

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

Tuesday July 16, 2019

Jimbo Fisher

Texas A&M



COMMISSIONER SANKEY: Texas A&M University head football coach Jimbo Fisher will be next on the stage. Jimbo entered his second season as head coach at Texas A&M after serving at Florida State University as their head coach. Former Broyles Award finalist. Multiple Coach of the Year honors in 2013 away from football, Jimbo and I were just talking about his two boys, Troy, a senior quarterback, and Ethan, who will be entering the eighth grade. Jimbo just came from wrestling some cattle up in West Virginia, as he told me. But Coach Fisher spends time hoping to find a cure for Fanconi anemia, the rare disease that Ethan has. In the last eight years, the foundation Kids First Fund has raised over \$9 million for research, and now time life expectancy for those diagnosed with FA has risen over 11 years.

Texas A&M University head football coach, Jimbo Fisher.

JIMBO FISHER: Howdy. See, now y'all's supposed to understand this, now. I say "howdy," you got to say "howdy" back. Dadgummit. It's great to be with y'all. It's amazing how fast a year flies and how fast, a little bit of vacation you do have, that it moves on.

But when these days kick off, that means football's here. Like I say, get your heart beating a little faster and your mind going a little quicker. Looking forward to it. Very forward of proud our team, the things we were able to accomplish last year. So didn't do all the things we wanted to do, but we're laying the foundation. That's what this is about, putting in the culture and making sure we understand how we want to do things at Texas A&M. Have everything in place. Our players are doing a great job. Thought we had an outstanding spring, and our offseason is going really well.

From that standpoint, the biggest I love about our offseason I think is our psychological disposition about how to go about things and the way our players are approaching it and how we are going to have to make and correct a lot of things as coaches. Our players, our upperclassmen are doing a great job with the leadership. The guys we have here today, Kellen Mond, Justin Madubuike, Braden Mann, those guys would be some examples of that, but there's a lot of that going on right now creating the culture. In this

league, you better have culture and be able to win and expect to win because everybody has good players from that standpoint.

I'm very proud of our team and the things we've been able to accomplish and where we've been so far, and looking forward to this year. We have a tremendous schedule. As I say, you always do in this league, and that's one of the things that makes this league what it is, why it's the best league in football. It's fun to get into and compete and do what we have to do. So we're looking forward to those challenges coming up. Thank you.

Q. Texas coach, Tom Herman, expressed an interest in reviving the Texas/Texas A&M rivalry, citing games like Clemson, South Carolina, Florida, Florida State. Is that something you're likewise interested in?

JIMBO FISHER: Yeah, if it's beneficial to

Texas A&M. I know we're scheduled out right now for ten years. If it's something that benefits Texas A&M, we'll definitely be interested in that and make those judgments as they come.

Q. Hey, Jimbo. You played at teams that will likely be ranked in some order, one, two, three. In the poll, Clemson, Alabama and Georgia. If I were to refer to Texas A&M as a spoiler, would you consider that encouraging or condescending?

JIMBO FISHER: Condescending. We don't want to spoil anything. We want to take care of our own, and they are great teams. But we expect to play with them and compete with them and win those games. That's why we're here. We are not looking to spoil anything. We're looking to win something and go about our business and do the things we have to do. They are great programs, but Texas A&M can be the same way. We have to go play and prove ourselves and do the things we have to do, but I definitely think we're on that track.

Q. Coach, Tray'Veon Williams was a huge part of your success last year leading the SEC in rushing. Wherever you've been, you have always run the ball well. Give us an update where your running game is and some guys to watch out for in the fall.

JIMBO FISHER: I think first of all, it starts up front. Our

offensive line, we have five guys that started multiple games. We have over double digit games coming back. We have a great group of young guys coming in. I think Jashaun Corbin, behind him -- that young freshman last year we had, Jashaun Corbin. He's a very talented guy. He can catch it, run with powers, speed, agility.

