



**Postgame Press Conference Quotes
Kennesaw State vs. Cincinnati
Sept. 10, 2021**

Head Coach Luke Fickell

Opening Statement

"I wish you had told me it was going to end like that. I would have slept a little better knowing that. The triple option is always challenging in different ways, and that is a different type of triple option team, and I am happy to say that we did a really, really good job across the board. Sometimes you don't realize when we talk about the triple option and our defense, the reality is it's the whole picture. The ability to do things together because of the limitations, as far as how many possessions, and different things that you get and our guys really took that to heart. Across the board, all in all, we played well. It is only game two, but that is the most together football that we have had. Like I said, in game two, the complimentary football that you got to be able to do. If we're going to have to continue to grow to be as good as we can be and we did it today. I am happy and excited about that, but there are some things that it doesn't help you. Sometimes a triple option doesn't help you in the next couple of weeks, so you have turn the page and move on. I think we answered some questions that we had from last week, the maturity and how we can handle things. To me, more than anything, that's what I am most proud of is our ability to be mature to handle the preparation and all that we had to do and to come out and play as we did."

On how important the second offensive drive of the game was to get points on the board

"The first offensive possession that blows up on a sack, for us to still move the football out to get to a position where we could punt the ball well, I thought that was a little bit of a recovery and made me feel better about what we were doing. But then for the offense to come back the next three possessions and really take charge. The only time after that we got the interference, and the offensive pass interference, which is kind of a questionable call on a down-the-field block that hurt us on the drive, and then the turnover. Other than that, offensively in the first half, when we were moving, and we felt good, then the ability to come out in second half in control was key."

On Ben Bryant's accuracy and improvement from last week

"You don't want guys to get the jitters after last week. We throw one into the field side flat and they take it back last week because of those sudden change situations we were probably as much the cost, and that is connected to both sides of the ball. but happy to see [Ben Bryant] at a high confidence level. I think we kind of had an idea that we were going to throw out a little bit, but you know how those guys are times they want to take the shots down the field. The best thing that he did, and we did all day took what was there, sometimes you get antsy and want to take a Tyler Scott and all the receivers down the

field, but the accuracy of the ability to continue to move the chains is where we have got to continue to focus.”

On tight ends Josh Whyle and Leonard Taylor's involvement helping the offense early

“Well, I know for us defensively, it's difficult when people have two tight ends that can do a lot of different things and I'm sure it's similar to other people that we play, but that they're both guys that bring a lot of different value. It's not just catching the football but blocking as well and their versatility gives us a chance to make people play us differently as an offense. We're going to continue to grow with those guys. There are opportunities for both. Sometimes you say (Leonard) Taylor, he's the guy that plays in-line, and Josh (Whyle) is the guy that is going to flex out, and the reality is what makes those guys so good is their ability to evolve, and we will continue to grow with that. I know that Ben Bryant loves the big targets. I know those guys are not just a part of the passing game but also a big part of the run game.”

On Charles McClelland having a great performance in today's game and stepping in for Ryan Montgomery

“It's good to see him back. I know he may have only run the ball 10 times for 66 yards, but I thought after last week's performance and to come back out this week, do what he did, and stay on some special teams, will be as valuable there as he is. It just shows you the versatility that he has and how we're going to be able to continue to use him this entire year. We want to figure out who those two running backs are, then you have a third guy usually, but it is a position that you'll probably see three guys for the majority of the time. As we continue to move forward, we'll see what kind of roles those guys figure out, but Chuck right now is the guidance leader of that pack. There's a lot of different things you can do first.”

On how important it was for Myles Montgomery to have a good game today

“Yeah, it always is, and I told you guys that the most difficult thing coming out of camp was trying to figure out what you had at the running backs line. You don't get those challenges of carrying the football live-action that often. I don't want to say it's growing pains, but a lot of time with younger guys there are some growing pains. Hopefully, Myles (Montgomery) learned his lesson that the ability to take care of the football is first and foremost. Just glad he got an opportunity to rectify it and come out of the game feeling really good about what he was doing.”

