

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

Monday, July 17, 2023

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Texas A&M Aggies

McKinnley Jackson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: McKinnley is here, and he is ready for questions.

Q. What do you think about the SEC expanding into Texas? Is that going to make it different for your school?

McKINNLEY JACKSON: Texas is some of the greatest football I've ever seen, so I think it's great for the SEC considering it's one of the best conferences in college football.

Q. Just goals for this season, what have you tried to improve upon from the end of last year?

McKINNLEY JACKSON: Honestly, being a better player, a better person, and better leader. Holding my guys accountable and holding myself accountable to be the expectation of what we need to be every day and bring it to the table every week.

Q. So your guys run defense from 2021-2022 dropped from 36th to 123rd nationally, so what do you guys have to do from a preparation standpoint to get back and prove that run defense and get back to what it was in 2021?

McKINNLEY JACKSON: Every day, like I say, we hold each other accountable. We can't be one-dimensional, just stopping the run one or two times. You have to be consistent every day. That's what the game comes down to. Being consistent, holding each other accountable, pushing each other through limits and your expectations.

Q. McKinnley, what have you done this offseason to be better individually, and what does it mean for you to be the team captain?

McKINNLEY JACKSON: It's an honor, and I wear it on my sleeve with pride. I've been pushing myself to new levels. I'm just working on all the small details I feel I wasn't great

at last year.

Also, pushing my guys. Like, you know, I can't just worry about myself because it's just not me out there. You know, it's more than me. There's 11 players out there. I have to worry about 11 more people. I'm one of the most selfless people I know. I don't worry about myself at all because I know I'm willing to bring my all. I'm going to go 110% every day, but I have to make sure everybody else is on the same page.

Q. What was it about Texas A&M that made you leave your home state?

McKINNLEY JACKSON: Honestly, I wanted to grow, expand my mind. I've been in Mississippi for 18 years, so I wanted something new, to see the world for more than what it is, because where I'm from it's kind of small. I don't want to tell you how it is where I'm from, but it's kind of small-minded. You don't see too much every day. You see the same things, same people.

I could go home today, and I leave for a year, and the same thing is going on. So, you know, I wanted something new out of life, and I felt like Texas was where it's at.

Q. McKinnley, who has the most, I guess, swag or freshest fit here at SEC Media Days, and we want you to describe your outfit too.

McKINNLEY JACKSON: You're looking at him. Come on, man. I came up, hand Gucci down, a suit from Men's Warehouse. I thank my school for this. I try to look pretty nice for y'all, you know, when the camera is on me. I'm not too big on the cameras, but they found me, though.

Q. What was the difference for you in the LSU game and the team -- they're a top-ranked team, and you beat them at the end of the season as opposed to earlier in the season. You had trouble with some opponents that you were supposed to beat, but fell short.

McKINNLEY JACKSON: Honestly, it was a complete game of complementary football. We got three of them now, and the offense went down to finish the score, and we



have to be consistent with that.

Like I said, the game comes down to consistency. How consistently you stop the run and rush the quarterback and get knocked back and contain the rushing lanes in order to put the offense in good field position to score.

So I feel like that's the main thing. We have to be complementary to one another. You know, just do our jobs.

Q. Your teammate Walter Nolen was the top defensive line prospect in the 2022 class. Played some last year. Since the end of last year, how has Walter improved, and how do you expect him to contribute in 2023?

McKINNLEY JACKSON: He has improved tremendously, and honestly he is nowhere near his peak at all. He is still on the incline.

I'm more excited. Y'all got to see what he is going to be. I feel like -- we call him in the locker room unicorn because he is so -- like, his body type is different, but he can do it all.

So he is one of the most tremendous players I've ever seen, one of the greatest talents I've ever seen playing this game from high school to the collegiate level, and I played against some amazing guys. Skill players included.

He is one of those tremendous athletes. Like I said, he is a unicorn.

Q. I would love to know about the unity in the locker room last year at the most difficult times in the season and sort of how it all -- how it stayed together and how you guys have been fighting?

McKINNLEY JACKSON: There were ups and downs. Of course there's going to be. How we come together and commemorate to one another, like I say, hold each other accountable.

So dealing with those losses, you know, at times we didn't handle our business the way we should have. We didn't conduct ourselves the right way.

It falls back on a lot of things, like leadership. Like I said, I feel like this year, it's one of the things we've worked on especially this offseason, especially myself. Like I said, being selfless and pushing others to be more than what they expect themselves to be because, you know, there's no limit to what you can be. And if you don't see it, someone else sees it. If I see it, I'm going to push it out of you each and every day, no matter if you like me or not.

We can argue back and forth. We can fight, but I'm going to get the best out of you just like I'm going to get the best out of me. Because I want you to be the best at your game. I want you to have everything you want out of life, and I'm going to do whatever it takes for my part and for me putting it on you.

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