

# Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

Monday July 10, 2017

## Ed Orgeron

LSU coach

ED ORGERON: Thank you, Commissioner Sankey. It's great to be back at SEC Media Days. What a wonderful event for college football and what a wonderful event for the best conference in the United States.

Before I start, I would like to say our thoughts and our prayers for the LSU family and our coaching staff over Congressman Steve Scalise and his family as he gets better in Washington. We know he'll fight like a tiger.

I would like to tell you a little story about growing up in Louisiana. In 1971, I was 10 years old and LSU was playing Notre Dame. And it was a great game, two highly ranked opponents. And there was a young man named Ronnie Este from Larose, Louisiana. He had 17 tackles that game. He had three great stops on the goal line, and LSU beat Notre Dame 28-3. And the headline was Irish 2 for LSU. And I was a young boy from Larose. I think the whole city of Larose, the whole state of Louisiana, was cheering for the Tigers that night, and it was just magic.

Ever since that -- ever since then, I wanted to be in the purple and gold. I want to thank Joe Alleva. I want to thank King Alexander and the LSU family for hiring me as the head coach of the LSU Tigers. What an honor.

I obviously am excited about the upcoming season. I want to talk to you about each unit coming up. On our offensive staff, we are very excited to have Matt Canada as an offensive coordinator. Matt runs a very diverse offense, a lot of shifts, motions, use of personnel, fly sweeps. He makes it difficult to defend, but the thing I like best about Matt was he talked about being a team player, and he talked about running a balanced offense, 50 percent run and 50 percent pass.

I think he is going to do an outstanding job as offensive coordinator. I have to give credit to Matt coming in in the spring and installing his offense to a brand new offensive staff, guys he never met before. They did a tremendous job. They gelled well and really had a great spring.

One of our biggest hires going into the new season was hiring an assistant head coach, recruiting coordinator, running back coach, Tommie Robinson.



Tommie is one of the best recruiters in the United States. He's a great running back coach, and he is even a better man. We are honored to have him on our staff.

The next thing we had to do is get a guy that I trust in recruiting the city of New Orleans, which is really, really important to us at LSU with the state of Louisiana. And we found Mickey Joseph. He's a friend of mine. I have known him before. He went out several places. He was at Louisiana Tech, and we came back and hired him as our wide receiver coach. He has done a tremendous job in recruiting and a tremendous job of coaching our wide receivers.

On our staff already was Steve Ensminger, a Tiger playing quarterback, was a great Tiger, one of the toughest coaches I've ever been around. Did a tremendous job of taking over the offensive coordinator job once I became interim head coach and broke all kind of LSU records.

Steve is going to coach our tight end and be very instrumental helping Matt Canada on our offense. Also on our offense is Jeff Grimes who has done a tremendous job. Jeff was very loyal to me in the interim process, does a good job of recruiting and a good job coaching our offensive line.

I want to talk about offense. First of all, when I interviewed Matt, I said what kind of quarterback do you need? He said, coach, we can have success with a pro-style quarterback or dual-threat quarterback. I said, good, we have both. Here's what we're going to do, we're going to make quarterback competition this spring, and I want every quarterback to have a chance to show you his different skill sets and see if you like him, and we did that throughout the spring. He let every quarterback compete. Then he came out with the best quarterback running his system. Lowell Narcisse did a great job. Lindsey Scott did a great job. Justin McMillan did a great job. And now we recruited Myles Brennan who I told him I was going to give him a chance to earn the starting spot as quarterback in LSU.

So there's still a quarterback competition going into fall camp, but right now if we were to play, Danny would be our starter. And by the way, Danny loves the

competition. He loves that we made it a quarterback competition. Actually he thrives in it. So to answer the question about the quarterback competition, there's still a competition there, but right now Danny is the leader.

Everything that we do is going to be based around our best player, Derrius Guice. We feel we have one of the best running back and one of the best offensive players in the country coming back, lead the SEC in rushing. Derrius is a great player. He runs the ball like Warren Sapp played the defensive line for me at Miami. He runs with an attitude. He's a great young man. He's here today. You're going to love him. He has a great character and has turned out to be an outstanding team leader for us.

Behind Derrius, a guy that lost a lot of weight for us, Darrel Williams is going to be another senior tailback. We're going to use tailback rotation and let those guys really play. Behind them will be Nick Brossette, Lanard Fournette and a freshman we are looking forward to is Clyde Edwards-Helaire.

