

Vanderbilt University Football Media Conference

Saturday, August 31, 2019

Derek Mason

Post Game

Georgia - 30, Vanderbilt - 6

DEREK MASON: That showed today, as like in the second half, we just weren't able to get anything going. Conversely, defensively, I thought we were able to battle. This team never gave up, and they fought. Again, you learn a lot about yourself.

With that being said, it's the first game. It's a first game opportunity. I'll take all the information that we have. I know we can play better. We've got better football in us. And what we'll do is find a way to battle back, come back, get to work, and get ready for Purdue.

Last comment is probably well warranted. It has to do with Ryley Guay. I thought he kicked well. Ryley had a great off-season. I thought I could give him one last opportunity, but I wanted to see if we could punch it in the end zone. My mentality is definitely score points, but with that, I thought Ryley had a great day.

Q. Riley Neal completed 11 of 13 passes in the first half, so he was accurate, usually short stuff. Was that by design he was throwing short stuff?

DEREK MASON: Yeah.

Q. Or was it just what he saw?

DEREK MASON: I thought that's what the defense gave him. I thought they did a good job of playing top down, not wanting to give up anything on the outside early. That's really what it became. It became that type of ball game, where role coverage, sort of found Kalija most of the day, in terms of what it looked like. They were going to play over the top and try to single everybody else and make everybody else have to stand up.

There were a couple times with Riley -- I mean, he did a great job with his feet getting out of the pocket, but there were times he had to climb the pocket as well.

With that being said, I thought first half was solid. Second half, we've got to be better. We need it more, and we didn't function very well. We'll go back and take a look at it. Like I said, take any information and figure out where to go.

Q. Derek, three touchdowns first three



possessions, four total. What changed or got better on that side of the ball after those first three possessions?

DEREK MASON: I thought it was about attacking, making them a little bit more one dimensional, making them get the third down. The reality for us is we didn't tackle well in the first half. Even in the second half, we bled a little bit, but you saw guys straining. I thought there was a lot more strain in the second half, and that was good to see. We needed that.

I mean, we're down some guys right now, probably like most teams. But with that, just challenge guys to strain a little more, play a little harder, fight a little harder to get off blocks. Be a little tougher on the edges and on the perimeter and challenge more outside, and I thought those guys did that.

Q. (Indiscernible) hopped off the field later on in the game. I'm sure you don't know the severity of that injury yet, but is that a head injury?

DEREK MASON: I don't know anything, believe me. I looked up. I saw him coming off the field. I couldn't pay much attention because there was a football game going on.

Q. Ke'Shawn left some games last year because of injury. He took a whole lot of shots tonight. He still had a lot of gas left in the tank. Were you pleased with how he handled contact?

DEREK MASON: I was. I was pleased with how he handled contact. He came into the season ready, physically ready to go. I thought he was primed. There were a couple of opportunities meant for him tonight where he was close, he was close to breaking one, but their idea was to make sure at the end of the day that they were going to make the box really heavy. Roll coverage to one, heavy on the other, and for us, man, we've got to be able to take advantage of it, but I thought Key ran hard all night.

Q. There has been a lot of patch work on the offensive line with injuries and whatnot. What's your assessment? They certainly were able to create some creases and didn't give up too much pressure. What did you see?

DEREK MASON: Well, I said it earlier, I thought the offensive line did a good job. I thought they worked hard. For the group that it is right now, you know, with

four guys getting their first start against No. 3 in the country, I thought they handled it well. I thought they came out and really gave Georgia enough in the first half. They just didn't get enough opportunities.

Then what you slowly started to see was, with some of their pressure packages and what happened, we got flushed a little bit. Good thing is I didn't see a ton of penalties. We didn't have a ton of holding penalties or -- we had one -- they had a couple of procedures. Unfortunate, but I thought -- as a group, when you have four guys starting for the first time in the SEC against an SEC opponent, I thought these guys handled it pretty well.

Q. The three linemen that were out because of injury, Cochran, Saige Young, McMoore, are those long-term injuries? Are those game to game type?

DEREK MASON: They're day to day. You saw those guys out on the sideline. You saw them moving on the sideline. I think we're closer. Right now I'm in the day to day. When we get them back, we get them back. Here's the thing about football. You can't worry about the guys you don't have. You've got to worry about the guys you do. That's what you build on. That's what you work off of, and that's what we did.