Again, Tray'Veon is the guy -- you are talking about a guy that is third in the country that lead the SEC in rushes over 1700 yards. I mean, to say, you don't ever replace those guys. That's a standard which is set. I think Jashaun is a hard worker. I think behind that with Kibodi as a tailback and Prince and those guys, we have a great group of guys, Cordarrian Richardson, Isaiah Spiller coming in. We like our backs more where we are at now. And I also think Glen Beal, our tight end, is a very good blocker. Our young tight ends are. I believe you have to be physical in this league to be successful, and you have to run that football. We will continue to do it. I feel very confident with where we are right now.

Q. I wanted to get your thoughts on one year of the transfer portal what you thought, how that worked, and how -- what role it plays in building your roster? And, second, Nick stark will transfer to Arkansas, and you're going to face him in conference in division. Your thoughts on him and what kind of player he is and what Arkansas is getting there?

JIMBO FISHER: First of all, Nick is an outstanding person. He's an outstanding player. He has great arm. He can throw it. He thinks. He has had great success in this league. And Nick is one heck of a player. He is going to be an extremely tough guy to go against. I have no doubt about that. He's a class, class young man.

The transfer portal, I think the biggest thing we are getting to whether you transfer, whether you're in a portal, or transfer, however it goes, the thing about it is I think you have to get consistency on how you rule things and when guys are eligible or not eligible and all that.

That's what we're searching for. What is the rule? I think we've done a great job with the targeting rules now. I think they're extremely defined. I think how you coach things and how you look at things I think is great and I think it is the same way with transfer.

Guys transfer all of the time. There's no disrespect or anything in transfers because guys' situations change and all of that happens, but you have to have a set of rules for this, and I think that's what we're getting to, and it will enhance it that much more.

Q. Coach, how do you feel like the -- now you've been through it a couple years how the early signing period has changed, how you go about recruiting the cost of it, the time and has it been a good thing for the sport?

JIMBO FISHER: I mean, I think it is from the standpoint of, you know, you can get that done -- having that done after coming after a bowl game and going back and not knowing you have to go sign your whole class and having most of that done. Now, once you get to that point after a bowl game and after January, it's great. Before that, it's tough as heck, those two or three weeks, especially when you come in the first year of it. I'm a new coach coming in with three weeks to try and scratch and claw and getting a class together getting to know me, that's tough. I think it's a good thing.

I will say recruiting now with the visits in the spring with April, May and June, it's tough on a coach right now. The time spent every weekend is a recruiting weekend and what's going on, you're out there spring recruiting. You are coming home for visits, these assistant coaches, they take a pounding now. It's really tough. It's here to stay. I don't think it is ever going back. I like it. I think it's something that was needed. It's a very tough time, and it's strenuous. There's no doubt about it.

Q. Coach, you won so many games at Florida State. You won a national title. Does it bother you or hurt you that in that recent Bleacher Report article that FSU's administration is blaming you?

JIMBO FISHER: In this business, you learn to have tough skin, you learn the circumstances of everything that happens and how it happens. That's part of this business. People are going to say and write things, and you know what goes on and you move on. I have nothing but respect for my time at Florida State. It is a phenomenal place and those players and kids and everyone that was there. I had great time. We had great success. I wish them nothing but the best. You move on with your business and move on. They'll be successful I know. That's a great program.

Q. How much was the LSU win last year for you guys sets your program ahead for this season? Do you feel like there's a rivalry kind of butting with you with Scott Woodward coming over and between those two states and recruiting at this point?

JIMBO FISHER: If I can get Scott coaching, that would be better. No, it is. That used to be a rivalry, and I think it is. We're so close. You had one of the epic games in college football history. It was very unique, and I think it will butt into rivalries. Rivalries come when both teams are good. I think we are building our

program to be good. LSU is establishing itself as a great program. I think that's how rivalries are made. Just like everybody talks about the LSU/Alabama rivalry, that wasn't a rivalry when we first went to LSU years ago. Then it evolved. Then Alabama come back. That's how you have two good programs that evolved into that. I think that is what is happening here. LSU is establishes. We are establishing ourselves as a great program.

The more rivalries, the more emotions you have in college football, I think that's what makes it such a great game. It will be very tough. And they're always a great opponent. It will make it fun, and we're going forward.

Yes. To answer your question, I think it was huge for our team to be able to get through that. I think after the second half of the Old Miss game, I think the way we finished, I think that was very big for our program. It helped us establish and I think it helped our kids and players to understand the way we practiced, the way we prepared, the way we have losses, and how those things all come into play. No doubt.

