

Southeastern Conference Football Championship Game: Georgia vs LSU

Saturday December 7, 2019



Ed Orgeron Derek Stingley Joe Burrow LSU Tigers

LSU - 37, Georgia - 10

THE MODERATOR: We're now ready with the SEC champion LSU Tigers. We have Coach Orgeron, Joe Burrow, and Derek Stingley. We'll ask Coach to make an opening comment, and then we'll take questions for the Coach and the two players.

ED ORGERON: So proud of our football team. These guys are committed to excellence and great leadership. The two men beside me are excellent players, great team players. This is a great win. I'm so proud of our defense tonight. The way they came to play, I thought overall it was our best effort of the season.

I wasn't surprised. Preparation, I thought these guys were phenomenal. They had a look in their eye today of focus and winning and determination. This is a winning football team. This is a win for the whole organization, for the state of Louisiana, and for LSU and everybody that played in the purple and gold.

But tonight wasn't our final destination. We know that. We don't know where we're going to go. We don't know who we're going to play. Wherever they tell us to go, whoever they tell us to play, we'll be ready to go.

Q. Ed, (indiscernible) the No. 1 seed with the committee?

ED ORGERON: I don't know that. I think we're a darn good football team. We don't know. I've told the team it doesn't matter. It don't matter where they rank us, where they tell us to go. We've got to win the next game. That's all that matters.

Q. Derek, your first interception, the game was still in balance at that time, and they're threatening. Talk about that play and how you guys played overall on defense tonight.

DEREK STINGLEY: On defense, it was amazing, but this is what we've been working for since the summer.

We knew that, if everybody worked together, then nobody could really compete with us.

Q. Joe, on the pass to Justin, how much of that was planned? How much of that was improvised? Take us through that play.

JOE BURROW: It was all improvised. Justin ran a six-yard hitch route and saw me scrambling and took off deep. We got a great feel for each other. I knew exactly where he was going to be when I got out of there.

Q. Just the scrambles in general tonight, was that a big part of the game plan going in? And on that first touchdown, has it seemed like you never had so long a time to throw in your time at quarterback?

JOE BURROW: Yeah, so they came out on defense with kind of what Auburn played against us a little bit, and we didn't expect that against Georgia at all. So we kind of had to feel our way out a little bit. They were rushing three. So my O-line did a great job of giving me time in that three-man rush, and our receivers found a way to get open.

Q. Coach, the media are always looking for Heisman moments. I think third and 17 at Texas is one for Burrow, but that toss for Jefferson, where does that kind of rank in your mind?

ED ORGERON: In my opinion, he's the best player in the country. In my opinion, he should win it. In my opinion, he's going to win it. The best thing about Joe is he's a team player. All he wants to do is win this game. Individual awards are not high on his list. That's what makes him such a great team player.

Q. Derek, what do the defensive performances against A&M and in this game kind of say about you guys as a unit?

DEREK STINGLEY: This game kind of proved the point because a lot of people, they didn't really respect us, but we came out and played and showed everybody what we're made of.

Q. Joe, just as kind of a followup to that, what does this game mean to you? You've had a lot of victories before, but how important was this one?

JOE BURROW: LSU hadn't won since 2011. It's such a great victory for the state and for the university. This is

what we've been working for for a long time.

Q. Ed, you come off the field and give Derek a hug. What did you want to convey to him in that moment?

ED ORGERON: I'm proud of him. I see Derek work -- you go in the off-season, and you can go in the indoor arena every Saturday and Sunday, and he and his daddy are working every Saturday and Sunday. He's a tireless worker. Derek is a humble young man. He came ready to go when we had him. His dad did a good job of coaching him. He's one of the finest corners I've ever been around, and he's a competitor. I'll tell you, these two guys are team players. Team comes first with them.

JOE BURROW: In case anybody forgets, Derek is a freshman, in case anybody forgets that. I forget it a lot.

Q. Derek, I didn't ever ask you. How has this year played out from your standpoint? Is this what you expected, to come in and be viewed as one of the best cornerbacks in the country as a freshman?

DEREK STINGLEY: For one, the only reason I'm in this position is because of everyone else on the defense. We all work together. We make sure everybody's on the same page. As long as that happens, everybody is looking good together. I knew that was going to happen, and I'm just blessed to be in this spot.

