

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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Texas A&M Aggies

Coach Jimbo Fisher

Press Conference



JIMBO FISHER: Great to get back again. Once this starts, it's on. Very excited to get going for the season. I think the kids are. Things are happening, and like I said, Greg talked and I was listening to him earlier and all the different things are going on in college football and all the different scenarios.

But the good thing about the whole thing and why we all got in this business many, many years ago is to be able to coach the game and play the game. At the end of the day that's still what we find our greatest moments, when we're on the practice field and when we're on the game field coaching these young guys and developing these young guys.

Very excited about our team this year, the things that are going on, what we're doing, how we're doing them.

But first, before I get into all that, I want to speak about a loss we had in our program. We lost a coach named Terry Price, who was our defensive end coach. A lot of y'all know, he's had a long stint in the SEC. He was at Ole Miss in two different stints. He was at Auburn for a long time. Of course he was at A&M, and then of course he played at A&M.

We lost a great Aggie, but more importantly, I think the world lost a great person. I really do.

I think Terry is one of the people my dad always had a saying that he called him "real people." A guy who never judged you. You could take his word, whatever he said, how he did it, and you knew when you give him a job it was going to be done the right way. He was a selfless staff guy. He was a selfless husband. He was a selfless father. Whatever needed to be done, nothing was too little or too big for Terry Price to handle.

Our program and our family at A&M and the whole college football world lost a great man. Just wanted to remember him.

A lot of y'all have probably had relationships with him at different places and of course at A&M and the different schools you've had, but I can't reiterate, one of the best human beings I've ever been around.

It was a very tough loss for us, and he'll greatly be missed. But he'd be the first one up here to say, hey, get lined up and go play again. That's the way he played, and that's the way he was as a person. But he'll always be in our thoughts and prayers. He's an Aggie forever.

Going on from that, like I say, very excited about this season. As we know, everybody has got a thousand questions on everything that goes on, but we as coaches, we focus on the process of getting our team ready to play and how we've got to play.

Very excited about it, and people say, well, what makes you say -- every coach says they're excited every year. We are, but the thing that got me the most excited, I think, one, is our leadership. I think you'll see that today in some of the guys in which you speak with.

Like I say, every team has leadership, but to me, leadership is how it affects the other guys on the football team, how your leadership can really -- can they translate their personalities, their work ethic, their culture of how they want things done to the other players.

The players have to accept that, and I think our leadership of our football team has me very excited on how they've put their stamp on our team, what they see in our team, how they want our team to go, which we've had many, many meetings on and reiterated, and I can say we manage the team, they do the day-to-day functions of how to get things done and the relationships, and very proud of that group.

I'm excited to see how we translate into fall practice and into the end of the games which we have and what we're trying to do. But very, very -- the experience which we have -- I think last year was some trials and tribulations we had with some injuries and key guys that got out and came back and got back out, I think has benefitted.

We've played a lot of young players. Now you're bringing a lot of those guys back with experience, and I think our two-deep probably has as much experience as we've had since we've been here.

I feel very confident in that group. And as I say, some of your problems a year ago can be your strengths this year, but again, those have to translate on to the field and the things that go on.

Like that dynamic of where we're at, and I think this is a team with a chip on its shoulder. I think it's a team that has something to prove, and we know that. There's nothing to hide about that, how we've got to play.

But you can't become outcome oriented. We have to create the habits on the day-to-day basis, and they have to understand their strength is in their unity, but also that their individual responsibility to create a habit for them to be counted upon in the situations in which they're counted upon and allow us to execute in the most critical moments of every game.

In this league, no matter whether you won 11 games or you've won five games like we did, there's such a fine line in those games of games you won and games you lost. It's making a few critical plays at a few critical times in the game and finding those inches in which you've got to fight, scratch, and claw for each and every play.

And then that's how quick it can go from the top to the bottom real quick, and the team that can find that.

I like the dynamic of our group to be able to do that this year, but we'll find out. There's no promises, no things. I like the group. I think the way we've practiced -- and you say that -- you know, there's a saying I always say, your actions speak so loud I can't hear what you're saying.