I'm proud of these guys. We've got more work to do, and we've got to play against a Purdue team that had a rough game yesterday. We've got a short week. So we've got to get ready, and let's go.

Q. Is that the biggest road crowd you've ever seen here? How challenging is it to play at home with that many fans of their team here?

DEREK MASON: I didn't really notice it. I saw red, but I really didn't notice it. Once you get into the game. I mean, I'm a coach. I'm not worried about fans and what fans are doing. I'm more worried about my team and what we're doing.

But pregame, I had a chance to take it all in, and I thought it was a different crowd. I mean, I saw a lot of red. They seemed excited. They looked like they'd had a couple of beverages and having a good time. Nashville must have did them well.

Q. Have you ever played a faster team when you were at Stanford than what you saw tonight speeding across the field?

DEREK MASON: I saw good speed across the field. When I looked at it, Georgia is a really good team. I thought they ran fast. I thought they did a pretty good job covering things up, but I didn't think we were outmatched on speed. I didn't think we were outmatched on the perimeter. I didn't think we were outmatched. I thought their speed getting off the blocks

and getting to the ball looked a little different at times. Overall, I think it's a really good Georgia team. That's why they're No. 3 in the country.

Q. You had a fake punt followed by a reverse. You had a throwback cam. Are we to take you kind of want to be somewhat creative, if you can, with the playbook?

DEREK MASON: I think we have to. The reality is that's part of how we want to play the game. We want to be aggressive when the opportunities present themselves. We saw some things that gave us an idea that we could run it. So we did.

And then in the last couple years, I think you can count the fakes. To me, if you're going to practice fakes, let's run them. If the opportunity presents itself, that's the way players start to buy into special teams and what you do and what it looks like. Scout the looks. When you get the look, be willing to take the opportunity.

Was it a risk? Absolutely. But it paid off. It gave us a possession. Unfortunately, we couldn't do anything with it, but that's what you're going to see. We hope to be much better on special teams. I thought tonight was okay all the way around. Not great, but solid.

Q. You gave up a lot of explosive plays in the running game, but in the passing game, maybe one, maybe two, but you seemed to contain them on the back end especially. How do you feel about your secondary right now?

DEREK MASON: I'm fine with the secondary. I've got no problems with my secondary. I think we've got to do a better job including the secondary, really setting edges. I thought what you saw tonight, the ball came downhill inside a fair amount, and I thought we were late getting off blocks and even seeing it. But when the ball got on the perimeter, I thought that had more to do with us setting edges. Our edges weren't very good tonight, and that's something you can't have because so many teams run screen. They're going to run split zone until you stop it.

I thought we did a better job in the second half, obviously, of being able to slow some of that stuff down. So help is on the way. We've just got to make sure we get back to work. Thank you.

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Saturday, August 31, 2019

Riley Neal

Post Game

Georgia - 30, Vanderbilt - 6

Q. Riley, how do you feel your first start?

RILEY NEAL: I mean, we'll see how I'm feeling tomorrow. Obviously, we've got struggles at times, but it's hard to tell until you see it on film.

Q. One of your passes were short. You checked down quite a bit. Was that by design, or is that just what you saw with the coverage that you needed to?

RILEY NEAL: Generally, you just try and take what the defense gives you. Each play is different, so it's hard to tell exactly what's going on in each one.

Q. Can you walk us through the cornerback competition with Deuce and how you were able to kind of let it go against him?

RILEY NEAL: It's just like any other camp. We split reps. Me and Deuce are super close, very healthy competition. I took the reps when they told me I was in. Deuce did it for him, and that's how it played itself out.

Q. When do you think you ended up getting the job?

RILEY NEAL: That's more for the coaches to decide. I just go in when they tell me to during camp and just kind of work from there.

Q. Riley, a lot of changes on the offensive line leading up to this game and a couple of scratches before the game. How does that change your preparation?

RILEY NEAL: I don't think it necessarily changes preparation. We watch film all week and prepare for blitzes they have and what protection we have. Who's out there isn't exactly what changes it. It's more what look they present us, I think.

Q. Riley, I know you've gone through spring with these receivers and tight ends and preseason camp and all that, but what do you think you can learn from actually playing a game and building chemistry off of that? What do you think you're going to see on film that's going to help you?