Q. Joe, how much fun is it for you in a game like that where things don't go perfect and you have to make plays and things break down and all of a sudden turn to like a 10-year-old again on a playground making plays? How much fun was that for you?

JOE BURROW: They did a great job of disguising their blitzes. They had a new package for us this week that I didn't see on film. That's why I was having to make those scrambles. I told the O-line before the game, this one's going to be a lot of fun. I can just feel it. That's exactly what it was.

Q. Derek, you're getting a lot of hype as the nation's top cornerback. What was it like learning to play against these type of quarterbacks in the SEC and going against a quarterback like Joe in practice? How does that make you better?

DEREK STINGLEY: Joe taught me a lot about having to go play by play because in high school I was always able to make the play, but when I came and he was pinpoint accuracy, there was just times that I was on the receiver but I just couldn't do anything about it. That just taught me a lot about the game because it's going to happen. Once I got over that, like play-by-play mentality, then I knew that I'd be all right.

Q. Joe, one of your friends, former Ohio State quarterback Troy Smith said in a recent interview that you were really chomping at the bit to play Ohio State this year. Would you care to speak on that?

JOE BURROW: Look, we'll play anybody anywhere. I said in the post-game, you can take us to Canada, and we'll play on a gravel lot. It doesn't matter where or who we play.

Q. Joe, this offensive line was much maligned last year. That first drive that you guys had, it seemed like you had about ten seconds to throw on that touchdown to Ja'Marr Chase. First guy I saw you point to was left tackle St. Charles. Can you speak to this group and how you felt they performed today against Georgia?

JOE BURROW: They're unreal. They've been unreal all year. They're one of the most improved groups I've ever been around. They took that criticism from last year to heart, and like I said, they were three-man rushing us in the first half, and I told them, hey, I'm going to have to sit back there and find some open guys because I don't have eight people in coverage. They gave me as much time as I wanted back there. I think they're the best group in the country.

Q. Joe, what is it -- I guess, how big is it for the offense for Terrace to have a game like he had today? And what do you tell him as a quarterback after a drop like he had and then you came back to him a few times later?

JOE BURROW: I told him after that drop, look, I'm coming back to you. They're playing Ja'Marr and Justin, and I'm going to have to come back to you. He only had one drop all year, and so I trust that guy with every ball, with every 50-50 ball.

That's what makes this offense so great. We have five guys that can hurt you, and you're going to have to pick your poison. If you want to take away Ja'Marr and Justin, you're going to have to deal with Thad, Clyde, and Terrace.

Q. Ed, you've coached a lot of places, time zones, whatever, a lot of different seasons. I guess they're all different. What words do you find to describe the fall of 2019?

ED ORGERON: Very proud of our football team. You know, in the spring I could see them coming together. They were starting in first season with the spread offense and having Joe run it, then having Joe Brady here and to see the evolution of the spread offense, which our fans have been wanting for a long time. Then to get the No. 1 player in the country sitting right here and top recruits.

We're finally gelling on defense the last couple of games. Coach Aranda challenged the defense. There was a lot of pride on the defense. I knew they were going to play their best ball, and I said it. I'm very proud of our coaching staff. I think we have the best assistant coaches in America. You look at a guy like Tommy Moffitt, who gives it his all 24/7, Jack Marucci. We have all the support from Scott Woodward, who came in and gave us every bit of support. Anything that we needed that he could do, he did for us. It's just a good time at LSU, and everybody is pulling the same side of the rope.

Q. Derek, I'm wondering, it's a tough learning curve for any freshman in the SEC, but was there a game that kind of made you better, whether it was adversity, whether it was going in (indiscernible) or somebody else that maybe taught you something about yourself?

DEREK STINGLEY: Really every game that was played taught me something new. Like every week throughout practice, like after watching film, I would either change up technique or change up my eyes, like every game taught me something. There wasn't a specific game that taught me more than something else.

Q. Joe, you mentioned that you saw them drop eight in coverage at times. Had other people tried to play you that way earlier this year? The fact that you guys were able to counter it and had answers for it, does it kind of make you think that you guys might be unstoppable right now on offense?