Q. I had a two-part question. I think Nick Saban's former assistants are 0-16 --

JIMBO FISHER: I've never heard that, never, ever heard that before.

Q. It's 0 and something. And he doesn't seem to be showing any signs of slowing down. I think he's 67. Do you think eventually one of you guys are going to beat him? What's it going to take? And the second question, Kevin will probably help you remember this, with the 7-0 teams, the NCAA changed the rule that after four, you got to start going for two, you don't go to the 25. What do you think about that rule change?

JIMBO FISHER: I mean, from that rule change part of it, I think it is very good. I mean, but you know you're changing the rule for something that happens, what, 3 percent of the time, or 4 percent of the time that it's ever happened. But at the same time, I understand why they did it for player safety. If that happened to be in the middle of the season, you have to come back the very next week and prepare. That has a huge effect on how you have to prepare and the amount of playing your kids did that week going into the next week. I get that, and I understand it.

The good thing about that, we will always have the longest game and high scoring game, and everything is good. So we will get to keep the record.

As far as Nick goes, what's it going to take is it's going to take 60 minutes of football. We all know, Alabama

established itself as a great program. Nick is a great coach. What's it going to take? 60 minutes of great football. You have to line up and play. And more importantly, you have expect to win the game. Don't hope to win it. You got to expect to win. You got to go in the game prepared knowing that you can win it and play it, perform and execute. Don't worry about winning the game. Before you win it, you have to play it. I think that's the key. Don't worry about winning it. Worry about playing well in the game, performing, making the plays when you have to, and then you'll get the results you want. They established themselves, and they deserve it. But we'll see in time.

Q. Kelly Bryant from last year played against you guys. What did that game in College Station show about him?

JIMBO FISHER: I mean, I think, first of all, the kind of team player he is because he was a starter the year before and they were subbing back and forth with him and Trevor Lawrence, and then he came back in the game and played very well and made the plays and the drives in which they were able to win that football game, I think it shows his team morale and camaraderie and the kind of guy he was and the kind of winner he was. He's a heck of a player. I think he'll do very well for Mizzou, that's for sure.

Q. How do you and your assistant coaches approach the NCAA transfer portal, just as far as building roster management? Do you guys take a look at and look through things?

JIMBO FISHER: Yeah. We have people who manage it and see what's there and what's going on. If somebody contacts us -- say you don't ever take them, and you do take them. You don't want to build your program from them. You can't do it that way. You have to build your program from what you recruit and how you develop guys. But if there's a guy out there and he makes contact, that is part of the process you are going about. Transferring is a site-free agency. That is kind of what is coming out. If there's a guy out there that you think can help and provide a need, it is big. That's part of it. You have to manage that part of it. You don't expect it, but it's something you have to always be aware of and plan for if you see those guys come available how you recruit and do other things.

Q. Coach, Mike Elko was somebody who was pursued by a variety of people. You're probably going to have to deal with this on a yearly basis. How big a part is he of what you are trying to build and how difficult is the task to keep him on board?

JIMBO FISHER: I don't think the task to keep him on board is that tough because I think you look at A&M and what we have and what we're building and the players we have coming, and he knows what the future

of this program is going to be, and Mike wants to do that for sure. He's a big part of it because Mike's one of the best defensive coordinators in college football. This guy does a great job. Knows how to play the run pass, knows all the different things. Our kids love him. He's a hard worker. Philosophically, he and I believe a lot of the same things when we're going in and now we've adapted that to how we want to do things and how I want things done, and he is a total team guy. He gets it. I think he's a tremendous coach and has a tremendous future in this business.

Q. Coach, what do you remember about Jake Bentley, seeing him last season at South Carolina, and also your scouting report on Will Muschamp as a basketball player?

JIMBO FISHER: You said Jake Bentley?

Q. Yes.

JIMBO FISHER: Jake is a heck of a player. Had great arm talent. I knew Jake as a youngster in high school. I mean, can throw it. And being a coach's son, he knows the game. He's tough. He can make all the throws. He stands in the pocket. He's a guy I think will play on Sundays. I think the guy is a heck of a player. I really do.