Our offensive line, we're very, very happy to have several guys return from our offensive line that was ranked one of the best in the SEC and the best in the country. At left tackle, K.J. Malone. Left guard who earned the starting spot in the spring, he's from Baton Rouge, Garrett Brumfield. At center, an SEC player, we are going to start him at center, Will Clapp. I say this, a young man that did a tremendous job at center for us, Will was hurt and did not practice all spring, Lloyd Cushenberry. Lloyd give us the flexibility that if Will Clapp needs to play another position, he can come in and play center.

Starting right guard would be Maea Teuhema. Behind him will be the number one right guard when we recruit him in the country from Ponchatoula High School, Donavaughn Campbell. We expect him to make progress and be an outstanding player for us.

At right tackle, we think we're pretty solid with Toby Weathersby. He did a great job for us last year. He's going to be backed up by Jakori Savage and Adrian Magee, two young guys that we are looking forward to. We think will be outstanding prospects will be Austin Deculus and Saahdiq Charles. At the wide receiver position, he's here today,

D.J. Chark, he had a tremendous job for us last year, a leading wide receiver. You'll see him run the fly sweeps. He is a great young man from Alexandria, Louisiana. He's thinking about going out early his junior year. I asked him to come back. He came back. We brought him to SEC Media Days today. It's a tremendous opportunity for him and for us. Also we gave him jersey number 7. That's what he wanted to

wear. And we look forward to him having a great senior year at LSU.

Backed up will be Russell Gage, another wide receiver. Drake Davis who is an outstanding young talent. Drake's about 6'4", 225. He's very fast. He's coming to his own.

And also Derrick Dillon and Stephen Sullivan, we expect those guys to have tremendous seasons at LSU. At tight end, Foster Moreau and J.D. Moore return. I think they're two of the best tight ends in the SEC, if not in the country. Foster Moreau is one of the toughest guys on the team, one of the toughest guys I ever met. And J.D. Moore is a tremendous, tremendous leader.

Now, on to the defense. I'm very excited to have Dave Aranda. You guys know we have one of the best defensive coordinators in all of football. We're glad Dave is back with us. He signed a three-year contract. He's a great coordinator. He is a great position coach, outstanding recruiter, and even better man. I think he did a great job of shifting from the 4-3 to the 3-4 defense.

His defense lead the nation with fewest touchdowns in just one year, and he held the Heisman Trophy winner, Lamar Jackson, out of the end zone in our great bowl win, the Citrus Bowl, versus Louisville.

Our defensive line is Pete Jenkins. Pete Jenkins will be known as one of the greatest assistant coaches to ever coach the game. He spent 15 years at LSU before we rehired him. He promised me this, he said, coach, you are going to be the last LSU head coach I work for. I said I got it, Pete. I appreciate it.

Outside linebacker Coach Dennis Johnson, who also played at LSU. He is an outstanding recruiter, was my graduate assistant. He coached the outside linebacker. And Corey Raymond, one of the best recruiters in the country, outstanding teacher, DBU, Jamal Adams, Tre'Davious White, all of those guys, Patrick Peterson, The Honey Badger, Corey Raymond also played at LSU from Louisiana means a lot to us.

On defense, we have to replace five out of the front seven. We feel that we have a very good young defensive line coming back in some spots. We're so excited to have Rashard Lawrence who earned a starting spot in the spring. Rashard is from Monroe, Louisiana. He was the number one player in the state of Louisiana from north Louisiana. He came to LSU, which means a lot to our recruiting. Rashard's also a 4.0 grade point average student. I think he's going to have a tremendous, tremendous season at LSU.

Backing them up will be Frank Herron. Frank will be a rotator at left and right end. Frank's a senior. He's ready to have an outstanding year at LSU as a senior.

At nose tackle, we have Greg Gilmore and Ed Alexander, two nose tackles that played very good last year. And behind them, we have Tyler Shelvin, one of the outstanding freshman. He's the number one player in the state of Louisiana, chose to come to LSU. When we signed him, he was 383. Now he's a slim 323. I look forward to him playing.

At left defensive end is Christian LaCouture. He's here today. He's wearing No. 18, what a great young man, fought through adversity. I expect him to have a great senior year. Backing those two ends up will be freshman Justin Thomas and Neil Farrell. I think those guys are fantastic.

