

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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Les Miles

LSU coach

COMMISSIONER SANKEY: Our next coach this morning is Les Miles.

COACH MILES: Thank you so much for the applause.

(Laughter.)

COACH MILES: The summer's been a very interesting one. Please forgive me, but I'd like to talk about something other than football. I work in a place that's committed to providing our student-athletes with exceptional experiences.

The tragic events in the last weeks have certainly taken the national spotlight, those areas, including Baton Rouge.

We've had several meetings. We met with the entire staff, and it was not about our roles as coaches or staff, but more or less who we were as people, and I wanted to listen. And I felt like it improved our communications. We -- I've had two small lead meetings with leadership of my team, and I've had a team meeting, I broke that team meeting up into position groups, and I felt like there was -- we brushed the surface of the issues. I don't know that we got to the depth that we needed. I think the -- I think that has to continue, certainly in our place.

You know, it's -- when you look at what's going on in our country and you look at the culture of a football team and the culture of any sport team, people have to buy in, they have to have great energy. They have to work hard. They have to do their job. And then when they do that, they come alongside a team effort. They're embraced by team. They enjoy the position that they have. They're productive, and that team is significant. If you have great talent, you can have a very, very talented team, but you need everybody.

And I feel like our society's the same and you need everybody. If you look to see change and if you watch the representation of our country on live TV, you realize that change is necessary. And it comes through all of us, everybody in the room, certainly me. It's an inclusive. You reach for others. You need to be respectful of their life and their opinion and who they are. You need compassion for people. You build them



up and you train them and you give them the best practices, and we change as a team and as a community and as a society.

I help my guys in some way process emotion. I don't know that I've done a very good job. I don't know that I personally have processed the emotion that I see when I -- when our country is displayed as it is.

What I'd like to do is have them, our guys, have a platform where they could affect change. I think they're wonderful men. I think they're constantly involved in roles -- they're a student, they're a football player, they're role models. Society chases them. They want them at the party. They want them in front of the magazine. They want their autograph. And so then they're constantly barraged with what's the answer, what's the answer, what's the answer?

And the reality of it is just hope to put them in the position to allow them to have the greatest possible impact, because they're our future.

Commissioner Sankey did it really well on Monday, and here's what he said. Pretty simple. He said sport has a way to unite people, and I agree with him. And I hope that the Tigers do their best and that that happens in Baton Rouge, because Baton Rouge is home. And I -- I appreciate the opportunity for me to share with you today.

So, now I'm going to go to football and what would be my normal running spiel. Miles' summer update. I was shanghaied in Austin, Texas, and taken to Cleveland, Ohio, to watch a Game 6 in the NBA Finals and root for LeBron James. I'm so happy for him. I could not tell you. But it happened very unusually. I was meeting my eldest daughter in Austin, where she attends. And my son, North Carolina quarterback backup, decided to come. And I said, Okay, this is going to be my vacation. I'm going to Austin. We're going to get sun. We're going to work out. We're going to eat big. I'm going to be with the two eldest.

Kathy took my youngest and went to fast-pitch softball. I got there and the -- first thing we said, come on, we're doing this. We had no plans. We're going to bed, we're going to have fun, dadadadada. Next morning, What do you think? You want to say here, Dad? I said,

What do you mean do I want to stay here? This is where we're going to be. I brought my stuff. He said, Bring an overnight bag. We're going to go to a lake. I'm not set up to bring an overnight bag. This is an overnight bag, and I'm carrying all my stuff with me. He said, okay, good, let's do that. Oh, by the way, we're going to stop at the airport. I said, Airport? I knew there was a lake in Texas we were going to go to. They said, No, we're going to take you someplace else. And I said okay.

When they did, they checked me in. My son's first name is my first name, Leslie. And he checked me in, and I found out as we sat at the gate that we were going to Dallas. He said, Yeah, there's a lake in Dallas. There is. We used to live in Dallas. Certainly I thought I was going to be at one of those little lakes outside of Dallas.

Then we landed in Dallas. We're going to Cleveland. I knew then. I had a big smile on my face because I was going to get to see basketball. I didn't have any idea. John Heikki (phonetic), who is currently employed with the Texas A&M team, and is doing a great job for them, is a friend of mine and arranged tickets that were just spectacular. And I am a ticket -- if it's not a good ticket, I am not going.

So I got really good tickets, and I had a blast. I saw my college roommate at dinner, and it was a -- it was unexpected completely. And the Cavs won then, just so you ladies, the Cavaliers, Cleveland, LeBron James, and although it was a wonderful series with going to the seventh game, I could not have been more happy.

My wife and I have been separated. She's with Ben Myles taking unofficial trips around this country, looking at schools. And he's fortunately being recruited by some very quality schools. And Macy Myles, my 12-year-old who turned 13 -- I'm done with -- all of my kids are now older than teenage, or teenagers, so I'm messed, I got a problem.