On mistakes being exposed in the early part of the season

“Well, we will see, we have to break down the film. I think there were some mistakes in Arkansas that didn't get exposed. Today, I'd still obviously love to be able to play cleaner. The penalties are still one of those things we need to fix. I know when you get later in the game, and it gets some guys that aren't in the same rhythm, they can get a little bit sloppy, but those are the kinds of things that we got to continue to focus on. That maturity of our team is really a big deal. And as we grow, we got to grow in some other areas. It's not just playing ball, but it's the ability to play clean, and eliminate some of those situations that we put ourselves in. Obviously our very first play offensively, or pass interference down the field, or different things like that, but I thought, for the most part, we're addressing what our guys recognize, and what we got to do to continue to grow.”

On Evan Prater coming into the game and making big plays

"It's really hard because you guys wanted to ask about it too. It doesn't make it any easier. I said to Jim Kelly afterwards, I was happy that he not only got an opportunity to play but he got an opportunity to do what he can do. Sometimes you get in those situations, and you get hamstrung by the coach. We can only do this, and it was great to get him in there and let him kind of do what it is that he can do, show all the different things that he can do, build some confidence in himself as well. We've seen it we know it, but to go out there and do it, and have the opportunity to do it, is what's sometimes most difficult. I'd say he played well. He was sharp, and it wasn't just running the football. It was the ability to throw the ball down the field. I'm really proud of, not just the way he played, but the way he's handled this whole thing and his ability to be prepared for when that opportunity comes. It's going to be a great thing for us. "

On Jabari Taylor and Ja'Von Hicks' defensive touchdowns

"Those kind of eluded us last year. We got our hands on a lot of balls and I think we'd return them to the two-yard line, three-yard line, one-yard line, the four-yard line. I think is where we took the balls to this past year, and we had a little thing. I don't think we had a Colerain guy that knew how to get in the endzone. Coach Combs swears and now that he's back from being a Colerain guy, and next time a Colerain guy gets his hands on the ball, he's born in the endzone, so he got it done. I'm not sure there was anybody out there Hicks had to fall but needless to say we found a way to find the end zone. You can't even put a price on how much that just picks you up and I mean that defensively. The momentum and energy. Those are two things right there. I don't think we had a defensive touchdown last year and to come up with two in a game like this is good."

On speaking about the Colerain guys and Ivan Pace, Jr.

"I don't know the numbers, but I know this. Those guys inside did a really good job. They said they'd rush 150 yards and 76 of those last 76 games held him under 150 yards. It's because of those guys. You don't want to get those two nose guard guys in their graves. Jabari Taylor, Dontay Corleone and Justin Wodtly did a really good job to give Wilson Huber and Ivan Pace in the best opportunity to fit and fill downhill. You can see the instincts even at a triple-option game. It's from a kid like that, he's going continue to grow up. He's a big part of what we're doing."

On Jowon Briggs and how important he was to the success of the defense

"It's big and especially in a game like this. He's going to continue to grow. He played an end for us last year. He's going to play more inside this year. Last year, on defense, Curtis Brooks was one of the guys I would say is the MVP of the defense. We had some pretty good corners out there that weren't bad, and some other guys were pretty good players. In my opinion, defensive linemen and those like Curtis Brooks are one of the MVPs. To fill those shoes is going to be a big deal. The good thing is Briggs' going to do a great job. He's going to have some help behind him, so he doesn't have to play all the time. Corleone kind of stepped up today and hopefully we'll get Dominique Perry back here soon."

On how Ryan Mullaney stepped up for the Bearcats

"He did. He did a really good job and he's going to be one of those guys that's going to have to continue to step up for us. We've kind of said that I really feel good about the way we play with some of our three defensive linemen. In order for us to really sustain and continue to grow throughout the year, we have to play seven to eight guys. This was a big day to see him come play to get a lot of action. He showed what it is that he could do it and the consists that he can do it. It wasn't one of those things he was rolling in there from series three, on two on. He was in a situation where he had to go out there and play and perform. He did a really good job. It's going bode well for the entire defense."

