

LSU Press Conference Quotes
October 24th, 2020

LSU Football Head Coach Ed Orgeron

Opening Statement...

“Very proud of our football team. Two weeks of hard work. Here’s what I asked them, “Stay together.” Here’s what we demand from the coaches, it starts with me, “Coach harder.” We coached more goal line on offense, and it paid off today. We did more service teamwork than we usually do, and it paid off for us. This was a total team effort and I have to thank the coaching staff that worked tireless hours to get our guys ready. Were we perfect tonight? No. We have a lot of things to shore up on defense, especially on coverage. Guys weren’t running wide open and we still have got to continue to fix it. I thought our pass rush was outstanding, led by BJ Ojulari. I think he had three sacks, what a tremendous freshman. We’re really proud of TJ Finley. That’s what we saw in camp, he’s a competitor and so is Max Johnson. You saw it out there. We have two outstanding, young quarterbacks. I think Steve Ensminger did a better job with our running game. John Emery showed up, Tyrion Davis-Price ran well. Overall just a great team effort, and the score on special teams.”

On TJ Finley’s performance...

“Strong arm, very confident. Steve had a game plan that he knew TJ could operate and he never blinked. TJ showed us a lot of confidence throughout camp, he lost some weight. I thought he did a tremendous job of leading the team today. You see how he had a tremendous arm, scrambled around and made some plays on the run and he made some good decisions. He threw one interception but look, be patient. He did a phenomenal job.”

On if the defense is growing into their identity/On if the defense is improving...

“That’s what we wanted out of the 4-3. We have some outstanding defensive ends; we had a great pass rush today. I knew this going into the game, South Carolina’s strength was running the ball and I thought we could rush the passer, and we did. We did an outstanding job at that, but there’s still some things we need to sure up, especially in our coverage part.”

On why Max Johnson didn’t split the snaps with TJ Finley...

“TJ [Finley] was on fire. I was planning on playing TJ [Finley] the first quarter and Max Johnson the second quarter if I could to see who the best one was to end the game. TJ got hot and I told both of the young men, I said ‘I’m going to try to play both of y’all, but if one of y’all are hot, I’m not taking you out the game.’ TJ was hot.”

On if this was LSU’s most complete performance...

“Yes, I do think that, and we still have some things to get better at. We’re going to play better teams down the road, we put some stuff on film that guys are going to figure out and we better

fix it fast. Going into the game, we knew South Carolina was a tough, physical team with a lot of grit, just like their Coach Muschamp. They out-physical a lot of teams and we knew we had to play a physical game, which we did.”

On if tonight was a good night for Defensive Coordinator Bo Pelini...

“Sure, and he’s been great. He hasn’t blinked at all, he’s a veteran. He coached hard this week, he loves LSU, he loves being here. Like I told you, I believe in Coach Pelini but there are some things that we need to shore up. There are things that we need to execute. We have some great ideas, but we need to make sure our players are able to do it.”

On if Coach Emsinger’s experience at Quarterback helped TJ Finley...

“No question. I guarantee it. He was patient with TJ. He did a good job of getting those guys... we had both of those quarterbacks taking reps all week. We didn’t announce a starting quarterback until Thursday. I thought Coach Ensminger did a good job of planning all week. He had some different plays for Max Johnson if he were to go in. Maybe some different quarterback runs, and he had some different things for TJ if he were in and once we named the starting quarterback, he had a great game plan. You know, Coach Ensminger gets to work at about 4:30 a.m. and leaves at about 11 p.m., even sometimes sleeps in the office. He’s a great Tiger, was a great player here, and a great coach.”

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Quarterback TJ Finley

On entering the contest and if he was nervous ...

“I entered this contest really relaxed. My quarterback crew did an amazing job supporting me throughout the week. Steve Ensminger was amazing. Prepping me for this game. A lot of preparation went into this game. Coach Russ Callaway did an amazing job preparing me for the blitzes, the pressures and things of that nature. I will say, I didn't have many pregame jitters but if I did it was very quick.”

On if he thought he would be starting so quick into the season ...

“No, I never thought about it. I just focused on preparing every week like I was going to be the starter. Competing with Myles in practice, to make him better and he made me better. Every quarterback in the quarterback room has the ability to go in the game and win the game. It was just me thinking about us as a group supporting each other. When Max went in the game, I was on the sideline just as hype as everybody else. As he was when I went in, so it was a group effort.”

On how different it felt to play quarterback tonight compared to high school ...

“It felt amazing. First, my weight loss is a huge aspect in this success I'm having right now. Like everybody said I came into LSU, this is an embarrassing number but oh well, 265 pounds. I was huge. A lot of the guys messed with me and said I'll move to D tackle so I kind of took that to heart. You know, so when quarantine hit, COVID hit and we went into quarantine I took it upon myself to trim down in weight. It is paying off well, like you mentioned, we have a lot of playmakers on this team. And honestly, I don't feel a difference from when I played at Ponchatoula High. Of course, I got guys I could throw the ball to and they're going to make a play whenever. The speed of the game hasn't changed. I'm just taking it game by game in the preparation that the coaches are putting me through is helping tremendously.”