Your actions -- whatever you say is one thing, but your actions, and I see that in our attendance, for instance. How you do anything is how you do everything. We've had the highest GPA we've ever had as a football team in our last semester. Kids are going to school, going to class, going to study hall, taking those things great, the attendance in the fourth quarter workouts, the effort in them, the practices we had in the spring, the attitude, the demeanor, the smile on their face, busting their tails.

Man, it was a fun thing to be a part of.

Like I say, sometimes when a guy gets hungry it's fun to watch. How we're going about our business.

As I say, recruiting is going well. We're recruiting a very good class right now, and I always say -- people say, what is your culture? What's your dynamic? When you recruit well, your culture is fine, and I say this for one reason. Our players are our best recruiters. Our players are doing the best job.

As soon as the coaches walk out of the room, the players are going to tell you, they're going to say, they're crazy. That isn't how things are. We want you here. Or this is the way things are and this is the way things are going to be done.

Our players have done a tremendous job in that regard, as well. It's creating a great atmosphere, it's creating great momentum. Now we just have to translate into playing and finishing off this summer in great condition, great health, and going into fall practice August 1st and get on the field August 2nd I believe it is and get going with what we have to do and what we have to achieve.

Like I said, we're in the SEC West, which is the best league in ball, in the SEC period. We've got a great schedule coming up, got great non-conference games, got great conference games home and away, which you always do in this league.

So we've got a lot of challenges and you have play on the on the road and you've got to play at home. We have a lot of things that we have to accept on a weekly basis, and more importantly on a daily basis to create habits, allow us to fight for the inches and do the things we have to do to be successful in everything we're doing.

What I'm telling you is nothing new. There's no secret to this madness. It's about execution. It's about having a plan for what you want to do and guys that can do it.

Our staff has done a great job. I love our staff right now. DJ Durkin on defense is doing a really good job. Of course we lost Terry, which was very critical. Elijah Robinson is doing a great job in our D-line group, along with T.J. and BGA in our secondary group.

We'll name -- and I'll get into -- people are going to ask me, who's going to be your next coach? We'll have an idea when we get back and we'll announce things as we get back and we get -- right before camp when we get started and what we're going to do in the transition with Terry.

Offensively Bobby has done a great job. Fit in very well. Been a great staff guy. He's done a great job recruiting. Has done a great job coaching. Fit right in with what we're doing.

Our staff loves him.

Steve Addazio of course been with us in the offensive line. I think getting a second year under what we're doing and how we're doing it, and has changed some of the things that we're tweaking and turning has done a great job on. Has great ideas himself.

James Coley been a coordinator. Tremendous. Dameyune Craig has done a great job with receivers. Marquel Blackwell, the running back coach coming over from Ole Miss has done a great job. Very excited about that group and ready to go when fall camp starts.

Q. Schematically are we going to see the pro-style under-center play action or the Bobby Petrino four-wide power spread?

JIMBO FISHER: Do you ever watch Bobby? Bobby is a lot of underneath play action. No, but I'm not going to get into schematics and four wide. We'll do everything. We're not going to get into that.

I'm not going to sit here and say exactly what we're doing to do or how we're going to do it. We'll have a good plan, and then the key is we've got to execute it and do it and get the ball to the right guys and right playmakers and be solid across the front, get the quarterback doing what he's supposed to do, and get it to the playmakers and let them play.

That's your goal on offense. And not turn it over and score points.

Q. Jimbo, as you come here and go into the season, do you feel added pressure because you've never been in this position before?

JIMBO FISHER: We live under pressure every day. We put more pressure on ourselves than anybody out there ever puts on us, so there's no added pressure because what good does that do? Does worrying make you any better? No.

What you've got to do is get to solutions. You've got to line up and understand what went right, what went wrong, what kind of team you have now, and that each team changes year by year. I say a team has a one-year life expectancy. Feature what it does well and get it to execute at the highest critical moments of games, consistently throughout games.