At outside linebacker position, we feel that we have one of the best defensive players in the country, if not the best defensive player in the country returning in Arden Key, outstanding pass rusher, outstanding player. We expect him to have a great season. Arden took the spring off for personal reasons, and we are going to respect that. He came back. He had to get some work done on his shoulder. We don't know when he's going to be back. We do expect him to be back and have a great season. And he's in tremendous shape right now. He's weighed 255 to 260 pounds and is a total team player.

Backing him up will be either Ray Thornton, Andre Anthony, or one of the best young outside rushers I ever signed in K'Lavon Chaisson. We expect K'Lavon to contribute early and be a tremendous player.

And our field linebacker, we have Corey Thompson returning for his senior year battling some injuries. He's extremely fast. He and Michael Divinity will man that field linebacker position. At the middle linebacker position, I tell you a story, Dave Aranda and I won a recruiting trip. He doesn't say many words. He said, hey, coach, do you know we have more kickers on scholarship than middle linebackers? I said, Dave, I know that, but don't tell anybody. Okay? We needed to go out and recruit three of the best middle linebackers in the country. And I do believe we did that. We signed the number one linebacker in the country in Jacob Phillips. We signed a great linebacker in the country out of Georgia, Tyler Taylor, and one of the best linebackers in the state of Louisiana, Patrick Queen.

We expect those guys to really play and really compete in the starting position next year. Donnie Alexander is up to 230 pounds. He's going to play our middle linebacker along with Devin White who played last year.

We expect Devin to have a tremendous year. Remember this young man played running back and ran a 10-6 100 meter dash in high school.

Coming back from New York -- I mean, Philadelphia, we're happy -- we're happy to see all our players get drafted. What a tremendous night for the Tigers, being there in the green room with Leonard, Tre'Davious and Jamal, and all of the guys that got drafted.

Everybody said, coach, you must be really excited about all of the guys getting drafted. I said, yeah, but now we have to replace them. So here we go, we are at DBU, we go and get two midyear graduates. Grant Delpit and JaCoby Stevens were two of the top players in the country. They came out in spring bowl and had an excellent spring. We expect those two guys to get playing time and perhaps to even start.

The other safeties are John Battle and Ed Paris. At corner, we have to replace Tre'Davious, but we feel that we have one of the potential corners in the country. He's the fastest guy in football right now, Donte Jackson. He has tremendous skills. I know with a little maturity and a little more playing time, he's going to be a tremendous corner. One of the top corners in the country two years ago in Kevin Toliver. He is now starting, had a tremendous spring.

We're excited about Greedy Williams from Louisiana. Jontre Kirklin who played quarterback at Litcher High School. And Kary Vincent who won the 200-meter dash in the state of Texas.

We feel that we have a very good defense. We are going to be young. We have to go through some growing pains at the beginning of the season. I know Dave Aranda will have them ready.

On special teams, I know we're very fortunate, very fortunate, to have as our special teams analyst. Let me be correct in what I say. An analyst can only coach the coaches. He cannot coach the players. And he cannot coach on the field. So what we decided, we have Greg McMahon on our staff, who coached many years at Illinois and coached 11 years at

New Orleans Saints. He brings a wealth of knowledge to us in coaches only special teams. That's what I wanted on our staff, only a special teams coach. Greg coaches the coaches. We split it up between five coaches. We coach the special teams, and I'm heavily involved in it. I expect us to have a tremendous year on special teams and make some improvement especially in the run game.

Okay. Any question?

**Q. Ed, how are you? How do you think you are different now as a head coach than you were during your time at Ole Miss?**

ED ORGERON: I'm very grateful for my time at

Ole Miss. I had a great job, a job in the SEC. Was given a great chance. I wasn't ready. I went there as defensive line coach. I did the things that I did at the defensive line coach and was very successful over the years. It didn't work at

Ole Miss. Although I recruited well, the day I left Ole Miss, I looked at myself, and I called my mentor and said, hey, there's some things I have to change. I'm going to be a head coach again. There's some things I got to change. I need to find out why I was not successful. We dug in. I went to see different coaches. We dug in and watched different people. I went and talked to some mentors of mine.