But I was catching her in flip-flops, and that's a mistake. You never -- anybody that's a parent or want-to-be parent, you never catch a son, pitcher, or female fast-pitch softball pitcher in flip-flops. Let me take it back. Flip-flops and a can. Because when you sit on the can, you put your feet on the can, and it's an obvious position to be hit. So I broke two toes in my right foot catching her. So I went to Cuba, and Cuba is a communist country, and that was kind of the reason that I went.

Okay. So, now, that was in case you guys wanted to not miss anything. I wanted to be comprehensive.

So, okay, now LSU. 9-3 last year, and should have

been a ten-win season. 16 straight bowl appearances. 16th straight year with at least eight wins, returns 18 starters, and we were 7-0. Number two ranked in the country in position to finish and did not.

And our goals have not changed. We were 100 percent graduation, and we wanted to win the West and play in the conference championship and then go on to the playoffs and win the national championship again.

So, you know, offensively, feel like Cam Cameron is back. A year ago at this time we were suffering with prostate cancer, and Cam basically was just phenomenally involved from home, from atop a perch in our practice. And so we're so fortunate to have him healthy and going.

Jeff Grimes, our offensive line coach, running game coordinator in his third season certainly has improved in his -- with that offensive line.

Jabbar Juluke we hired. Is a running backs coach and does a great job, is a great spirit and a great understanding of a variety of offenses.

Dameyune Craig goes to our wide receivers and is our next quarterback, and again another tremendous addition to our staff. Because he thinks like a quarterback, and that always, you know -- if you can look at a play through the eyes of a quarterback, that wide receiver can understand where he needs to be.

Brandon Harris at quarterback, certainly our play there will be significant and he shows more poise and more comfort in -- he's more ambitious, he's -- the more you accomplish, the more you want to accomplish. The artistic piece of being a quarterback is the style of throw and the style of throw is really where he's at. You know, do I drive it? Do I put air on it? Where am I -- what is this throw? And there's where you want a quarterback to spend his time, and he is, and I think for a guy that's throwing for 2600 yards, 19 touchdowns in two years is kind of a nice position to be in going into the season.

So, we had a transfer from Purdue, Danny Etling, a real quality competitor. Big, tall, bright guy, 6'3", 226, two-fer. At Purdue he started 12 games, threw for 2400 yards and 16 touchdowns.

Justin McMillan was a redshirt a year ago, lefty. 6'2", 205 pounds. A good athlete as well as thrower, very talented guy.

Running backs. Leonard Fournette. I was already asked: Has he met your weight requirements? Absolutely. In case you're wondering, it's his desire to

be an elite back. He wants to be able to have speed, strength, and the combination of the two is certainly the advantage for the elite back, and so we felt like that would happen somewhere between two and a quarter and 231, and he's right there. Just where he needs to be.

Derrius Guice who averaged a staggering 8.5 per yard per carry is also in that backfield and is having a very strong summer as well and Darrel Williams, 6 foot, 232, also a guy that's going to carry the ball for us in significant times.

Nick Brossette came in. He injured his knee in the Ole Miss game. So we're going to be pretty salty at running back.

Fullback. J.D. Moore returns off injury. Didn't have him the back half of last season. Bry'Kiethon Mouton is his backup. Should give us two heavy guys in there, can go in there and block and receive and run the football. There's some advantages that we really probably have not had.

At wide receiver, Travin Dural, who was injured in the Ole Miss game, lost a hamstring connecting, but he's back in full speed and ready to roll.

And Malachi Dupré, D.J. Chark, Tyron Johnson, a host of pretty talented freshman at wide receiver, Drake Davis and Jazz Ferguson. So, we have height and speed and strength and we should be talented enough at the wide receiver spot.

So a tight end on offense, Colin Jeter, returns. Desean Smith and Foster Moreau I think will be big and strong and capable there. I think we'll be able to receive the ball. I think the play action will be a very serious advantage for us. Jamal Pettigrew and Duke Riley, two freshman that have come in at the tight end spot as well. The offensive line will be veteran, even though we only have three starters returning, and all of those guys play a lot of football, and we would expect Toby Weathersby to be right tackle, to whom would be the left, K.J. Malone would be the left guard or tackle Maea Teuhema. Will Clapp will be a left guard or tackle. Ethan Pocic returns to center. And Josh Boutte, who really has been in position to play a lot of football, should he decide to have a great fall, he may be one of the more dominant players that we have.

So, defensively, we feel like the -- really, since 2005, our defense has been really significant and we've had 24 fourth quarter comebacks, and Dave Aranda really fits the bill, just what we need. He transitioned from a four down to a three down personnel group. He has also the opportunity to play four down. So we'll mix up personnels, but we'll be playing Dave Aranda football,

and that's historically been damn good.