RILEY NEAL: I'm pretty comfortable with the chemistry I have with these guys. I've been here since December.



I think the chemistry is always ever growing, but you can't -- you know, the game is just a little different feel. It's hard to get that type of thing in practice. So it was good to get some of those in. I'm hoping to just progress as the year goes on.

Q. I know you played a ton of games. You played against Big Ten teams and Notre Dame and all that, really good teams. What do you think about the fact that your first game here is against the No. 3 team in the country? That's got to be kind of daunting.

RILEY NEAL: When you're playing in the SEC, I don't think -- it's just part of it. There's not any games that you just go into and have a win. It takes a lot each week. So it's just kind of part of it.

Vanderbilt University Football Media Conference

Sunday, September 1, 2019

Kirby Smart

Post Game

Georgia - 30, Vanderbilt - 6

Q. Just your general thoughts on the game, and then we'll take questions.

KIRBY SMART: First off, I'd like to thank our crowd, our fan base. I think it was pretty obvious that they seemed like they took over the majority of that stadium. It sure felt like a home game with the people there, the fourth quarter lights, pretty special. I think they travel well, and I think Nashville's a great place to go. Our fans all came to be part of it.

We've still got a long way to go. We had a lot of undisciplined penalties and didn't play efficiently in the second half, at least offensively, but I'm proud of our guys. I don't take it lightly when you go on the road in an SEC opener, and when you open up with a couple of touchdowns, two or three touchdowns in a row, I think that's big. We had a lot of young guys on defense step up and play well.

Q. Kirby, I think D'Andre said, it kind of felt dead. So much so quickly happened good for you, getting that 21-0 lead, then he said it just kind of felt dead. What leads to those kind of lulls, and how do you snap out of those?

KIRBY SMART: I think Vanderbilt leads to some of those lulls playing hard and not operating efficiently. At the end of the day, we know what kind of boxes we're going to see. We know what kind of fronts we're going to see. We've got to be able to expand and do more things, throw the ball down the field, expand the field, get some of the wideouts involved.

I think Jake can do it. We've got to protect him to be able to do it. Ultimately, we want to come in here and play physical and establish the brand of football that we play, and I thought we did that.

Q. A couple of short yardage situations, the offensive line kind of got stuck there. Are people going to make something out of that because of its reputation? Are people going to make too much of that, or is that the kind of thing you're going to be critical of as well?

KIRBY SMART: 325 yards rushing. I'm not going to get overly concerned about the two we didn't get or the one we didn't get. Certainly a lot of room for



improvement, but those guys play physical, and those guys see every front and every box known to man. I'm disappointed we didn't convert those, but that's good, guys. We've got to have a lot of things to work on. That's one of the many things we can continue to improve on. Everything will be exaggerated great, or everything will be exaggerated horrible, and that's just the way it is.

Q. You were glad to see guys doing good things first time for Georgia, Zamir, D. Rob?

KIRBY SMART: Yeah, I'm excited for those guys. Those guys busted their tail. D. Rob been in there two years busting his tail, got an opportunity to make some plays. I thought he was very comfortable. He was dominant on special teams as a gunner holdup, which he gets no credit for. He and Matt Landers were as dominant a performance as we've ever had out there. He goes as kind of an unsung hero. Zamir did a tremendous job when he got his opportunity.

Q. What is it about Zamir? He seems to bring the Zeus calls every time he comes in the game. Have you had a guy that just, for whatever reason, the fans are so much behind him and so excited by him?

KIRBY SMART: I love him too. He's been through so much. He's a tremendous kid. He's a winner. I love all our kids. He's just another one that's been through a tough time. To see him go out there and have some success, he's so deserving of that. And our medical staff is deserving of a pat on the back for getting him out there because they spent a lot of time on Zamir.

Q. You had a couple of drives at the end of the first half where you gave up some points and then come back in the second half and go four straight three and outs. What kind of led to that?

KIRBY SMART: They stopped us. We didn't execute.

Q. I was talking about you on defense.

KIRBY SMART: I was going to say I didn't know we had four straight three and outs. I didn't realize we had four straight three and outs on defense, but I thought the momentum swung a little bit. Guys started playing a little more aggressive, a little more comfortable. We affected the quarterback on a couple of those where we got to him.