Here's two things I came up with; number one, I was going to treat the team exactly how I treat my sons, no different. And I was going to treat every coach on the coach's staff with respect and let him coach his position as he knew it. Ever since those two minor changes, we've been 12-4, so that's the difference.

**Q. Coach, can you talk about having to go play five conference games on the road, which is very unusual, and the predicament of the decision of last year put you in?**

ED ORGERON: No. You know, it is what it is. Here's what we do at LSU, we take one day at a time, one game at a time. We know we have a very tough schedule, but we don't look at it that way. We look at it as a chance to compete. We look at it as a chance. When we take our team on the road, to go into a hostile environment, and we accept that challenge. And we want to compete at the highest level, and that's part of being in the SEC.

**Q. Follow up to that question, Florida last week scheduled you as their homecoming game. Do you think that has anything to do with the bad blood with the Hurricane Matthew game and do you take any exception to that?**

**A. Here's what I got to tell you, people going to do what they going to do. And Florida is a great rivalry for us. We respect them. Any time we go into the swamp, it's going to be a battle. We need to prepare. I have a lot of respect for Coach McElwain and the job that they do. We are going to be ready to play regardless of what it is. We have an upcoming opponent that week that is very tough, and I'm going to get our team ready to play.**

**Q. Coach, Chuck Smith, he used to play at**

**Tennessee and is a private pass rushing coach. Now he worked with Arden Key. He said recently that he thinks he's going to be better than Myles Garrett. I know you've seen plenty of Myles Garrett in the last few years. Would you put him in that class?**

ED ORGERON: He can be. There's no question. He's a different player than Myles. I have recruited Myles. I have a lot respect for Myles. Garrett obviously is the number one player picked in the draft. Can Arden reach that status and perhaps surpass it? Yes, he can.

**Q. Your opener against BYU kicks off at 8:30.**

ED ORGERON: Yes, sir.

**Q. It's not unusual for a college game to last 3 1/2 hours or more?**

ED ORGERON: Yes, sir.

**Q. BYU doesn't play on Sunday. Have you considered what happens if the clock strikes midnight?**

ED ORGERON: I think that that will be held up to the referees. I will let them make that decision.

**Q. Has it come up, though?**

ED ORGERON: It has been discussed within the realm of our assistant coaches. Yes, it has, but that's out of our hands.

**Q. Ten years ago, you were here as Ole Miss' head coach. How surreal of a feeling is it to now be LSU's head coach with everything you have gone through?**

ED ORGERON: I thank God. I do believe he had a big hand in this. I thank my mentors. I thank Jimmy Johnson. I thank Pete Carroll. I thank our players. I think when you take over for Les Miles who did a tremendous job, who hired me, did a tremendous job at LSU, you have to have some players to lead the way. I think the guys that are seniors that were on the team last year that supported me and the team bought into what we were doing, a lot of factors had to happen for me to get the job at LSU. I'm very, very honored to be the head coach here.

**Q. Coach, you saw glimpses of Derrius Guice last year in a feature role. How do you think he steps into that full time in 2017 and also as a leader in the offense?**

ED ORGERON: I think he's going to flourish. He flourished last year in the last five or six games. He's going to have an even better career this year. I think Matt's going to know how to use him. Matt's going to open up some holes for him. Derrius is a tremendous player. I think he'll end up being after the season,

barring any injury, one of the top players in the country, if not the top player in the country.

**Q. Ed, one of the reasons there was a coaching change at LSU was an inability to beat Alabama. How big is the gap right now in your mind between Alabama and LSU and how can you close it?**

ED ORGERON: Obviously they've done a great job at LSU. Coach Saban did a great job. He did a great job at LSU. Last year was a tight game. It was 0-0 going into the third quarter. Their quarterback made two plays. We didn't. I don't know if it's that big of a gap. I think we need to play our football.

Obviously there's a lot of people on our schedule that are very, very good football teams. So we can't just point to Alabama, but they are the benchmark on the stand that the head coach at LSU must be in Alabama. I think the way to beat Alabama is to recruit on their level. They are recruiting at a high level now, and they do a great job of evaluation. And coach, coach your team very well, and get your team ready to play. Again, last year, we weren't that far off.