On Malik Vann

"I don't know. It's still early to tell. I know that he didn't come back into the game, but we'll have to figure that out. You always have some of those things. As we continue to move on, it's only week two but you have guys that have bumps and bruises and what that means is there's other guys that have to step up. There are some guys in that locker room and they played a little bit today. Maybe they don't know what their exact role is but as we continue to press on in this journey, they're going to have a much bigger role moving forward."

On Will Pauling

"I haven't gotten anything either on him so all those guys will be evaluated here later this afternoon or tomorrow. Another guy that was a tough situation for us. He's done really good job."

Senior defensive lineman Jowon Briggs***On how he's adjusting to new defensive coordinator Walter Stewart***

"Coach Walt is a defensive mind, being a guy that played at UC, he has so much knowledge when it comes to football and so much knowledge when it comes to the game and the culture. He just ties it all together, a great personality that does well in the coaching setting. Personally, I have had four different coaches, so the adjustment isn't that bad for me, but it's really compelling to see how well the young guys take to him. Just learning things easily, going headstrong in there and being good coachable players."

Briggs on the momentum shifting with the defensive touchdowns

"We talked about it all the time. Sudden change, whether there be sudden changes going back in on defense or on offense. I was getting the offense back on the field. Our guys on the defensive line was flying around. We got to put some points up and as you said that does a lot for momentum. A lot of people kind of understate that, but especially being at home hearing the Nippert roaring like that does a lot for us."

Graduate Student defensive lineman Jabari Taylor***On what is it like as a defense when you can put points on the board?***

"That's a great feeling. Playing a complimentary ball and being able to give them a breather here and there, and they being able to give us a breather stay on the field. It's a great feeling to be able to play complimentary ball. If we can continue to do that the rest of the season, you know it's nothing up."

On if he prefers to play on the inside like he did today.

"Inside, I love that even when I'm not making a play, just banging hands, being in the middle of all that double or triple team. Or being able to pop up and make the play and sometimes. I'm just doing my job. I guess that's just that's me. I don't mind the edge and little space though."

On getting to test the depth of the defensive line group

"All I can say is it's not that I was I wasn't doubting anything about us or the ones that were coming after me, (Jowon) Briggs, Malik (Vann) and down but the fact that they were able to stay just disciplined if not better than us is a very, very comfortable feeling."

Senior Quarterback Ben Bryant

On improvement from last week

"There was lot of self-inflicted stuff last week. But I was happy with we played today and like I said, there's still a lot to improve on. I'm proud of our team getting the first win at home."

On his performance today

"I don't know honestly. I just want to get wins for this team. That's really the most important thing targeting nine different receivers. What was it that you were seeing from that Kennesaw State defense? All those guys came out and played well. They came out and did a little don't know honestly, not clear. I just I just want to get the wins for this team. That's just really the most important thing targeted nine different receivers today. What was it that you were seeing from that Kennesaw State defense? Good all those guys. They came out and did a little something different than we planned for. So we've made good adjustments early and I mean we have so many guys that can make plays and get open and so that everyone whose job is just getting the ball to the playmakers and go to work how fun is that when you're having a game like you had today that even everyone gets to get in towards the end there and have some fun with this team as well. It's so much fun because like, well, those guys don't play on the weekends during game day. I mean, they put in the same amount of work that we do and that it's such a good players good friend of mine, he's, he's done so much better. And I'm super proud of him. It's nice to see him go out there and succeed also Brady got in there too. So, a lot of guys got to know that and it's exciting to see those guys kind of get rewarded for their hard work."

On the very first offensive play

"Coach talked about the fact that very first offensive play, but it was important for you guys to move the ball out in managing and not go for too much. Get yourself in a position where you can put the ball away. Can you think about that at that point, like hey, let's not try to get it back all at once just to try to give our defense a shot Yeah, you know the quarterback. You don't ever want to force things when they aren't there. And unfortunately, that first play happened. It is what it is. But yeah, when you're packed up like that you want to be able to look the field and not."