We can have a good defense because we've got a lot of speed. We need some more activity up there in the front. We need to make some more tackles, and we need to stay off people's face masks because we basically gave them 45 yards and two field goals on undisciplined penalties.

Q. Coach, you talked a lot about havoc in the off-season, but you said we may not see a lot of the things you're going to do tonight. Was that because of Vanderbilt's style of play, and how would you grade your team in that area?

KIRBY SMART: I don't know that I would say you're not going to see it. I thought we had havoc tonight. I don't know what the rate was. I have to see what our numbers were. Between the batted balls, between the sacks, the attacking of the ball -- I thought they played really good in regards to that. I don't know if you're asking me did we not show our whole defense? I don't really know what the question is asking.

Q. Kirby, you talked about overanalysis of one game often. What did you learn about your team tonight?

KIRBY SMART: That we have a chance to be explosive offensively, and we're going to try to be aggressive defensively. I really feel like the backs I kind of knew about. The wideouts got some chances to make some plays, a couple balls. George there, I mean he would have caught one of those if he got an opportunity. It was just out of range for him. A couple other guys made good catches and made plays, so I feel good about that.

It's not like I agree with you that it's going to be blown out of proportion either really positive or they struggled in the second half. It didn't matter to us. All we're doing is going back to work on Monday and going out there and doing good on good and put the hammer down and find out who's going to get better. We've got 72, 73, 74, 75 players, all the way up, that want to be on this trip, and they're going to be out there trying to take somebody's job.

Q. What did you make of Jake Fromm's performance today?

KIRBY SMART: Jake did a great job. He got a lot of looks, a lot of pressures. He checked. As soon as he saw pressure on one side, he moved it. People don't know what he did that was really, really sound and put us in really good football plays. Some of those explosive runs were because he knew where to put us. Derek mentioned it before the game. It's so comfortable to have a starter there for his third year, and you just know he's not going to put you in bad plays.

Q. You were up 24-6, and you had fourth and two, and you went for it there, and they stopped you. What was your thinking?

KIRBY SMART: Three score game. Kick a field goal, it's still a three score game. It was an opportunity to make it a four score game, and we felt like we could get it and put the game away. Either way, three scores, you're going to lose.

Q. How challenging is it to have an entirely new cast of receivers in terms of guys who hadn't played for Georgia when they entered the game? Did you have any doubts they'd be able to perform?

KIRBY SMART: No, I've seen those kids for so long. I didn't think they had their best performance. I thought they were really physical. When you're physical, it makes catching the ball that much easier. They were dominant on the perimeter blocking. Tyler Simmons, Kearis, Cager, Matt, George -- those guys are physical blockers out there on the perimeter, and they punish people, along with the tight ends.

So I think that kind of brings you your catches and gives you an opportunity to catch the ball. We got an opportunity to throw it some. We hit some. We didn't hit some. Vanderbilt did a good job of taking some away.

Q. It's very unusual to come into an SEC opponent and completely take over a stadium. What does it mean to you?

KIRBY SMART: It says everything about Georgia. University of Georgia is a special place. The reason you all are here is covering Georgia. Georgia is an unbelievable market. It's a great academic institution. They travel well. They love their fans. The fans love the stadium. They love our place. They want to go. I'm proud to be from the University of Georgia.

I'm proud to be an alumni of the University of Georgia, and I know that our fans turn out because they want to be recognized. They want to be great. They want to be part of something special, and so do we. So the two groups align for sure.

Q. So Jordan Davis, what can you say about him and how he was kind of -- he has an emerging role as a sophomore. What do you say about his sophomore year?

KIRBY SMART: The sky's the limit for Jordan. He's extremely athletic. He's big. He's smart. He's fun to talk to. I mean, he's just entertaining. But Jordan has to work really hard to keep his stamina up. People can negate him by going fast, by going hurry up. They can wear him down.

He's extremely physical. He's a typical SEC D-lineman.

I can't judge how he played tonight, because I don't know, but I know he was hard to block.

