players in all of the right places.

Q. Does it concern you at all that your guys have never really been in this position with everything on the line, a championship out there to grab and that kind of situation? Does that concern you at all?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Not really, because as you're well aware, there's nothing we can do about that, but not a lot of teams have a bunch of players that are that familiar with those circumstances. I think it's great for our guys is the way I have viewed it. To face these kind of challenges and that kind of pressure in your young life, I think, and I've told them, you have to embrace it. Sure, there's a lot of pressure. Sure, it makes you anxious. It does all of those things. But you've got to learn to embrace that all your life and look forward to those types of challenges, and this is certainly a huge one. But I think it's good from freshman to senior that they're having to deal with that. It's a growth opportunity.

Q. The other thing is in your first five years you've won one game in November, you've won three this year. How much of that is health? How much is the focus the team had? I know finish was kind of the unofficial motto. But what's played into the success you've had in November this year?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Well, this team is really a good football team, and it's obviously part of it. Our depth, less injuries than we've had, I think all of those things that you mentioned at the front end asking the question are a big part of it, and then I really believe that the maturity of this team and the maturity of the program has certainly helped.

Q. I've been asking coaches today, we do have to vote on All-ACC this week. It's tough at a couple of positions. You guys sent out some nominations. Can you make a case for a couple of guys especially on the offensive line?

COACH CUTCLIFFE: Yeah, I think everybody has a difficult time knowing who's playing well in the offensive line. Perry Simmons, who's a four-year starter, who has never missed a

snap -- he hasn't missed a practice. It's almost unheard of. He's the most durable, consistent offensive lineman we've ever had. I'd love to make a case for all of them, but you asked for a couple, and certainly Perry is just -- and an incredible student. He's the student athlete everybody talks about and dreams of. He's going to New York as one of the finalists for the top student athlete in the country, and then his partner right next to him, Lincoln Tomlinson, is playing at an extremely high level. He's a very gifted, really quick 315-pounder that's got tremendous strength. He has become a really good technician. Lincoln is in his third year of not missing any time. Very appreciative of those guys in the trenches anyway as you well know.

COACH DAVE DOEREN NC STATE

COACH DOEREN: Happy Thanksgiving to everybody, and looking forward to our game with Maryland. End of a long series, and a very even series. It's 33-32 in the series if I'm not mistaken, and a chance to play them here on senior day for us, a team that, like us, has dealt with injuries throughout the year, a very talented team, and has had a tough loss last week, but started fast to the season.

And for us it's a chance to play our last game at home here for our seniors and try to end the season on a positive note, coming off of a tough loss in which we had a good fourth quarter rally but fell short against ECU. With that we'll open it up for any questions.

Q. I wanted to ask about the fourth quarter rally. What does it mean or what does it say, it's been a long time since you've won. You've had a tough losing streak. You're getting killed at home. What does that rally say about the team and maybe how they're performing this week?

COACH DOEREN: Yeah, I wouldn't say we're getting killed, but we definitely haven't won a game. We haven't won a game. We've been in a lot of these games and haven't found a way to win in the fourth quarter, and it's something we've been straining to do as a staff and with our players, and felt like we finished the game the right way, and the second and third quarters kept us out of the game.

It was good to see Brandon play as well as

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he did, four touchdowns and no interceptions, and hit a lot of people. He hit a lot of throws that he hasn't been making and still had some I know he wishes he had back, but it was his best game since he's returned from injury, and a lot of young players continued to make plays. ECU obviously played better than we did Saturday, but our team hasn't quite. They continue to come to work every day, and that is a positive, and I've seen a lot of growth in some of our players.

Q. I apologize for the choice of words, but I was talking about just the East Carolina game. I thought you were in bad shape until the comeback, so forgive me from that. Let me go on and ask you about All-ACC. We have to do that this week. I think we can do skill people, okay, we can look at numbers, but help us out on the offensive line. Is there anybody on offensive or defensive line that maybe you could make a case for that we ought to give strong consideration to?

COACH DOEREN: Well, Joe Thuney for us is probably our most valuable offensive lineman because he's played all three positions and he's played both tackle spots with what we've had to deal with from a depth and injury standpoint on the line. He's done a lot of things and held his own and done better than that at times.

I think that Duran Christophe has started every single game and played almost every snap for us. Those two guys would probably be the most deserving on the offensive line.

D-line standpoint, there's a lot of guys that have made plays. Art Norman has played the most and Thomas Teal. After him would probably be our two most productive players, and until he was injured Cato-Bishop was having a very, very good season. Just unfortunate he missed five games in the middle.

Q. I wanted to ask about Maryland. Last year they kind of struggled after they lost all their quarterbacks to injury. What do you see with Brown and what difference he makes and how dangerous he is?

COACH DOEREN: Well, there's not many good teams out there that don't have a quarterback playing well for them. It's hard to find them at whatever level you're looking at. I think when you have depth at that position, it's easier to sustain the injury, but Randy was -- last year at Maryland; is that correct, so probably hadn't established the depth he wanted there yet and didn't have one but

had multiple injuries at that position. So that's very difficult for any coach to overcome. And now having a guy that lost the football not once but twice with CJ, I'm sure he's playing with that senior mentality that I'm out of time and I've got to play my best football, and I'm sure he's preparing the right way, as well.

Q. Speaking of quarterback injuries, obviously Mitchell struggled with that earlier this year. His good performance last Saturday, is that a product of getting healthier?

COACH DOEREN: That's part of it, yeah, and I think the reps. I think what people don't understand is two things: We inherited Pete Thomas and Manny and Manny wasn't ready to play, and Pete we felt like we needed competition there and we brought Brandon in who hasn't been a starting quarterback, but he's a very smart football player. He learned our offense and we felt like he was more multidimensional, and so every game Brandon would have played would have been his first year as a starting quarterback, and every one of those reps would have mattered for him as a growth at his position.

He had a great fall camp and it showed in the first quarter of the first game, and then he lost five and a half games. So a lot of the growth that -- he's really like a freshman. He's playing his first year as a starter at that spot. I think what you're seeing now is some games under his belt. Florida State, the way he got to play there, and then he struggled in that game, and then North Carolina and didn't get to play against Duke and got a little healthy -- excuse me, played against Duke and got injured and got healthy in the BC game, and he's just got four games of reps here where you're starting to see the progress. I think for a coach, I think the more you coach a guy, the more you understand what his strengths and weaknesses are, and to be able to detail a game plan that fits him better.

Q. This is the last game of your first year at NC State, and people on the outside don't always see all the things that are happening inside. Talk about some of the things you think you've established this year in your first year as the head coach of the program and the kinds of things that you want to create for the future?

COACH DOEREN: Yeah, I appreciate

that. Well, we had the highest team GPA they've had in football history my first spring here on campus. To this date we've had very few off-the-field issues to deal with. Our players have really taken the one attack, one goal mentality that we've established as far as the accountability to your teammate and those that play here and played before you mentality, and I think there's a lot of bad things publicly going on in all sports, and our team has done a nice job with that.

I think we've played a lot of young players, and we're recruiting extremely well, and within that, we've done \$900,000 worth of facility improvements and we're getting ready to build our indoor here in February, which will be done next December. So there's a lot of positive facility changes to a place that already had good facilities.

I think all the people that have been around here and understand what we're doing from the inside out really get the progress. Unfortunately the win-loss part of it hasn't matched up with that, but we know where the program is headed, and I appreciate the opportunity to talk about it.

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