

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

Monday July 16, 2018

Ed Orgeron

LSU coach

ED ORGERON: Thank you, Commissioner Sankey. It's always great to be a part of SEC Media Day.

I'm proud to have Rashard Lawrence, Devin White, Foster Moreau, three outstanding football players on our football team, three outstanding leaders, and three great football players. It's kind of hard to choose three, when we left so many good leaders at home, but these guys will be a great representation of LSU Tigers.

At LSU we're excited. We're anxious to start fall camp having such a great summer with Tommy Moffitt. I can't thank Tommy Moffitt enough and his staff for enabling us to do the job we do as football coaches, when he does on our team on a daily basis. One of the best in the country.

On offense I'm so excited Steve Ensminger is our offensive coordinator. As we all know, he took over interim coach. Steve's offense broke seven school records in eight games. He spread the ball around. He put the ball in our play makers' hands and space and let them make plays. Great game day caller, able to make adjustments, game plan.

We're excited to have Steve Ensminger, a former LSU Tiger quarterback, to be offensive coordinator, along with Jerry Sullivan, our passing game coordinator, one of the best in the country. We're happy to have Jerry.

James Cregg is the offensive line coach, has done a tremendous job already with the offensive line. We'll be very strong on offensive line this year. Tommie Robinson has done a tremendous job with our running backs, training our running backs. And Mickey Joseph, think about this, Mickey Joseph recruits the city of New Orleans for us. In Mickey's first year as a recruiter at LSU, he brought in the number one wide receiver class in the country. I'm so proud of our offensive staff and what they're going to bring.

If you're thinking about what we're going to do at LSU, we're going to be a spread offense mainly from three wide receiver sets, four wide receiver sets, sometimes five. We'll be 50/50, throwing the football, running the football. Steve's going to do a great job of that.

Some key competition in the fall camp, obviously, is



going to be at quarterback. The addition of Joe Burrow has added to the competition we already have add quarterback. We feel that Justin, Myles, Lowell are three excellent quarterbacks. We're going to let this thing play out and let the best man win.

Like I said, we're excited about our young wide receiver corps. We're excited about the young freshman we're bringing in. I feel we'll be very strong on the offensive line lead by Garrett Brumfield, a tremendous guard, has a lot of playing experience at LSU. And excited about Damien Lewis, a young offensive guard brought in from junior college. He's strong and physical.

At running back position, we feel that we have two or three outstanding running backs. They haven't proved themselves yet. Clyde Edwards-Helaire, Nick Brossette, and I want to see what Chris Curry gets to do.

On offense, we're excited about what is going on, excited about everything that's happening with Coach Ensminger and his installation of the offense.

On defense, obviously, Dave Aranda has done a fantastic job. We feel we've got the best offensive coordinator in all of the land. You'll see more of Dave's defense this year, more of a blitzing attacking style. We feel we have two of the best defensive players in the country returning in Devin White, linebacker, and Greedy Williams at quarterback.

We have a front seven that's going to be able to rotate, we're two deep, lead by Rashard Lawrence, who is here with us today, and then K'Lavon Chaisson, our outside linebacker who will take Arden Key's place.

We have to find another cornerback. That cornerback position is going to be exciting to see in fall camp. We brought in Terrence Alexander, a graduate transfer from Stanford who will have an opportunity to compete at that position. Kelvin Joseph, one of the top signees from the state of Louisiana at quarterback. Jontre Kirklin and Kary Vincent. It will be exciting to see who is going to be that other quarterback.

On special teams I'm excited to have Greg McMahon be able to coach in a full-time position. Last year he was an analyst. And we're excited about the signee of

Cole Tracy. We feel Cole is the best graduate transfer kicker we can get out there. We're excited to see him at camp and see what he can do for us and earn the starting spot at kicker.

Our 2000 (sic) recruiting class right now is very strong. I stated several times this is the best recruiting class in the state of Louisiana over several years. We have some very strong commitments in our class right now that's filling some important needs.

One of the best things about this class is that we have young men from the state of Louisiana that will help us recruit this class to make it very strong. We know that we have to finish very strong. We're excited about the direction that the recruiting's going for this class and the 2020 class.

Any questions?

Q. Do you feel like the intensity of the Florida/LSU rivalry has really picked up in these last couple years since kind of the Hurricane Matthew fallout, the goal line stand, the one-point game? Do you feel like it's kind of at its peak right now?