JOE BURROW: Every single week, you watch film all week, and it started back when we played Texas. We watch film, and we go in and see something they haven't done all year. It happens time and time again every single week. I tell my coaches, why do we even watch film anymore? We see something new. We might as well go out there cold turkey.

So I think we have a great coaching staff, and they make the adjustments that have enabled us to be successful.

Q. This is for Coach Orgeron. Joe seems like quite a mild-mannered guy. How does he become such a leader on the field? Talk to us about that.

ED ORGERON: He leads by example. I remember his first day coming here, we were running 110s. I don't know how many there were, 16, and he won every one. The next day he did it again, and the next day he did it again. He kept his mouth shut and worked hard, and eventually he took over this football team.

This is his team, and the reason it's his team, it's because he earned their respect. I've got to give it to

Joe. Joe's quiet, doesn't say much. He leads by his actions. But every once in a while, he'll say something when things aren't going right, and that's the mark of a true leader. But he does it on the field. He backs it up. The whole team, everybody in the organization believes in Joe.

Q. Ed, what goes through your mind when you see Joe throw a ball, get it batted back to him, and he takes off running with it?

ED ORGERON: Run, Joe, run!

(Laughter)

Q. Ed, just to follow up on what I asked Joe, he has not had a bad game the whole season, and just kind of seeing all the different defenses he's seen, do you think there is a way that, if somebody could play him, that it would be difficult for him? Or is he just so naturally gifted at reading the game, that he could adjust on the fly?

ED ORGERON: You know, I think, as we go into the playoffs, the competition is going to be stiffer, obviously. We'll find out. I think it's a combination of his athletic ability. It's a combination of the talent that we have on offense, and, again, I think there's some fantastic play calling going on.

Then again, Joe makes some plays on his own. He can extend plays with his feet. He has a great connection with his receivers. Those guys caught 10,000 balls on their own this summer. They had player only practices. None of that stuff surprises me. These guys have a will to win.

Q. Joe, you talked earlier about you can forget that Derek's a freshman. I'm wondering, sometimes when you get a top-rated recruit like that, they come in with attitude and think they're going to do what they did in high school, but obviously he didn't take that approach to start off the year. What did you see from him when he first came in that kind of told you he was going to be like that?

JOE BURROW: Derek is as humble as a guy as I've seen. Like you said, No. 1 recruit, sometimes they come in, and they're all cocky and loud, and Derek didn't say a word for three months. At practice, I would go out of my way to throw Derek's way to see if he was as good as everyone said he was. I can tell you, yes, he is. Yes, he is.

Q. Both your highest ranked wins at the time this year were essentially road environments, and I don't mean that to knock the LSU fans, but they were in Georgia's backyard. Just winning those two games on the road, essentially, what do you feel that shows you about the makeup of your team to

win in that environment?

ED ORGERON: We're battle tested. We block out the noise. These guys are focused. I think they feed off the energy in the stadium, whether it's LSU Tiger Stadium or someone else, we feed off the energy. We enjoy going into someone else's stadium. We enjoy the challenge. I think our players enjoy it. We don't talk about it much, but I think we enjoy the challenge.

Q. Ed, you said many times it's not about you, but you have to take some satisfaction delivering a championship to a state that you know so well, it's where you're from, and you know what football means in Louisiana.

ED ORGERON: I'm just happy for the people. I know what it means to them to see all the fans cheering, to see all the Georgia fans out there, and we owned this stadium today. It was a good feeling. I'm just happy for the players. I'm happy for the state of Louisiana and happy for LSU. This is what I'm supposed to. I'm supposed to recruit great players and win big-time games.

Q. This question is honestly for any of you guys, but I'm wondering, over the course of this season, how would you assess how your team has grown and come together? It's never easy to win a conference, and it's never easy to get to the playoffs, but you guys have done both of those undefeated. How would you say you've grown from day one to now?

JOE BURROW: I think it really started last year. We had a lot of people coming back. We lost three starters, I think, and we were young on offense last year. I think towards the end of the year you saw us kind of starting to gel. You know, when I first got here, I felt like it was kind of -- you had the offense, and you had the defense, and now you have LSU. That really started middle of last year. They started really gelling as a team, and this is as close as I've ever been to anybody.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach. Thank you guys.

ED ORGERON: Go Tigers!