Muschamp as a basketball player. He accused me and Nick of cheating all of the time. We were always on the team. I remember one time kind of take Will into the wall and messed his ankle up a little bit. Those games got very physical, that's for sure. Nick was always on the other side. It was Nick and myself and then whoever, we got whoever with us, and then played against those guys. But he was a good athlete. Nick was -- I mean Will was a good athlete. He really was. But we were undefeated.

Q. Hey, there could be up to I think five grad transfers be starting SEC quarterbacks this season. Do you see that trend continue? Do you see especially why quarterbacks transfer when they lose their starting job, and can you envision yourself having a grad transfer?

JIMBO FISHER: I think that position of all the things -- you have to manage that position differently because it's the one position where basically one guy plays, and I think that's just a trim of quarterbacks, or they get a backlog or they see someone that wins a job, they're going to transfer. I think that's part of -- I think that will always be the game going forward. I truly do. That's just going to be part of it.

And I can understand why a guy does that. If he loses his job and he's going forward and he has one or two years to play, I mean, I get it. That's not the way it used to be, but that's the way it is and that's part of it

and you've got to manage that part of it going forward, in my opinion, and always be aware. That's why I think you're constantly recruiting quarterbacks. Because you don't ever know how many of those guys are going to leave.

Q. Quick question. You've spent a lot of your career in the SEC. And you spent a decade in the ACC. Differences between the leagues, speed of the game, tougher? What's your comparison?

JIMBO FISHER: I think both leagues outstanding. We had great success when I was in Florida State. We were in the top five or ten almost every year and won national championship, played for more of them.

The SEC I think from top to bottom, and I've always said this, I think the -- it's just a -- everybody has good players. Not that they don't over there, but it just -- the statement it means more, I think it does. I think these schools take football extremely seriously. It's the number one sport in this league, in almost every school in this league it's the number one sport and it's very important.

But the ACC has great ball. I always said that. They competed well. I mean, from top to bottom, I don't think there's any doubt the SEC is -- look at the draft picks. We set a record last year with 64 draft picks. I think the next to it was 40 with the Big Ten, then you got into 29, 26, and 22 in the other three leagues. I mean, three times the number of players. And the atmospheres, the environments, the home stadiums, the number of people at games, the coverage, you're under a microscope here and just the best of the best.

Q. Jay Graham has been on your staff for a number of years. Do you see him kind of getting -- kind of escalating up your --

JIMBO FISHER: No doubt. He's actually our co-offensive coordinator right now. Jay's done a tremendous job recruiting, coaching with our running backs, in the situation with the backs. The number of backs we had at Florida State and what he's done with those guys. Himself being a great player, he developed great players. He has a great mind for the game. It's just not in the -- he understands the big picture of the game and how to throw it, how to protect it, how to do everything. And I think eventually he'll move up as coordinators and one day be a head coach.

Q. Sorry to bounce back to the transfer conversation, but I was wondering did your experience transferring in college influence how you think about the topic at all?

JIMBO FISHER: I'm not going to say it didn't. I think each situation is unique. Probably so. I think it does. When you're 18 to 22, think of how many different

things your mind changes on and situations occur, things occur.

It's like my father always told me: If you're changing or you're leaving, tell me why; give me a good reason, not "because I feel like it." And, two, what's the plan on the other end?

See, the thing that scares me about all the things going on now, I don't think a lot of guys always plan the other end of it out and have an idea where they're going. I think if they do it for why am I going, is there a legit reason for leaving, and what's the plan of where I'm going -- and I do with our players. I say, okay, if you're leaving, I get it. Tell me why you're leaving. Now, tell me what you want to do and what you're trying to accomplish. If they can't do that, I say, why don't you go back and think about it. You know what I'm saying? Because I think as coaches you've got to help them make those decisions. And there's guys you want to talk -- you try to get them to stay, and the other guys you say I can see your point. You're going to have a tougher time playing. If that's what you want to do, you can. I try to at least make them say that to me. Because they can get lost out there really quick. Because you know there were more guys in the transfer portal than there were available scholarships. You got to be honest with those guys. Trying to help them do it is part of our role as coaches, is very critical in that whole process.