ED ORGERON: Well, from what I know and me being from Louisiana and my history with LSU, it's always been an intense rivalry. Whether it's intense or not because of those circumstances, I can't say. But I tell you what, it's about as intense a rivalry we have, and we respect the University of Florida and we look forward to going and playing a very good Florida team at Gainesville again this year.

Q. Ed, do you feel like you're more settled this year? I mean, this is your staff. You've hired eight of ten coaches. You've had two recruiting classes. Do you feel there's not a lot of guesswork on your part going him?

ED ORGERON: No question about it. That's a good point. We have the staff that we'll go to battle with. I trust these guys. I've known Steve Ensminger since 1979. Obviously Dave Aranda is very well proven, can be a coach at any level. And Greg McMahon is one of my best friends in coaching.

Along with them and the great assistants we've had, one guy I didn't mention on defense is Bill Busch. He's been a five-star coach for us. He's done a tremendous job of recruiting and allows Corey to coach the quarterbacks, and those guys can share the nickel position.

So we're more equipped to be able to compete in the SEC. We have ten analysts this year as opposed to five. We're giving our coaches more information, our players more information earlier in the week. So, yes, I

feel more comfortable, and I love coaching at LSU.

Q. You mentioned Coach Ensminger. What were the things you saw as you were making the move for the full-time position of offensive coordinator that convinced you he was the man for the full-time job?

ED ORGERON: Like I said, the year that we took over interim coach -- I've known Steve -- in fact, I was Steve's graduate assistant football coach at McNeese State University on offense. I have known his ability to lead an offense, his structure, his communication with the players and the respect that he has.

In our first game against Missouri, he set all kind of school records. And he continued to do a great job. I said to myself that Steve is worthy of the coordinator position at LSU.

Circumstances were different when I got the job. I went out and tried to get the best coordinator in the league, and possible for our football team it didn't work. And all the while I was saying: You know what? Steve Ensminger is the guy, and if I have a chance, I'm going to hire him.

I have complete confidence in the direction that he's going to lead this offense. He and I are on the same page.

Q. Coach, not many teams have a luxury of a guy like Devin White. Can you speak to the impact of having a leader like Devin on your team, on the field, but specifically in the locker room?

ED ORGERON: He's a tremendous young man with tremendous character. You brought up a good point. He leads the locker room. After I lost to Troy last year, Devin White became a vocal leader, along with Rashard Lawrence and other people.

He's the reason we got to turn around our season last year along with his teammates. So he's done it before. He's prepared to do it this year.

We have a very challenging schedule. That's why you come to LSU, to play the best. We have to start very fast, and Devin is ready to lead this team to great things.

Q. Coach, how big was the win in Gainesville last year, and what are your thoughts on having to go back a second year in a row?

ED ORGERON: It was monumental. It was monumental for the point of the season, where we're at, very good football team. He missed the extra point. A very good kicker, as you know. And that gave our team confidence.

What happened on the sideline is the leadership of the team came through. We're winning this football game. And that catapulted us into a great win against Auburn.

So, that win for us last year was monumental to prove that we can go and beat Florida on the road.

I'm looking forward to going back there this year. I think Dan Mullen is an excellent coach. It will be a tremendous challenge for us. Again, that's why you come to LSU.

Q. Coach, what does Jimbo -- the addition of Jimbo Fisher bring to the conference and to the division?

ED ORGERON: Jimbo is a great coach. He's won a National Championship. He's a proven recruiter. He's in the hotbed of recruiting near Houston. It's going to be a tremendous challenge. I have a lot of respect for what he does.

Q. Coach Orgeron, it's a two-part question. First part, I know Steve Ensminger is installing a spread offense. What did you see from an intangible and skill-set standpoint that attracted you to sign Joe Burrow and bring him in as a graduate transfer? And the second part of the question: You've got an addition to your strength staff in his first year, Connor Neighbors, former LSU fullback. How important is it for you to have former LSU Tigers come back and be a part of your program and be on the staff?

ED ORGERON: Addressing Joe Burrow, as you know we didn't sign a quarterback in 2018, and Bill Busch was on the staff at Ohio State, and when Joe Burrow's name came up, Bill gave him an outstanding recommendation.

And as we researched, Joe was exactly the type of quarterback that we felt that could come in and compete at LSU. So, those things were very important to us in the recruitment of Joe Burrow.

As far as Connor Neighbors, I would like to have a hundred Connor Neighbors. I think he's an outstanding young man. It's important that all of the ex-LSU football players come back. They bleed the purple and gold. This is their university. We represent them.