Q. Vandy got three All-SEC titles. You got to feel good holding this team without a touchdown.

KIRBY SMART: I agree with that. I think those three players are good players. If you told me we'd have it without a touchdown. Lipscomb's been here forever. Pinkney has been ferocious in the back, is really good. I know from how we played them last year, we struggled last year now to be able to control these guys. Now, they didn't have a quarterback. That's the big difference, the guy that gets the ball to them. They've got a good football team offensively when it comes to those three guys.

Q. First time in a long time you guys have started with an SEC opponent. How difficult is that when they know you so well and really the room for error gets so much smaller?

KIRBY SMART: It's all relative. We know them. They know us. It's the first game. It's the second game. Everybody's on a comparable playing field, but the crowd is the biggest thing. You think, when you go on the road, it's going to be hard to play, but it felt like a home game with our fans and all the momentum. It helps having a very established offensive line, established quarterback to be able to go on the road and play your first game.

We grew up some tonight, but guys, we haven't scratched the surface of where we can go. We've got so many things we can improve on. This team has to decide they want to get better. That's all I'm asking them. Do you want to get better, or are you just okay being good? That good is not going to be good enough.

Q. We saw Demetrius Robertson get a bigger part in the offense tonight than any game last year. Is that more about the guys who were here last year being gone or more about an evolution that occurred with him?

KIRBY SMART: It has something to do with three wide receivers being drafted and being gone. He was just as talented last year as he is now. He just doesn't have a 10 400-meter guy in front of him, a seventh round pick, and a fourth round pick, so he's able to get opportunities. He's taking full advantage of those.

Demetrius, he comes to work every day. I just hate so bad that so many people have had these expectations for him because he's such a good kid, and he practices so hard. He was so deserving of what he was able to do tonight.

Q. We saw Isaiah come off the field. Were there any

other injuries of note, or did you come out of this pretty unscathed?

KIRBY SMART: I missed the first part of that.

Q. We saw Isaiah come off the field --

KIRBY SMART: I think Isaiah's fine. He came back, didn't he? I didn't get an injury report, but I didn't see anything there. Kearis may have -- he got hit on the hand during a fumble. I don't know. They're doing X-rays now.

Q. You returned a kickoff pretty deep out of the end zone. What kind of green light do you give them? How far back --

KIRBY SMART: Not that far.

(Laughter)

That's youthful exuberance.

Q. (Indiscernible) had his helmet off and didn't play. Is he okay?

KIRBY SMART: Should be fine.

Q. How about Herrien getting the first carries for you guys and being able to have the numbers you have in that position?

KIRBY SMART: I thought Herrien did a great job. I love the way he runs. He runs with reckless abandon. He has no regards for concern for himself. He tries to be physical on the tacklers and very patient. I'm proud of our backs. We've got good backs. They've got to improve their blitz pickup, and they've got to improve ball security. The ball got loose some, but we've got good backs, guys. We've got to figure out our true identity, and we've got to figure out a way to be even more dangerous in the passing game.

Q. We're hearing a lot about an unplanned two-block walk to get into the stadium.

KIRBY SMART: No, actually, it was unplanned, but it was a shorter walk than typically we have here. Apparently, we lost our lead state trooper since there was an altercation on the sidewalk. So the guy that took over the lead went a different route and didn't allow us to get to the normal location and see all the dog walk people. So they had to drop us somewhere else. Ironically, it was closer to the place we come in. We typically have to walk across the field. So we didn't have to walk across the field.

Q. We don't talk much, Coach, about Rodrigo Blankenship. He moved up the charts again, and he kicked a 50-yard field goal and didn't hesitate. Can you talk about what kind of weapon he is, I guess.

KIRBY SMART: He's a weapon. People don't realize it. Sometimes it frustrated Rod. We don't always let him

kick it out of the end zone on the touchbacks. There were some planned not touchbacks tonight to make sure we get practice covering kicks and number two, the thought we could pin them inside the 235. He didn't always like that because he likes to kick it out of the end zone. But he's talented that he can hang it up higher and longer than anyone in the country and gets the field goals as well.

He's a valuable weapon for us, and he's a great kid and an unbelievable ambassador for the University of Georgia.

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Jake Fromm

Post Game

Georgia - 30, Vanderbilt - 6

Q. You guys win. You put up a lot of yards. How does it feel after this game?

JAKE FROMM: It feels good. A long time since we last got a win. It feels good to come out, road conference opponent, SEC team. So it feels good to come out and come out on top.

