

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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LSU Tigers

Austin Deculus

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Austin Deculus. He'll go straight to questions.

Q. What kind of player is Kentucky getting in Dare Rosenthal?

AUSTIN DECULUS: Dare Rosenthal is like my brother. I can honestly say this with no hesitation, there's a dog. You know, big athletic freak, big -- he's about 6'7", 6'8", dunk the ball, he can hoop, overall athlete, plays to the end of the whistle. So they're getting a very dependable and very great player.

Q. I got a few questions. How fun has it been this spring and working through football school when there's an open competition at quarterback and you know that Max and Myles are giving it everything they've got every single day because one practice or one workout can change the pendulum of who's going to start against UCLA? How good is this process for them?

AUSTIN DECULUS: It's amazing really because you have both of those guys and they are like human highlight reels because they're fighting for everything. They're fighting for that spot. So they're going to give their best every day, and regardless of who it is, they're both going to do a great job for us, and, hey, at the end of the day, I'm going to block for both because I know both of them are going to get the job done.

Q. (Off microphone) last year wasn't the year you wanted. What has been the message in the locker room? What have you been talking about to get the nasty taste of 2020 out of your mouth?

AUSTIN DECULUS: Just to play to LSU standard of performance. Coming together as a team, just being able to be consistent where we weren't consistent, just being able to just bounce back and show, not that we're just going to play -- we don't play with a chip on our shoulder at

LSU. We never have, and we never will. We're always going to play to that LSU standard of performance.

Q. From your perspective, what's the quarterback battle been like so far?

AUSTIN DECULUS: It's been great. Like I said earlier, it's a competition. Competition brings out the best in everybody, and both of those guys are stepping up. Even everybody from Garrett Nussmeier too. He's been coming in, and he's one of those Patrick Mahomes-type guys. He likes throwing his special little passes. But all of them are doing a great job really.

Q. Talking to Coach O earlier, he had said he brought in DJ Mangas and Jake Peetz to run Joe Brady's offense from 2019. What have you seen so far, and how much is what you're experiencing with those two coaches a resemblance of what Joe Brady brought in 2019?

AUSTIN DECULUS: When you compare both offenses from that 2019 season to the one Peetz is bringing, you have both -- both of those offenses are just highlight reel offenses. You've got dangerous running backs, dangerous receivers, two dangerous quarterbacks, whoever it's going to be.

But the thing is about both of those offenses that are similar is giving playmakers plays to make plays in space.

Say that about three times, and I can't do it, I promise you.

The thing is, like I said before, it's going to be a very energetic offense, just like the 2019 season.

Q. The running game, it seems like you guys were a little bit disappointed in what you got last year. What are you going to need to do to improve this year as far as getting Tyrion Davis-Price and John Emery going this year?

AUSTIN DECULUS: That also falls on us, the offensive line. We didn't have the best season that we had in the past, but having everybody come back from all aspects,



from the offensive line to the running backs, it's going to build on the depth, build on the experience of the group, and you're going to see something different.

Q. Coach O said a couple weeks ago on the radio that he already saw a leader emerging between Max and Myles. Just wanted to get your thoughts on who you thought that maybe would be and how that quarterback battle will play out heading into the fall.

AUSTIN DECULUS: I believe both of them are leaders in their own aspect because not all leaders are the same. 2019 season, you had two different type of leaders. You had the lead by example type. You had Lloyd Cushenberry, which is both. He was a lead-by-example guy in 2019 season, then you have Damien Lewis, which is more of like the voice of the offensive line room.

So you see a difference in both of them, but they're both great leaders of the overall like team.

Q. You're not even two years removed from winning a National Championship, but do you feel like at times that LSU now gets overlooked, and why is that dangerous for other teams as a motivator for you guys?

AUSTIN DECULUS: Any program that goes from National Championship to 5-5, they're going to always go like, eh, they're going to put them to the side a little bit, which is respectful. If you don't produce and you don't do it good within your season, you're not going to get the love, you're not going to get the recognition. So it's really going to change after the season.

Q. Please don't take this question personally, but I have to ask, were you guys a little embarrassed by what happened last year based on the great year that you had the year before to be a .500 team again? Did you take that personally? Did the offensive line take it personally? And was that one of the reasons why you guys decided as a group to come back?

AUSTIN DECULUS: There's a lot of things, there's a lot of reasons why we chose to come back. The thing going 5-5, you know, it's no one's fault. Us players, we play with our hearts. The coaches coach their hearts out. And at the end of the day, the chips didn't fall in their hands.

With the offensive line group, we really like just came together, and you look back, you look at 2018, you look at the season that the offensive line had, people were saying similar things to us this past 2020 season. I kind of like told those guys, like look what happened whenever we all came back, 2019 season, Joe Moore Award, all that. I just

sprinkled that insight on them, and we just took that on the ground running.

Q. One of the things I talked to Coach O about is talking about 2019, you had some of the highest highs, and you go into last season, which not any of you guys, I think, were too, too proud of. I said, What did you learn from that? And he said, This year I'm going to do it the way I want. What changes do you see in Coach O and the way he's handling things, but also the changes you guys are making yourselves as players?

AUSTIN DECULUS: Changes with Coach O, Coach O has always been that great man since the first day I met him. The first day we had home visits and he came and visited my house, he had a bowl of chili in my living room with me. But, no, he hasn't changed one bit. He's going to be that stern coach everyone knows, but he's a player's coach. He cares about us.

It's just that respect there, from us to the coaches, from us to Coach O and from Coach O to us, it's just that respect feeling to where we're going to do what's right at the end of the day.

(Music playing.) Someone has got some jams back there today.

Yeah, we just have that relationship with each other where we're going to depend on each other and bounce back.

Q. After winning seven in a row against A&M when they joined the SEC, the Aggies got two of the last three against you guys. Do you feel like they're kind of chipping away at you guys' status as, if Alabama's 1, you guys are 2 in the SEC West? Are they climbing up in that status of being a real contender in that sense?

AUSTIN DECULUS: We're going to respect everybody. We respect A&M. We respect all the SEC schools and all the other schools in their respective conferences. We don't really have a rivalry with anybody. We play everybody the same, no matter who it is, too big or too small. We treat them the same.

Personally, being a Texas guy, I always like playing in Texas, playing in my backyard, because I have a lot of teachers in high school who graduated from A&M, so it's always fun to go play there. As a team, everybody's the same.

Q. We talked about a lot of changes going on. Specifically for you all on the offensive line, you have Brad Davis in. What is he bringing to the table? What newness has he brought to you all to make sure you

can perform at that Joe Moore Award-winning level again?

AUSTIN DECULUS: Coach Davis is a very stern coach. He's going to put that foot down. He's a Louisiana native. Many people might not know that. He's going to be a great asset for us. It's always tough seeing a coach leave, but at the end of the day, one door closes and another door opens.

Just being able to see and grow your game off a whole different mindset of a coach can really be beneficial for a room, and I think that's going to be so.

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