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Saturday December 7, 2019



Kirby Smart Jake Fromm J.R. Reed Georgia Bulldogs

LSU - 37, Georgia - 10

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll begin with Georgia. We'll ask Coach Smart to make an opening comment, and then we'll take questions for both and coach. We've got Jake Fromm and J.R. Reed with us as well.

KIRBY SMART: I want to thank the SEC and really our fan base. I always start that way because what an incredible atmosphere. I always say that about this venue. It's awesome to play in. The crowd is incredible. I thought it was more Georgia initially the first half than it was LSU, and they were impactful.

Unfortunately, we just couldn't make enough plays tonight. I give LSU a ton of credit. That is a really good football team, and we knew that coming in. We were going to have to play well. We were going to have to make explosive plays. We were unable to do that. I am very proud of the way our players compete, and I am very proud of the leaders on this team who have continued to compete.

That's not what we thought was going to happen, and certainly disappointed, but it doesn't take away the fact we've been here three straight years, and I'm really proud of this senior class, who led us to a lot of victories.

Q. Kirby, with the player losses and injuries that you had this year, what does the scheme and sort of a microcosm of the season, what does it tell you in terms of offensive philosophy and whether you have to go in a different direction after this season?

KIRBY SMART: To be honest with you, I thought we had -- I mean, we didn't come out with a mentality of running the ball down your throat today. If you thought we tried to do that, that probably wasn't a good view on the game. We thought we had to score points to win the game.

You have an offense that's built around the players you have. So you take the players you have, and you use your strengths. With the players we have, we have certain strengths. We usually have good pass protection. We have a good offensive line. We've got good backs.

But our ability to run the ball has not been consistent this year, and people can say, well, Coach Smart wants to play man ball. Coach Smart wants to win, and we threw the ball 42 times. Now, you can say it was because we were behind, but we threw the ball early in the game, and we had some drops, we had some misses. It's not a matter of what is your offensive philosophy? It is what is the best way to win the game. I honestly think that's what we're trying to do.

Q. Jake, what was it like being -- you talked about just going into the game having injured receivers. You lost another one. You've got three of your first top five guys out. What was that situation like for you in the first half?

JAKE FROMM: It's kind of tough on us, but for us, it's a "next man up" mentality. I think the guys were ready. They understood the plan. It's just an opportunity for them to go out and make a couple of plays.

KIRBY SMART: I would also like to note there was two that went down. We lost Dom Blaylock and Kearis Jackson for the entire game. I don't make excuses. We've got to go make plays. But those were two of the five we had left.

Q. Jake, I just want to be sure because it seems like nothing this season offensively was ever fully in sync. You talked about that after games before the season. Were you fully healthy this season? I know you don't want to use anything as an excuse, but I was just curious.

JAKE FROMM: Yeah, I was fully healthy. I went in every week at 100 percent and ready to go help my team whatever way I could.

Q. J.R., just going against Joe Burrow, what he's able to do, I mean, from your vantage point, what made him be able to be so successful today against you guys?

J.R. REED: He's a great athlete, man. We had a lot of

plays out there we were supposed to make, and he'd just squeeze out of it, gets out of it. He did a good job. We had a lot of guys on him, and he broke like three, four tackles. He extends a lot of plays.

Q. Jake, what was that like to have the pass dropped on Landers' play? I'm not asking you to point a finger on him, but just kind of the deflation that happened after that. Did you feel like that was a last-gasp situation for you guys?

JAKE FROMM: No, for us, it's always about fighting. Stuff happens in football. That's part of the game. There's a lot of ups and downs, especially in big games like this. There's a lot of ups and downs in it. You just kind of have to weather the storms at times and go and try to make the next play.

Q. Coach Smart, you were pretty much in this ball game going into that third quarter. Was that 70-yard pass that was thrown, was that kind of the back breaker in this game?

KIRBY SMART: Yeah, that one was frustrating because we thought we had a really good call on it. We had pressure, and we had a guy come scot-free. He missed him, and I think we missed him again maybe on that same play. Hey, I thought that was the perfect call by our defensive coordinator, and they made a better play than we did a call, and sometimes players do that. You learn in coaching that good players make big-time plays, and that was an incredible play by Joe Burrow.