**Q. Can you explain the tactics you've employed regarding satellite camps in your state and outside schools coming in? What do you say to the prospects from Louisiana that you may not have been recruiting, but who may have had opportunities to exposure to schools outside state limits due to your tactics?**

ED ORGERON: Let me say this, the recruiting process for us, we have six weeks in April and May that we can go identify and evaluate players that we've been studying for over two years. And we go to Texas. We go to Georgia. We go to Alabama. They come to our states.

Opportunity for guys to get recruited, there's XOs film. There's recruiting lists. Guys not going uncovered nowadays. If there's a guy on the country road, my GPS will get me there if he's that good enough. So as far as opportunity, there's a lot of opportunity given to these young men during those six weeks of evaluation.

So I'll promise you this, if there's a player that LSU wants, we are going to fly there. We are going to drive there. And we are going to get to his high school to evaluate him. Now, as far as satellite camps, am I a big fan of satellite camps? No. Do I wish we would go back to only having satellite camps on our campus? Yes, I do, but that's not my decision.

**Q. Ed, for one of us here who saw you ten years as a coach and see you now, do you think you have something to prove as a head coach because they remember you from ten years ago, and it didn't turn**

**out very well. Do you think you have something to prove, not only to yourself, but to people that I can be a head coach and I can be successful at this?**

ED ORGERON: You know, I think that's out there. But to me, we did it. I took the school at USC. We went 6-2. We beat fourth-ranked Stanford. We played pretty good last year. We beat Louisville. I feel that I'm ready to be the head coach at LSU. My players feel that. There's a need to me to prove the perimeter. I don't feel the pressure from that.

I know this, I understand the expectations of LSU. I was born in Louisiana, and they're very high. But we have the same expectation of our staff and myself. I don't feel the pressure, but I do acknowledge that it's out there. And I still need to prove that now I'm the head coach, and we need to win, and I get that.

**Q. Two-part question. One, looking at the offense last year against Alabama, it was a tough go. Was that more of Alabama's defense or your guys' scheme on offense? And, second, how do you select a new coordinator and Danny coming back for a second year will help the offense?**

COACH ORGERON: Very good question. When it comes down to playing Alabama, it starts with protection. They're great up front. They're taught great. They have great athletes up front and you have to protect the quarterback, and we didn't do a good job of that. Danny didn't have it the whole time, and when he did have it, he didn't complete the pass that he should. The year before, we tried to run the football on him, we couldn't do it. It has to be a combination you have to spread the ball around, put the ball in your playmakers' hands and face and let them make plays, but it all starts with protection first.

**Q. You lost your top three tacklers on your defense last year in Riley there at linebacker and Beckwith at linebacker, they are two critical pieces. Who are some guys you are looking at to step up the play but also to supply a leadership role as well?**

**A. I'm really looking at Rashard Lawrence. I think he is going to be an excellent defensive end for us. Christian LaCouture didn't play for us last year. He'll be playing defensive end. He's a leader. He's a team captain. We believe we'll have it in those two young men.**

**And then at linebacker, Devin White has to step up into that leadership role. He's an outstanding player. He's matured. In fact, he called me about a month ago and said, Coach, will you help me be a leader on this football team and let me know what to do.**

**We're expecting those guys to do it. Donnie**

**Alexander will be a senior. I think he's going to take a leadership role and do a great job for us.**

**Q. In Jacksonville, you talked about your kids, the joy you had in Philadelphia, seeing where those kids were going to go. In terms of Leonard Fournette, thanks to things like the combine, everybody knows his measurables, everybody knows his height and weight. Everybody knows his stats from college. What are they getting in Jacksonville that isn't measured by a number?**

COACH ORGERON: You're getting a good man. You're getting a father. You are getting a guy that loves life. Leonard was never on the list for any disciplinary reasons. Leonard was a great teammate. Leonard wants to fight for his players. That last game, going into the bowl, Leonard could not play. Leonard came to me in tears, he said, Coach, I can't go, I can't play. I said, Leonard, I understand, we will not put you in jeopardy, son, don't worry about it. I will tell the media.

Things you heard that he may have skipped the game or whatever, that has nothing to do with anything. In fact, against Florida, he didn't practice all weekend. He wasn't supposed to play. He tried to play. He wanted to play.

He's a teammate. He has a great heart. He's a great father. You're getting a great guy there. A great man.

MODERATOR: Coach, thank you for your time.

COACH ORGERON: Thank you, guys.