Ed Orgeron has done a great job, really new hire coming in and really having an impact in the defensive line.

Bradley Dale Peveto returns as special teams coordinator. And our secondary coach, Corey Raymond, has just done a great job in really mentoring that secondary and putting guys in great position to go on to the NFL.

So, we're excited. Felt like the spring went well with the defense.

On the defensive line, Davon Godchaux, Lewis Neal, Christian LaCouture, Frank Herron will be guys that you will hear up front. Neal is bigger this year, bigger, stronger, long arms. Just really long arms. And we'll bring in some defensive linemen from the freshman class. Rashard Lawrence is a guy that has the physicality to play as a youngster, Sci Martin also as well, defensive end.

So, two players at the outside backer would be Arden Key. He's going to give quarterbacks fits. And then Tashawn Bower, Corey Thompson. Corey Thompson will be a guy that can play a cover position, as well as a run position. We really look forward to his participation this year. True freshman.

Michael Divinity did a great job and has done a great job as he arrived here. And so we'll expect that he would play as well.

Inside backers with Duke Riley, Kendell Beckwith. Kendell Beckwith makes the Butkus watch list. Duke Riley is a very bright, capable player and will start opposite him. One of the freshman, Devin White, is a 6'1", 250-pound, runs under 4.5 and has played running back and linebacker, and I would expect that he would play in every game at linebacker.

Corner, Tre'Davious White, No. 18, the team leader returns. He's really such a comfortable corner now. It would be very difficult to get open on one-on-one and understands coverage reads. So his ability to break on the ball would be very good. Kevin Toliver returns at the other corner, and Donte Jackson and Kristian Fulton is a freshman. Eric Monroe is a freshman. So we should have a pretty talented secondary.

Jamal Adams would certainly answer the call at safety, is Pre-Season All-American, very talented safety. And Rickey Jefferson, again, another guy that can step in and play physical and ball skill football.

And we are going -- John Battle was injured most of

last season, played a lot of football, nursing a groin, and now is really in position to play a lot of football. So we think that we're really pretty good shape there.

We return the punter that was really slated to start thereafter, our kickers, back in tact. We lose a Trent Domingue, but we have Connor Culp and a number of other guys that are going to kick our field goals, as well as maybe Delahoussaye.

So we look forward to the season. It's a very -- I think it can be a very significant team.

But it starts with the first one. We play Wisconsin at Lambeau. And our football team is challenged. They've recognized that. One thing that this football team has done historically is that when they know that they are going to play a very quality football team to open, they prepare well, and this -- I think that they have had a very good summer to this point. Questions?

Q. Thank you, Coach, for your opening statement and addressing those important issues. I was curious, from a practical standpoint, have you found it necessary to, for instance, implement a curfew, suggest that players not go to certain areas of the city? Has there been any effect like that on your team, or are you trying to avoid that?

COACH MILES: Yeah. I'm not in position to curfew my team. I am in position to advise wisely what they need to do, and I think that they're -- I think what we're dealing with here is the overall view, not necessarily a pragmatic, you know, one-day-at-a-time rule.

So all you have to do is make one of those rules, and somebody has to go to somebody's house because it's important, and he violates. So I just -- curfew, we certainly talked about places to be and places not to be historically, and we would think that -- we hope that's enough, I should say.

Q. What does it mean or what should it mean that you're the dean of SEC coaches now?

COACH MILES: I don't know. I think really being called a dean, I should probably get like a robe, right, and maybe a hat that maybe sits to the side and maybe my hanging cloth could be, you know, kind of dressed up some. That would be nice.

I can tell you this, how fortunate I've been to be with really great teams and represent a wonderful institution in LSU and to be able to be here at the length of time that I have and how many very, very quality coaches have come and gone in that time, and I'm very fortunate. I certainly enjoy the membership and being a part of this group of SEC coaches. Thank you for

asking the question, Dennis.

Q. Les, you talked about fixing some problems with this team in the offseason. You said when you have a flat tire, you fix it. And you looked at this problem like a flat tire. What's the flat tire you have to fix specifically and how are you doing it?

COACH MILES: Yeah, the I don't think there's any flat tires to this point. I think it's more of a finding the best pieces and getting them on the field and the right personnel groups as an example. I think Maa Teuhema will be a really good left tackle. Okay. He can also be a really good left guard, right guard, or right tackle. Okay.

So Karl Malone could be a very good -- Jr., could be a very good -- Sr. could be a very good player, too, but Jr., left guard, left tackle. And we have Will Clapp at left guard.

So we're really at a pretty good spot. On the left side we had Toby Weathersby at the right tackle and, frankly, we expect that he will be a tremendous participant for us at that position. Boutte, Josh Boutte at the right guard, may be the most big, physical man that we have on our team. And even posting at center, it would appear that there's no flat tire, it's just getting the guys to the front. Okay?