Connor brings a tremendous amount of energy and knowledge to our staff, and he is very well respected.

Q. Obviously, LSU's dropped six in a row to Alabama. You've been part of the last two. What have you gained from the previous two years that gives you confidence when they come back to Baton Rouge, you have a chance of winning?

ED ORGERON: Yeah. I think each game is different. You look at that first game, it was 0-0 going into the fourth quarter, and we were toe to toe with them. Their quarterback made some very good plays. You got to give him credit. They hung in there. We didn't finish the game.

I think if you look at last year's game at Alabama, it was a physical contest. We felt that we could handle them physically and compete with them, and that was the first time I think our players felt that in a while.

We missed some plays. We had DJ Chark open. We didn't hit him. Their passing game gave us problems, and their quarterback made plays and we didn't. Give Coach Saban and his staff the credit. They won the football game.

Almost is not good enough against Alabama. But we feel that a couple of plays here and there and continue to be physically, we're going to be right in there with them.

Q. Coach, Commissioner Sankey said earlier today that because of the prospect of legalized sports gambling that, in the future, SEC coaches may have to come up or the conference may have to come up a uniform injury reporting system, or at the very least an availability report. Do you think the coaches will eventually have to accept more of a standardized injury reporting system?

ED ORGERON: You know, that's what happened in the NFL obviously, and that's out of my wheelhouse. I mean, if that's something we have to do, I'll comply with it. But I have a lot of other things to think about than that right now.

Q. Coach, you spoke about Steve Ensminger and what he did as interim for you as OC, but when you got the job, you're looking to hire the best OC in Matt Canada for one year. What gives you confidence now, two years in, that Steve is the best decision for you as OC at LSU?

ED ORGERON: Just on a daily basis, working within the office, what I wanted in an offensive coordinator. And just going through last year, some of the things that we went through, I felt that Steve and I would be on the same page. The players respect Steve. He runs more of the offense than I'm used to, an offense that we won championships with in the past.

So a combination of all of those things. More comfortable with Steve. He's able to adapt to the things that we want to do as a staff. I think he's an excellent game day caller. He knows our players, and he's a great recruiter.

A lot of people don't though about Steve Ensminger as a recruiter, but he's done a tremendous job in the Shreveport area and done a tremendous job this year recruiting quarterbacks.

Q. Coach, have you or your staff discussed the new redshirt rule and how you might end up using it?

ED ORGERON: Yeah. Obviously, every player is different, especially when they come in. Their maturity level is different. Some are ready to play, some are not. Those guys that are ready to play, we signed 22 freshman last year. We played 20. But some of them started the first game and kind of hit that freshman wall and then played towards the end of the season. That would be a guy we'd obviously redshirt.

A lot of guys are not ready to play very early. All of a sudden you get a couple injuries, and then towards the end of the season, they get bigger and stronger, they get in better shape, they learn the system, and then you can play them.

It gives us more flexibility. Obviously we play every one of our freshman that we could and didn't redshirt them at the point that they could be redshirted but take it to the fullest that we can use them those four games.

Q. You're going into your second full year at LSU, and you're already in the middle of the pack in terms of tenure at your SEC school. What was it like going to the spring meetings having five new coaches in the league and Dan Mullen at a new school? And what do you think about the job security in this league? And what do you think about the new coaches coming in?

ED ORGERON: I was glad I had my seat at LSU. But, you know, this is why you come to the SEC. You know that the expectations are high. You know the expectations are high at LSU. So you invite those challenges and you're going to play in the SEC West, perhaps the best conference in the United States and our you're going to play against some of the best coaches.

You know what? Any competitor wants that. I think they've done a great job bringing in some great coaches in the SEC West. Dan Mullen has done a great job in Mississippi State, now he's going to Florida. He's going to do a tremendous job. This is a tough league, but that's why you come here.

Q. It's a bit of a random question, but back when you were assistant at Tennessee, is it true that you came up with the idea to use a helicopter to recruit players, and how has that changed recruiting in general?

ED ORGERON: Well, I don't know if I came up with the

idea. But I do know this; that we were at Tennessee and we will come and recruit the city of Atlanta, and there were several games that we wanted to go to, and the only way to get there was by helicopter. That's the reason we did it.

Now, it was a big deal. The teams that we went to see, obviously everybody was looking up and seeing Kiffin and I coming in a helicopter. And other people started doing it.

I don't know if it was our idea, but it was the reason we did it. We had to go to several games. That's the only way we could do it.