Like I say, most games are lost, they're not won. What I mean by that, the other team's inability to be consistent and repeat something over and over and over, and that's

what our goal is, to be able to do that.

But to answer your question about pressure, it's not that you don't feel -- we feel pressure every day. We feel pressure in everything we've got to do. So there's no added pressure. It's just a matter of dealing with what you have to deal with and go execute and try to win football games.

Q. I know it's still one year away, but give us your thoughts on playing your old rival, Texas, again, either every year or every other year?

JIMBO FISHER: I think it's great. I think it's great for college football. I think it's great for Texas and Texas A&M. I mean, I think anytime the old rivalries are renewed -- I've been in a lot of rivalries, been fortunate to be in college football a long time and be in some of the great rivalries in college football, and this one, A&M and Texas definitely is a great rivalry.

I think it's great for us and it's great for them, and it's great for college football in general. Very excited for it to happen.

Q. Jimbo, you got several former head coaches on your staff, Bobby Petrino being the latest you've brought in. A lot of very up-front personalities. How do you deal with that in the coaching staff room when a lot of people -- a lot of us, including myself, wonder how that's all going to work out if it gets into a volatile situation.

JIMBO FISHER: Volatile? Why would it be in a volatile situation? As coaches -- have you ever been in any staff room that doesn't have arguments or disagreements? Every coaching staff in America has an argument or a disagreement. That's part of it.

But no, I'm the boss, we're the boss, we'll do it at the end of the day, but you listen to everybody's opinion. Everybody can voice their -- I want guys with opinions. I want guys who have knowledge. I want guys who make you think. I want guys to create different narratives that brought to the table that can help us. I think it's the best thing you have.

I think that's one of the reasons -- some of the reasons you hired them, to do different scenarios and different things like that.

But as far as that, we all have great respect for each other and it's been tremendous. We've had great response and haven't had any issues.

Q. You promoted Elijah Robinson to associate head

coach --

JIMBO FISHER: He's also co-defensive coordinator.

Q. He's been able to do some speaking. Why is it important to you for him to have some of those opportunities, and do you see a future head coach in him?

JIMBO FISHER: Yeah, I do. I think because he has growth and maturity in the things he's done within our program and respect we have and his understanding the big picture what we're trying to do and how we do things, and that's the role he's in.

If there's things that I cannot be at or I have to be somewhere with a different obligation within our organization or a family situation, I'm very comfortable. Elijah does a great job with that. I think he's a bright up and coming -- I don't say up and coming, I think he's arrived. I think he's done a great job. He's a bright young coach that does a great job for us, and we're very fortunate to have him.

Q. Bobby Petrino, I think this is the first time he's been an assistant since 2002, so he's used to calling plays, being the guy in charge. You've been calling plays probably forever. What's the dynamic going to be like on game day? Does he have total freedom to call the plays? And how will that work? And is it hard for you to give up play calling responsibilities?

JIMBO FISHER: No, there's a lot of things, and you're still involved with what goes on. I'm not going to get into what we're doing, how we're doing it. Again, I'm not trying to avoid anything. I just don't want to create -- you create advantages and narratives out there for what goes on.

But listen, Bobby was hired for a reason, and he's a tremendous coach and tremendous guy and tremendous football mind, tremendous recruiter. He's done a great job recruiting since he's been there, everything he does.

He'll call a lot of -- hopefully he'll call the game. We'll have suggestions on things we do, whether it's offense or defense. Every coach is always involved.

It's a more collective thing than people want to give it room for, but when you get to calling and you get on a roll, you've got to have a guy that can do it, and I think Bobby can definitely do that, and does it as well as anybody in college football.

I have great respect for him. Me and him, we've had a great admiration for each other for a long time, his

production and what he's done.

Q. Devon Achane moves on to the next level, and so currently it's a running back room, a lot of guys who had a handful of carries last year but not a ton, and then you bring in of course true freshman Rueben Owens. I wanted to hear your thoughts on the room and the outlook heading into it season.

JIMBO FISHER: Very excited for it. I thought they had great springs. You go back, Amari Daniels is a very natural runner of the football, does a great job with it.