Q. Does it feel any different than previous first game wins or preseason wins?

JAKE FROMM: Yeah, it does feel more playing a conference team to start off with. Vanderbilt, they played strong. They played tough, and they fought us for four quarters.

Q. What worked? What didn't?

JAKE FROMM: I mean, really, I think we're going to feel as an offense, when we go back and look at it, we're going to feel that every play we called or lined up or checked to should have worked. We just didn't execute in the second half as much as we really wanted to, but it is what it is.

It's football. It's the first game. We're going to take it. We're going to look at it. We're going to assess it. We're going to say, hey, we're going to get better at it this week, move on, and go play the next opponent.

Q. How do you feel like those receivers who were getting action for the first time did?

JAKE FROMM: Those guys grew up and played some football today. Good for them to get that experience, get going, and get the wheels rolling.

Q. Did you hear the Zeus chants?

JAKE FROMM: Yeah, I did. Good for him to get back out there. I know a lot of folks are excited about him. We are too on offense.

Q. Just the crowd out here, what did you think?

JAKE FROMM: No disrespect, but it really felt like a home game. Really thankful for the way our fans traveled. It was awesome, unbelievable.

Q. You just mentioned it was good to see the receivers out there. There was a bunch of them. Which ones stood out the most? For me, it was



Robertson.

JAKE FROMM: D. Rob played great, Tyler played great, Matt, George, Kearis. All those guys who went in, they really did their job. They went in. They attacked what they needed to attack. You know, it is what it is. The way we played on offense, got to execute a little bit better on some things, but really proud to come out with a win.

Q. Do you know how many yards D'Andre Swift finished with?

JAKE FROMM: No idea.

Q. 147.

JAKE FROMM: That's No. 7 for you. He's a great football player.

Q. It seemed like everything was working for you, going straight down the field. Seemed like everything you called was clicking.

JAKE FROMM: We were rolling. Coach Coley was on a roll. We were executing well at the beginning of the game. We kind of had our sensors up. Hey, we really wanted to focus. I guess we lost a little focus there. As a unit, just wasn't as locked in as we needed to be. It is what it is. We'll fix it come Sunday, Monday, and get ready for the next opponent.

Q. So after those first three drives, it wasn't a matter of dialing it down. It was just focus, you think?

JAKE FROMM: Just lack of focus, yes, I would probably say it was.

Q. Did you expect you guys to be as run heavy as you were tonight?

JAKE FROMM: It's really hard to stop calling it when you're getting 10, 15 yards a pop, and guys like 7 and 35 are on a roll. Man, it's really tough when you have the offensive line you do. Hey, if it's working, let's do it.

Q. It's been talked about all off-season in terms of different wrinkles that Coach Coley has added. Just don't put a percentage on it, but how much do you feel you guys showed tonight?

JAKE FROMM: I really don't know off the top of my head. It will change on a week to week basis whoever we're playing. So really no idea.

Q. First Saturday playing with all three of the Fromm boys playing. Going to call and check in on your brothers?

JAKE FROMM: As soon as I get my phone, I'm going to call and check in on them. Hopefully, both teams won.

Q. How did you feel the rhythm and timing was with the receivers today?

JAKE FROMM: First game, thought it was well. Thought it was as good as it could have been. You know, any time you play a first game as a quarterback, you haven't been live really since your last game, so you're really trying to get back in the groove and feel stuff, feeling heads and feeling rush. We're going to check it, assess it, and really see what really happened on film.

Q. Jake, we're doing something about football Friday night back at home. Talk about your experience watching that with all your teammates and just going back and enjoying that.

JAKE FROMM: Taking trips back, kind of miss the high school football on Friday. Really got to check in on some teams this past Friday. So it's awesome to go back and watch that. You miss it a little bit. Man, I hope the guys are doing well.

Q. Remember the Football Friday Night show, remember that after the game?

JAKE FROMM: It was awesome to check in on everybody and see how everybody else is doing.

Q. How do you feel about Swift's performance tonight? I know that he had so many yards. Just talk about how he did.

JAKE FROMM: Man, Dre played unbelievable. He came out. He was him. We didn't expect for him to feel like he had to force anything or play down to his level or play down. He played great. He went out, made some runs, made some nice plays.