We brought six people. When you bring six people, you expect to get home. He made a helluva play. I give Joe Burrow credit, man. He is a phenomenal player.

Q. Kirby, just so I understand, it looked like early in the game you guys were only bringing two or three, and I could be completely wrong, but just the defensive philosophy early in the game, it looked like Burrow had just tons of time out there.

KIRBY SMART: Yeah, we had a three man, a four man, a five man, and a six man rush, and we try to change those things up. We did a lot of studies going into the game of ways to get incompletions because you're basically fighting for incompletions on them. We got pressured. We didn't finish. When we had three man rush, a lot of times he was able to hold the ball, but we had a lot of guys covering, and you're fighting. We got them to third and long on that opening drive and didn't off the field, then they ended up converting to a touchdown.

I give them a lot of credit. We had three man, four man, five man rush, played seven DBs. We had a lot of different looks.

Q. Kirby, what was D'Andre Swift's real status at

the start of the game?

KIRBY SMART: D'Andre Swift's real status was he practiced all week. He did everything we asked him to do. He said he was going to be able to play and thought he would be able to compete. He felt good in warmups, and he played. There was no -- I mean, as far as I know, he was fine. Towards the end of the game, we ended up holding him out once the outcome was decided, but he seemed fine to me.

Q. J.R., just to go back to what you were saying, I think that second touchdown, three man rush, I think Joe had 8.5 seconds before he threw that touchdown pass. How tough is it to cover guys for that long?

J.R. REED: It's a very tough thing to do, but I think it's our job to cover on the back end. So we've got to cover those guys. We've got to get the ball down, something we practice. We knew what the game plan was going in, and we've just got to do that.

Q. Kirby, what's the biggest thing about LSU's offense that just kind of took the SEC by storm this year? Is it the quarterback, the play calling, the running back, combination of all of it? What can you put your finger on?

KIRBY SMART: That's a great question. First of all, I've been in this league for a long time, and I don't know that I've seen the combination of things they've got. They've got an elite quarterback that's a really good athlete. They have a back that is a matchup guy. He can match up on anybody and go in. They've got really good wideouts, and they've got an experienced offensive line. So they go tempo, but they don't go tempo to just run the ball, they go tempo and take shots. They never change personnel. It's like 28 consecutive snaps with the same people on the field. So it does not allow you to substitute in the pattern that you want to.

So there's a combination of a lot of things, and it is scheme oriented, but it's a lot more than scheme. They have plays that they've run all year, that we've run all year. Our plays haven't looked like their plays because a lot of times we might not have the same guys doing those plays.

They've got a great group of wideouts combined with an extremely athletic quarterback, and it hit at the right time. I've got a lot of respect for what they're doing and who they're doing it with. They're hard to defend.

Q. Joe Burrow's numbers last year were pretty much identical to what Jake's were this year, and Jake's were better the first two years. He didn't become a different person, but clearly something changed. Do you feel like you're getting the most

out of the talent you have, or do you think it's a recruiting issue that you need like they have? They have the same guys, but they're doing all this stuff.

KIRBY SMART: First off, I would say what you just said. The first two years, Jake's numbers were better. So the indicator of that was four wide receivers were on our sideline that were drafted that are playing in the NFL. So right now, I don't know if we have four wide receivers that are going to be playing in the NFL at this time next year.

And the loss of those wideouts, the vertical threat, has probably hurt our team. That's my responsibility, right, to replace them. That's my responsibility to replace them in recruiting, and we probably haven't done a good enough job of that.

Now, we had two or three out different games of the year, so we've not had a consistent group out there. Went out and grabbed some transfers we thought would help. A lot of those things fall on it. People can point at Jake, they can point at Coley, they can point at me.

I understand that. But at the end of the day, it's not about that. It's what can we do to win each game individually? There's a lot of plays they run that we run. You watch the tape closely, they run the exact same play we do. What's the difference right now? They have a lot more success with it. They have guys getting open one on one and catching the ball.

I don't know how many drops we had tonight, but I feel like we had to have had five or six that you could say should have probably been caught. And we would have been more explosive if that was the case. I don't mean that in disrespect. If we had really good wideouts, we're more explosive. I don't know. One is on the bench in the first half, one is in a wheelchair, and two or three are in the NFL that came out early. That's just tough.