Le'Veon Moss, extremely talented, fast, big, athletic. Both those guys can catch the football. Rueben Owens, the same way, fast. He's added a bunch of weight since he's been there, and speed. All those guys have size. They have power.

David Baily is a guy that's also come in as a transfer. I mean, guys have been very productive. I think it's -- Ernest Crownover at fullback and Derrick Johnson at fullback. But I like our tailback room. I really do. Le'Veon, Amari, Rueben, those guys are talented. They can be out -- they can catch the ball out of the backfield. They can run it. They can split out. They have power, speed, and they have breakaway speed, and they're strong. I think it's a very good room.

Again, their production is based off they were behind a chain in some situations and we weren't as productive on offense to have the number of at-bats and things we needed a year ago. But those guys can play, and I look forward -- I think it's a very talented room.

Q. During the spring meetings, there was the subject of tampering, and I wanted to ask about tampering. How big of an issue is it, and what are some answers do you think surrounding tampering?

JIMBO FISHER: I think if people tampered they have to be caught. But again, it goes back to you have to prove those things, too, and it can't be just allegations or rumors. I think you have concrete evidence. You try not to -- people say, well, how do you deal with that. I think you've got to keep an open line of communication with your players. You've got to keep a great open line of communication with things that are going on with them and things that are happening with them and being able to talk with them, and if you catch them, you've got to punish them and you've got to punish them severely in my opinion when you get into those things.

Unfortunately that's a part of college football that is becoming a bigger issue because you don't have to sit now

with the transfer portal. Those things are out there.

But listen, everybody is dealing with them, and that's the nature. We navigate it, work with it, communicate, keep an open line, and try to do the best we can.

Q. I wanted to ask about the local kid Marcel Reed. What are your impressions of him so far?

JIMBO FISHER: Really excellent athlete. Natural throw with the football. He looks like it. That's what they're saying. I haven't been out there to see -- he's just been in. The guys say he's running well, training well. He's gaining weight, looks bigger -- he's bigger already.

I haven't seen him. He's put on some weight from the weight room and those things, and the guys say he throws it well.

We loved him -- he was a football/basketball guy and ranked highly in Mr. Football and Basketball in the state of Tennessee. Comes from a coaching background where his dad was a coach a long time, so he gets it.

In my conversations, I've seen him off the field it's in the weight room or by the office, just stop and talk with him and he's very happy to be there, and we're happy he's there. I think he has a great upside. I really do.

Q. How much did y'all miss Bryce Foster last year, and having him back in the lineup, what kind of impact will that make?

JIMBO FISHER: I think significant. Not that there's anything that goes away, but he went through that whole year as a young center who was very physical, very athletic, very talented, and then we missed him right off the bat.

He was sick the whole camp. We never had him the whole two-a-day camp or -- ain't no two-a-day camp anymore, is there? It's still habit, huh? The whole August fall camp from what you have.

But when you got him back, you know, he had to get him into shape a little bit and he really started playing well, and then he got banged up again. Unfortunately for him that was one of the things that we had to deal with, which will make him stronger because we had young -- you know, Wykoff did a great job filling in, Matthew did. Now he's went in the portal, but also those other young guys got to play some.

But Foster is a very, very talented guy and also a very intelligent guy, athletic, big, and having that center, as you

know, that's your quarterback. That's your second quarterback on the field.

I think the world of him. I expect him to have a great year, and when he does, it makes a huge difference on what we can do on offense, a big difference.

Q. I've gotten a chance to watch Rueben Owens the last couple years at El Campo; Kilgore in the second round faced Rueben and able to get by him. Special, special athlete.

JIMBO FISHER: Yes, sir.

Q. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about not just Rueben, any other freshmen you've got coming in that we might keep an eye on.

JIMBO FISHER: You know, this class didn't get the hype that the other one did, but I'm going to tell you what, there's some really good players in there. I mean, offensive linemen in Chase Bisontis and T.J. Shanahan, Tomlinson, those guys -- I mean, that group is a really good group.