Q. Steve Shaw this morning directly referenced the LSU/Texas A&M game seven overtimes, something that changed the rule. Whenever that game ended, did you leave that thinking this is a game that rules are going to be made off of now?

JIMBO FISHER: It didn't shock me. I didn't -- I didn't know if the rule was. I just figured out, I know one thing, I got to make sure I have a lot of two-point plays from now on. But I didn't -- that wasn't the first thought. It really wasn't. But as it come back, it came up pretty quickly the next day. And people were saying it, and I got to thinking about it, and I said, yeah, I guess that does make sense.

But that was the game that did it, that's for sure.

Q. You talked earlier about the fact you have players constantly under 24/7 scrutiny. When you look at the student-athlete aspect of it, especially with mental health, like Greg Sankey was talking about on Monday, how much do you handle that on a regular basis?

JIMBO FISHER: Consistently every day. I have always been a part of that. I learned it a long time ago. We have sport psychologists, regular psychologists. We have everything in place. We have coaches, people

come in and learn it, organize, how to structure, to deal with everything possible. That's a huge part of our financial budget.

I think that's a big part of programs. I think those are the kind of programs in place that people who don't have resources really struggle, and I think it hurts college kids. I think that's always been a huge part of my development of players, is the psychological development, how they handle pressures, deal with issues, deal with all that stuff, different people to talk, from pastors, sports psychologists, psychologists, all that stuff.

It's the biggest problem -- I said this ten years ago in a meeting one time in the ACC, and people said, well -- they kind of laughed. I said, listen, guys, mental health is a huge part of what's going on right now. When you're 18, 20 years old, the kids -- the things they're facing is a hundred times greater than we ever did when we were coming up because of all y'all and the social media and the ability -- the accessibility and the expectations, it's crazy what these kids go through, and it's a shame sometimes.

My big thing on it, when do they ever get a break? When does a kid now ever get to be a kid? When is he allowed to make a mistake without somebody wanting to kick him out, throw him out, or whatever? They're under pressure. When do they ever get to unwind? It's hard. You have to create things within your program and team events and things for those for guys just to have fun and quit worrying about competing and what Twitter, the 10,000 followers they got, which they worry about what they think about it more than their mom, dad, and coach. It's crazy. It's a big part of what we do.

Q. Coach, I wanted to ask you about Kellen Mond, one of the players you brought over here, year two of your offense, is there extra stuff you're going to put on his plate this year? How much more comfortable do you think he will be in your offense, and how much more, I guess, innovations will be in it?

JIMBO FISHER: Well, I think it is. But also you talk about innovation, we talk about plays, but also it's decisions within a play. There's a lot of things within a play that are accessible that guys aren't ready for. You know, you give them the basic 1-2 read, but if there's certain looks, can you run that same play and the look on the back side is better than what it is on the front side. Giving him availability to have the five available receivers being able to go to him at any time or a check that can get us in a run or get us in a right look or he sees a certain blitz to take a shot.

But also, you call the play, it's one or two, but now if you do get these matchups, you may get one, two, three or four. And expanding -- like I say, you take Algebra 1. Algebra doesn't change, but Algebra 2 gets more complicated. You just keep adding more to the formula as you go.

That's where he's getting to. He's been really fun the way he -- he understands he has to be a student of the game, and I think that's the most fun we have. He works his tail off. Nobody works any harder, but he also works in the film room, too. You know from the conversations you had with him, the questions he asked you, it's starting to be really fun. He's being able to use all of the resources around him.

Q. A little history, Arkansas played two seven overtime games in 2003.

JIMBO FISHER: Ole Miss.

Q. They had a seven OT game in Kentucky and played Thursday night that following week and beat South Carolina, and back in 2001 Ole Miss and they beat UCF next week.

JIMBO FISHER: Houston had both of those, didn't he?

Q. Yeah, yeah. Knowing what you went through. You guys obviously didn't have to play till the bowl. How impressive was that to you that Arkansas was able --

JIMBO FISHER: Extremely impressive.

Q. Especially five days later.

JIMBO FISHER: I think it's impressive by the players and impressive by your coach because managing that and how to get them ready without wearing them out is a big part of the that, too, and how they probably practiced and probably made some changes or adjustments during that time, that would have been a very tough thing to do.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

JIMBO FISHER: Thank you, y'all.