Q. Ed, you have three graduate transfers all in key positions. You can't, per se, recruit them, but do you have any kind of system in place where you have analysts who are on social media kind of looking for guys who put it out there, they want to get out? How do you find out about these guys without recruiting, per se, because this is kind of like an all new recruiting season at the end?

ED ORGERON: Right. As soon as we had an opportunity, we had two scholarships left, and we could have signed some young men. But they didn't fit the bill. They didn't fit the position that we needed. As soon as we had those two scholarships left, we immediately started looking for graduate transfers at quarterback and cornerback.

Now, you get on social media. You get out there, listen to what things are going on, this may come available. You have to follow the same rules, but you have to be on top of it. And as soon as you get a release, I always like to be the first one to call.

We had those names. We had a list of names at quarterback, we had a list of names at cornerback. And when they came available, we jumped on it. I don't think we could have gotten two better young men, three better young men than we did in our graduate transfers.

Q. Ed, you also made a coordinator change after your first season at Ole Miss. Why was this situation different with what -- the change you just made?

ED ORGERON: Well, you asked me why I'm not my defensive coordinator? Why I'm not a coordinator? Is that right?

Q. Can you talk about making an offensive coordinator change after year one like you did at --

ED ORGERON: Oh, I get you. Here's the deal. It's tough when you make a mistake, but it's even tougher not to admit you made a mistake and it's just not a

good fit. And I had to do the best what I thought was for the LSU program, and that's why I did it.

Q. Coach, obviously Georgia hasn't played at LSU in quite a while. For the Georgia fans, going to be traveling down there, and there's going to be a lot of them. What would you tell them they should expect at Tiger Stadium and what would you say about that environment right now?

ED ORGERON: Obviously Kirby did a great job with the Georgia Bulldogs, tremendous team, tremendous recruiting classes. They're going to be a very tough opponent to play. But that night Tiger Stadium is going to be alive. It's going to be loud. There will be a lot of tailgating. Should be a great college matchup in the SEC.

Q. I know you mentioned the quarterback competition, but that first game out of the gate with Miami, could you see this quarterback competition going into that game?

ED ORGERON: That's a good question. We would like it to be settled in fall camp. And we don't know if it's going to be or not. But we're going to have to name a starting quarterback.

Now, there could be a possibility, we don't want to do this, where we would play two quarterbacks if it's not settled or if it's even close. We don't see that happening, but if we have to do it, we could.

Q. Coach, you mentioned some factors that really made Joe Burrow stand out to you. What exactly were those that made you go after him so hard, and what does he bring to the quarterback competition at LSU?

ED ORGERON: We had an advantage. Bill Busch was on the staff at Ohio State with Joe, and Bill gave us an advanced scouting report with Joe Burrow, and he was exactly right. We've known Joe's dad for a while as a coach. Jimmy's been a coach for a long time. A very respected coach. He comes from a very respected family.

But it wasn't until we met Joe. We went out to dinner the first night, and then the next day, we may have had three-and-a-half to four-hour meeting on football, and Joe was excellent in there. And I think it's the first time his dad had heard talk football.

Steve was running the meeting, obviously, and going through some plays with Joe, some installations that we do, some things that he did at Ohio State. And he was excellent.

And we felt that his knowledge of the game is able, his ability to run the offense, he can be a pro quarterback.

He can run the football, extend plays if he has to, he's very tough. He's a leader.

Overall he's very smart, throws in anticipation and accuracy. We felt that he would add to the quarterback competition that we already have.

Q. Ed, Rashard, healthy now. What does he do to the defense when he's got two healthy ankles?

ED ORGERON: He's a difference maker obviously. He's a leader. He leads by example. He plays with great technique. Rashard plays that four technique, talk about Pete Jenkins, excellent. Best I've ever seen.

We feel that we're going to put him in some three technique, let him get up the field and be more disruptive and be even more of a dominant player this year.

Q. Ultimately, what are the qualities that will determine who your starting quarterback is? What do you need to see in August?

ED ORGERON: You know, day in, day out, the operation, the leadership, to be able to execute the offense, to be able to call the protection, to make plays.

You know, the quarterback has to be able to make plays when not everything is just right. They have to make smart decisions, accuracy, throw the football. We're going to throw the football at LSU. We're going to be 50/50. The understanding of the offense and the leadership.

And you know what? We would love this to happen. I don't know if it's going to happen, but I want this to be a clear-cut decision. I want our team to see it and our coaching staff to see it in camp.