The secondary group, Jayvon Thomas, Bravion Rogers, Brooks, all those guys in the secondary, the linebacker group come in, did really well up front with DJ Hicks, a really talented guy.

We didn't have the numbers of guys. We didn't take as many. Then you've got Rueben there; Marcel is a guy that's under the radar a little bit; and our young receivers, Tease and Cotrell, two guys that had really good springs. You see them be productive in the spring game they came in.

Jaden Platt was another one that's really, really gifted. Big Samu inside is a defensive lineman out of Houston. He's 390 pounds. We're getting him down in weight, but he can move and play, and you've got that body in there as a run stopper and the things you've got.

Chance Johnson is another -- I'm trying to go through all of them. We were real happy. The guys that came in were good. The guys that have been in in the summer have worked out, ran.

The coaches say you watch their athleticism and their demeanor and their work ethic, we really liked that class. We really did. Hope there is no guys I missed. I'm sure there is as I'm going through it all off the top of my head.

But it was another good class. Not the numbers, but I think the productivity and the high end parts of it, I think some really good guys, especially when guys put their hand in

the dirt and play.

Rylan Kennedy, you know is a guy from up in the Dallas area that can really rush and be an athletic guy on the edge, too. So there's a bunch of guys in that group we like.

Q. Given the recent Texas State law and NCAA memo, what's the status of the 12th Man Plus Fund, and what's the future of that model?

JIMBO FISHER: It has nothing -- I don't know. That was not in my repertoire. That's for the athletic director and the lawyers and everybody else to sort through and do what they've got to do. That was what they come up with, and whatever that is, we'll navigate and work on based off the right laws in which we have.

I don't know that answer. I'm just navigating by the rules they give me, and I ask compliance every day, and then we go from there.

Q. Coach, it's been a little over a year since you went back and forth with Nick Saban in terms of recruiting. Where do you guys stand on your recruiting class, and how do you guys feel about your rankings in terms of recruiting --

JIMBO FISHER: Where we are in the recruiting class? I don't know what the rankings are, but I like the guys -- I don't ever follow rankings. We follow the guys we want to get and we recruit, and we feel very comfortable with those guys on our own evaluations and the things that go on.

Sometimes I guess you agree with the guys out in recruiting and sometimes you don't. That's why we always try to pick our own guys. But we like the guys we have. I think we've got a very good class going, and hopefully we'll continue to build on that because at the end of the day you've got to recruit players.

Q. What all did Connor show you at quarterback last year, and how close is he to being an elite quarterback in your mind?

JIMBO FISHER: You know, I like both our guys, he and Max, but when Connor got a chance, you're talking about a guy that went in and played in some great games, took us to almost -- won an Ole Miss game on the road. We had a tough time. Come back and played a great LSU team and played extremely well. Never had a turnover; had eight touchdowns, high completion percentage, poise, understanding. He's athletic.

You've got to remember now, he probably would have been a top two or three round pick in the baseball draft if

he goes a year ago. I mean, and he was a shortstop. I mean, this guy is a very gifted guy who can play, and very excited about his future and what he can be, and just love his whole makeup and demeanor.

Q. You've been a head coach in Power Five for over a decade. You've won championships. Every year chemistry is different on a football team. There's high expectations at A&M. You didn't meet them last year.

As a staff, when you guys self-assessed, what do you do this year to make sure the chemistry is different and that the football team meets expectations?

JIMBO FISHER: Well, just what I was talking about earlier. It's a great question, it really is. Because you talk about coaches can want all they want. Players got to manage a team and run it on a day-to-day basis, and I think it gets into your leadership of your team, and not just leading guys but how they can get guys to understand why it's important to do all the little things. Do you go to class, do you go to study hall, you're practicing hard all the time, practicing, trying to find those inches.

I think the leadership of your football team is the key. I think the open line of communication, that's what's got me as excited about this year. I love the leadership of our football team, and there's quite a few number of guys that have done it.