On how he feels about starting his career with this game ...

“Honestly, I don't look at it that way. Obviously, this is a big win for LSU, and for this team. I'm focused on Auburn. I'm going to get into the film room and get into the training room to get my body healthy. If Myles isn't able to play next week then I'll be ready for next week.”

On where he thinks the team's identity is compared to last week ...

“I feel like we have our swagger back. Last year the guys played together. The offense and defense, they fueled each other. Coach O always says, big plays fuel emotion. The offense, we have big plays, explosive runs, explosive passes. Defense had explosive stops. Interception, pick six right before the half, with things like that, I felt like we came together today. The last three

games, even versus Vanderbilt, I felt like the team was separated. I really didn't know why, but I feel like we just came together today. Coach O preached when we figured out that we weren't going to play Florida and that we were going to play South Carolina last Wednesday afternoon, he just preached to us that we'll win as long as we stay together. As long as we stay together we'll have success."

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John Emery Jr

On the support he was able to give TJ Finley as a freshman quarterback making his first start...

“TJ was very calm before and during the game, so it was easy to just be on his side with everything. When he first started, everything was kind of fast for him and he made a couple of mistakes, but him being a freshman and coming in and balling like that was unbelievable. For him to come in and stay composed was sensational. Me and TJ have a nice relationship and I’m so happy for him. He played a very calm and composed game.”

On how it felt to start as well as getting touches early and getting his rhythm going as opposed to entering the game later on...

“It’s always good to warm up early and get my legs going. It was a cold game and to come out pounding like we did; it woke up South Carolina’s defense. I’m so proud of my O-Line and I’m so happy that they stepped up big time this game. They gave us a huge confidence boost for next game.”

On how good it felt to score on a leap over the goal line and on how much the team worked on that in practice...

“As soon as we were going in the week after the Missouri game, we knew we had to work on goal line. I told TJ Finley and Tory Carter that I was getting in the end zone no matter what and that I was going to leap over it. We have great penetration with our O-Line and I just leaped over. It was great.”

On how much the team needed to win today after two tough losses...

“We had to get that nasty gut feeling out of our stomachs. We really needed this win. For South Carolina to beat Auburn, and then for us to beat South Carolina, it was a huge confident boost for us going into the week of Auburn. It was just an important week and we stayed focused through our practice as a team. I love the energy at practice every day. It was amazing and I had no doubt going into this game that we were going to win.

On the impact him and Tyrion Davis-Price had against the defense...

“We already have a pass game. We just wanted to come out and show that we have a run game. Me and Ty always motivate each other. All the running backs do. We know we have the abilities we just have to go on the field and show what we have. It was great. I’m happy for him and he’s happy for me. We just have to take it one game at a time.”

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LB Jabril Cox

On the impact of the team's win...

"This one was huge. It brought a lot of energy to us and something that we had to get back to: the LSU standard that we've all been knowing that we can do. This one was really well needed and going into Auburn is something that we can feed off of."

On what was working for the defense during the game...

"The reason they got down to the redzone was a few mishaps on our part. We had bad eyes by some of us in the secondary and linebackers missed gaps. Once they got down there, we decided to bend but not break. It was good, they missed a couple of field goals and we held them on a couple of possessions."

On playing under Defensive Coordinator Bo Pelini...

"Coach Pelini is really a player's coach and he really cares about us. Earlier in the week, Jacoby (Stevens), Damone (Clark) and I decided that we've just played really bad these last couple of games and we need to show everybody that Coach Pelini and his scheme is something that really fits our style. Coming out of tonight with a win and holding them to the amount of points that we did really showed how we can be as a whole defense."

On the defense giving up "explosive" plays...

"It's something that can be fixed. That's mostly on us, the players, either losing our eyes, trying to make a play, or just not focusing on the play. That's something that we can fix up on ourselves."

South Carolina Press Conference
October 24, 2020

Head Coach Will Muschamp

Opening Statement

“I knew coming in here that we often spawn talented backers. I was concerned about stopping the run especially and a young quarterback that was going to throw. So with that we didn't get our blocks, or tackles, and we did not play the run very well at all. That creates open pockets, and we have to bring an extra guy in the box to stop the rock. Offensively, we thought we moved the ball. But we missed three field goals, which was probably too far. We probably needed another yard or two inside with the ball. Parker (White) has been very consistent, we will be fine. We need to get off the field better, we had 75 yards on third downs about 8 times offensively. Which was key to the ballgame to give up 14 points to the defense on the field, you have a hard time winning the battle.”

Common themes and some of the breakdowns...

“I'll have to go back and look at film. We got beaten on man coverage a couple of times, and that was disappointing. But I went to credit them, (LSU) they have some really good skilled players, which we knew coming into the game.”

Inconsistent pressure on Finley...

“I'll have to look at it. I notice we made a couple of good stops. He made a couple of nice throws on the run with standard class. But we have to do a better job at covering the receivers. We need to work on rushing, when we were bringing in five, we didn't find those angles. So, we just have to go back and figure out how we can get pressure.”