I think that's really what I'm in reference to. Right now, in every phase, in every coach that comes up here has exactly the same thoughts, quietly: Fix this, fix this, fix this. Fix? There's nothing broken at this point, but you want to get to your best at the front.

And I think that happens for me in a number of spots. But I think we're -- we're looking for a wide receiver step to the front. We like the three guys that are going to start. We want to see who's the next guy. I think there's -- I think Brandon Harris will have a -- the right year. I think all he needs to do is what he's asked him to do. He's so ready to do that, he's champing at the bit.

I think there's a special teams -- we had a number of guys that can kick and field goals and punt and punt return, and it's more that, at this point, when you put that first team on the field in the opener that you're ready to continue to execute at a high level from that point forward.

Q. Going back to your platform comment in the introduction, could you please elaborate a little bit on what kind of role you want to have in the community, your players to have in the community and how that might evolve over -- as we get into the football season?

COACH MILES: I want to be a football coach. I think we have a wonderful governor, I think he's done a great job. I think what we need to do is we need to look at the things that we can do where we're at, and I think that that is a key piece.

I'm not about, you know -- I want our football team to focus on that game plan and those -- and that academics and getting your degree and then, with free time, you know, maybe I can go read at a school. Maybe it's an opportunity to, you know, to share outreach. Maybe there's a youth football team in the neighborhood that needs a speaker. Maybe there's, you know, those types of things that make the community rich, and that's -- I -- I want you to know something. I have great respect for my neighborhood. I have great respect for our community. And I -- I -- it's not a huge, huge -- there's not a huge negative piece there. I just -- I just want to be a part of whatever change that could be positive.

Q. It's been a little over eight months since Sid Ortis, Mountain Brook teen in Alabama, lost his battle with cancer. You formed a very incredible relationship with him that was covered not only around the nation but especially here in his home state. Looking back at reflecting on that relationship that you formed with him and the battle he went through, I was wondering what you took from that as well as the relationship that you had with him?

COACH MILES: I -- his family was so spectacular. His community was better than anything that I could possibly imagine. I remember a picture of his home, his street being, you know, lined with LSU memorabilia in Alabama. I promise you that you would only find that at Sid Ortis' street. I felt like he had great energy and he was a loving heart, and I -- I got much more than I could have possibly given him. So I -- yeah. I have very fond memories, and I hope he's watching over us right now, so --

Q. Coach, going back to your opening remarks. We ask a lot of these student-athletes on the field, classroom, and everything else. Are we potentially asking too much of 19-, 20- and 21-year-old men to also be role models in the community, especially a community like Baton Rouge going through what it is going through right now?

COACH MILES: I think there's such a need for quality guys with great opportunities that can really display that you can too. I think the "you can too" is a magnificent piece to who they are. And I -- asking them too much at times? You're absolutely correct. I mean, you know, a football player, he's injured, he's nicked. He's got to get up early to go to treatment. He's got to get up early and get to study. He's got to

stay up late to get the paper done. He's got to do a bunch of stuff. There's a bunch of stuff in academics.

Then you say, by the way, Leonard, we need to talk to you Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday just in media. We're not doing that again. We could, certainly, but we're going to see if we can script a time where we can take some of that off of some of those guys. And then there's a need in the community. But during the fall of the year there's also a need in the community for that team to win and let's see if we can do our part to do that, you know, find the -- find the times. And they're going to be rare, that we can do community outreach as a team.

Q. Coach, you talked about Brandon Harris. You also got guys like Malachi Dupré and Travin Dural in the offense for a while. Can we expect to see the offense open up a little bit this offseason?

COACH MILES: Did you get that? I didn't get it. Now, it may well be that I didn't listen hard enough. So, if you'd like give me a little bit more space in between your words, it would help me a little bit. Okay? I am really listening hard.

Q. All right. Coach, you got guys like Malachi Dupré and Travin Dural who have a little more years in offense --

COACH MILES: Are you talking about Travin Dural --

Q. Travin Dural and Malachi Dupré.

COACH MILES: Okay. Got you.

Q. And Brandon Harris. Should we expect the offense to open up a little more this season?

COACH MILES: Open up a little more this season. Good. I didn't mean to -- you know, this was nothing personal. I was just trying to get to it, and the -- I think we could expect more from our quarterback play and our receiver play.

I think Dural and Dupré should have marked seasons, seasons where they make big plays and significant games, so, yeah, I -- and I think open up the -- what we're going to do is this. We're going to throw it and run it with advantages, and where the advantages are, we're going to. Malachi and Travin would be those guys. Thank you.

KEVIN TRAINOR: Thank you, Coach, for your time.