I think a lot of guys coming back for fourth and fifth years, which you don't have a lot. Some guys got banged up and came back for those situations that are doing a great job of setting examples of what things -- and were around when we went to the Orange Bowl and won the Orange Bowl, were the fourth team in the country, had a chance to be in the playoff, all that. Guys that were on that team and productive in that team.

I think that part of it has me excited. I think that's a key to it. It's not what we say and how we do. We can adjust scheme. We can adjust that. But how they practice, how they go about things, how they do everything. And they're all the little things they do away from ball on their own time, whether they're seven-on-sevens, whether they're walk-throughs, all those types of things, the film watching, all those -- if those guys can lead and do, I think that's the difference in your great teams and your average teams, and I think that creates within the culture, and I think we've got a really good leadership group coming back, getting McKinnley coming back, getting Ainius to come back, getting Max Wright to come back.

There's a ton of guys in that group that came back. Layden Robinson, a huge one up front. All those guys.

I think it makes a big difference, and I think that's what's got me excited about it.

Q. Coach, you look at your schedule, and I know you kind of hit on this to start, but you've got a four-week stretch of Auburn, Arkansas, Bama and at Tennessee. How do you go about preparing your football team to survive that slate?

JIMBO FISHER: Right now, first of all, it's getting them conditioned and mentally tough in how they work, how they do things this summer and the attention to detail we've had all year and then how we practice in the fall to understanding what we have to do on a daily basis and not get outcome -- not worrying about going to all four.

Listen, we have one day today. This is what we have to do. You've got to learn to -- you know the old adage, control what you can control, and everybody says, that's just -- it's not a cliché. It's a fact. People wouldn't say it all the time; know what I mean? And be accountable to each other.

Be available, be accountable and be defendable. Until you do that, you can never -- those abilities are the three most important abilities you can have, availability, accountability and dependability. Until then you can't use your mental and physical abilities until you have those three things, and you've got to do that on a daily basis because those habits are what's going to come out during that time.

What we form right now and how we practice, and not just practice -- you don't practice until you do it right. You practice until you can't do it wrong. I think that's where maturity comes in, and I think that's where experience comes in, and we have to get those habits across right now so we can take those things on the road, and what we have to do on those games in Dallas, one's in Tennessee, two at our place, so to be able to do whether you're doing them at home or on the road. Those have to be engrained right now.

The secret to this is no secret. It's going to be the fundamental things, and great teams do ordinary things better than anybody else, and that's what's got to be engrained in us through camp, and then the athleticism and the greatness and the great plays will happen within the concepts of what you're trying to do. But you've got to practice that way to be able to take it and create habits in the big critical moments on the road and at home and those big games.

Q. Cameron Coleman, a lot of recruiting outlets were predicting that he would be probably staying a little bit

closer to home. Texas A&M came in right at the 11th hour. Could you tell us a little bit more about the --

JIMBO FISHER: I'm not allowed to talk about any current recruits that aren't signed that are on our campus. I'm not allowed to have any comments or anything of that nature. All I can say is that we were recruiting him, and that's it. I can't have any comments on him.

Q. Coach, you've mentioned that you're optimistic about the offensive line. You've said it several times already --

JIMBO FISHER: Which is the key. Which is the key to everything. You have a quarterback room, you've got to be able to run the football, do the things you've got to do. In this league you've got to win up front.

Q. What have you seen that makes you think that they will improve considerably over what we saw last year?

JIMBO FISHER: I think what we saw in the spring. I think the health. I think their health, the experience, the leadership of the group, and the failures which they had. The failures which we had as a team, as a group, allowing those things of what they have to do and not wanting to let them happen again. Sometimes that's the greatest motivator you have, what you have to do.

Now you have experience, you have knowledge, you have understanding of what to do, and I see a different chip on their shoulder, and I see a demeanor and a leadership within that group that's been excellent.

Now, again, that's all hearsay. Your actions speak so loud, I can't hear what you're saying. You've got to go back and do it. Doesn't matter, we just need to be quiet, shut up and go play, and we'll find out when it's all said and done.

But to answer your question, I feel like I have confidence in those guys. I believe in those guys.

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