2019 SEC Football Media Days Texas A&M Player Quotes Tuesday, July 16

Sophomore Defensive Linebacker Justin Madubuike

On how he feels about a schedule with Clemson, Alabama, and Georgia ...

“It is an open door for an opportunity, an open door to showcase our abilities, and an open door to showcase what our defense is about and what Coach has been teaching us since spring. It is an opportunity, and I see it as nothing less.”

On Head Coach Jimbo Fisher saying he plans to win ...

“Yeah, every game. We try to win the day and to win the game and every single game. We aren’t going into any stadium or any field expecting to lose. That’s not the way Coach Fisher coaches us, so every game we expect to win.”

On the opportunity to get to play top teams ...

“It is a great opportunity. It is a great opportunity to showcase what we can do. It is a great opportunity for our university, so we just have to take it one day at a time and keep working hard and putting our best foot forward every single day.”

On competing against Alabama after seeing how they lost to Clemson ...

“Alabama, under [Head Coach] Nick Saban, is a great team, and they have won multiple championships, so you never take one loss to define them. They are an unbelievable team, but so are we. We definitely will respect them, but we have work to do.”

On the energy Coach Fisher brings to the program ...

“Yes, Coach Fisher brings a very contagious mentality of hard work, grit, discipline and pride. We take that to the heart and practice that every day and try to make that our style of play.”

On what he thinks production capabilities are for the year and if he has numbers for that currently ...

“I do, but I am just focusing on finishing the summer strong and grinding it out with my teammates and putting ourselves in a position to finish fall camp strong and get ready for the first week against Texas State.”

On if he feels as if he is still underrated ...

“Oh yeah, I always feel like I have a chip on my shoulder. Ever since high school and recruiting I always felt like I had a chip. I just believe in hard work and words don’t mean anything, your actions do. So I just take it one day at a time and work hard and put my best foot forward.”



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Senior Punter/Kicker Braden Mann

On their preparation in the spring ...

"It has been awesome. The spring and the summer went really well. Some new guys just came in and put in some work. This offseason has been really good in the weight room and on the field."

On the evolution of becoming a punter/kicker...

"My whole life, I thought I was going to play linebacker. I realized I couldn't do that, and my sophomore year, I started kicking and punting a lot. That's when I started to take it a lot more serious."

On the loss to Auburn last year and how it affects this year's game...

"It left a bad taste in our mouth. This year, we aren't looking at it as a revenge game. It is just going to be another game on our schedule. We will have the same preparation and go into it with some juice this year."

On having the toughest schedule in the country...

"I don't think we look at it as a different schedule. We are never going to have an easy schedule playing in the SEC West. I think it gives us a great opportunity to prove what kind of team we are."



2019 SEC Football Media Days Texas A&M Player Quotes Tuesday, July 16

Junior Quarterback Kellen Mond

On what it is like playing for Head Coach Jimbo Fisher ...

"I definitely take full advantage of it. I'm very self-critical of myself, and I feel like we both can go back and forth. But at the same time, we are always going to try to make each other better. I think towards the end of the season, he kind of gained a lot more trust in me. So we can talk a little bit more about what plays that I like. We kind of understand what type of plays are going to work in certain situations."

On how important their game against Clemson was for them last year ...

"I feel like it really helped us. We were kind of a new team, still developing a new culture. Coach would even say, not everybody was fully confident that we could play with them. For them coming into [Kyle Field], and us as our second game under Coach Fisher, I thought that we competed really well. Obviously, we wanted to win. That will always be our goal. But now, I think we know that we have the type of confidence that we can go out and play and beat any team in this country."

On if they did anything differently to prepare for their difficult schedule ...

"I don't think so. I think no matter who we are playing, or no matter what our schedule is like, Coach is always going to put his 100 percent effort into trying to make sure that we are the best that we can be. Obviously, we know we have a tough schedule, but we got to take it one week at a time. We are looking forward to those games, but taking it one week at a time is going to keep us right on track. I feel like we have a lot of players coming back, and guys who have been starting since their freshmen years. So we have a lot of experience on our team. We are definitely looking forward to that opportunity."