

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

Wednesday, July 21, 2021

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Vanderbilt Commodores Bradley Ashmore

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Vanderbilt offensive lineman sophomore Bradley Ashmore. We'll ask Bradley to make an opening comment. Bradley, talk about what you're looking forward to with this season approaching.

BRADLEY ASHMORE: I'm Bradley Ashmore. I play offensive line for the Vanderbilt Commodores. Excited to go into fall camp soon and get this season rolling. I'll be happy to answer whatever you have.

Q. I want to ask you about Derek Mason. What was your relationship like with Derek, and how would you kind of describe his coaching style that we'll get to see at Auburn?

BRADLEY ASHMORE: Coach Mason was a great guy. He was the one that recruited me out of high school, and obviously he was there with me last season. I have a lot of good memories with Coach, and he was a great guy the entire time. Great on the field coach, great off the field coach. He brought great energy every day and was a good guy to have in your building. Nothing but good things to say about him. I'm excited to see what he does at Auburn.

Q. Last year, obviously, was a tough season for everybody, but you guys weren't able to win a game. A lot of guys opted out. I know a lot of guys got the virus. Roster was tough to put together. What was last season like? How beat down were you guys maybe mentally and physically at the end? How are you going to bounce back from such a tough season?

BRADLEY ASHMORE: Yeah, no doubt. I won't bounce around it. Last year was a hard time, like you said, not winning any games. I'd like to say hard times build hard men, right? That season has propelled us to where we are now, and since January we've been putting in a lot of hard work, day in and day out in the weight room and on the field, in the classroom.

So I'm just excited to put this product that we've been working on on the field this year and move on and create the best team that we can, win some games.

Q. There was a video last night of you and a few other players receiving your numbers. How do you feel about Clark Lea's making you guys earn your numbers, and how did it feel to be able to earn your number?

BRADLEY ASHMORE: It was surreal. It was an awesome experience. Like you said, we've been working on this the whole off-season, ever since Coach got here. It's an experience we're creating that's unlike a lot of other places, and I won't do any comparing, but it's an awesome experience to have to work for something and have to earn something every day, and you're working every day throughout an off-season to earn this number that you're going to wear on your back in the fall.

I'm loving the system. I'm loving how it's working out, and I'm just excited to be a part of it.

Q. Compared to last season, what's the vibe like in the locker room and among the team? What is it like now? What's the difference, do you think?

BRADLEY ASHMORE: It's been awesome in the locker room. We've got a great group of guys. Everyone in the locker room is psyched to be there, psyched to be putting in work, and just happy to be there every day. We're all just loving life right now and excited to get into this season.

Everyone's got a positive outlook. Everyone's ready. We're determined, and we're going into this season looking to win every time we step on the field.

Q. Coach Lea talked about just being a new program from last year. As someone on the team last year, what does that look like for you? Do you just try to reset mentally?

BRADLEY ASHMORE: Yeah, so when Coach got here it was really sort of clean slate, right? We're starting from square one, whether that be in the weight room, on the



field, mindset-wise. We're doing everything the way we want to do it. Like I said, we've just been working on that all off-season, and we're working to perfect our mindset and perfect everything that we're doing with the goal of winning every time we step on the field.

Q. Bradley, I don't know if we talked to you during last season. Starting at right tackle as a true freshman, what was that experience like? What was the learning curve like? And how is that going to help you for this season?

BRADLEY ASHMORE: It was surreal. Obviously, most college O-linemen, you don't come in expecting to play your freshman year, and I was not an exception. But when there's opportunities and when there's holes that need to be filled, you step up and you fill those spaces.

It was an invaluable experience getting to play as a young guy like that, so I think it will benefit me and my fellow young offensive linemen that got to play as well going forward in our careers.

Q. Your new coach played at Vanderbilt. He went through some tough seasons too, but like he said, ultimately, he saw Bobby Johnson take that program to a bowl game when there weren't as many bowls as there are now, so that's a pretty great accomplishment. Has he talked to you about that, or what sense do you get about what being the Vanderbilt coach means to him and his background? Did you know that's his helmet there?

BRADLEY ASHMORE: I didn't know that. That looks about right. We've got some scratches on the top here. I know he was lowering his head once in a while.

We've got a lot of former Vanderbilt players on our staff. I think that provides a really good take because they know what it takes to be a Vanderbilt football player, what it takes to be competing in the classroom and on the field. It's invaluable to have him as our leader and as our head coach. It's been great, and we're looking forward.

Q. I might get a two-for-one, if that's okay.

BRADLEY ASHMORE: All good.

Q. Ken Seals is your quarterback. He's a young guy too obviously. What did you see from him last year? What kind of spring, summer do you think he's had, and what do you expect from him moving forward?

BRADLEY ASHMORE: Ken's a great competitor, a great dude, a great teammate, and a great football player. I'm

excited to see what he has in store this season. He's been working his tail off in the off-season putting in work day in and day out, and I can't wait to see him on the field this fall.

Q. I think there were some offensive linemen who opted out last year. We all understand the situation, but they're back. How do you feel about the offensive line? You guys are going to be more experienced now.

BRADLEY ASHMORE: No doubt. Yeah, we did have some guys that chose to not participate last year, very valid reasons, right? I know we all know that was a very hard year for everyone. I'm very excited for our offensive line room. I think we've got a mix of young talent, old talent, and I think we're putting together an amazing product.

Coach Blazek has been teaching us well all off-season, and we're just ready to put it to use.

Q. How difficult was last season in terms of from a competitive standpoint at Vanderbilt with the numbers? Did you feel like you guys really ever had the team that you wanted on the field because of all that was going on?

BRADLEY ASHMORE: Yeah, like I said, it was a tough year, right? But circumstances are circumstances, and it's standards over circumstances. So we put the best product we could on the field every Saturday, and a lot of times the outcome wasn't what we wanted, but I feel like every week we had the team that we had and that was enough for us. We were just trying to win every game.

Q. Got a shameless question about a former co-worker of mine, Barton Simmons. He comes in with the new staff. Do you guys ever ask about your recruiting rankings, he was maybe given grief for what he did back then?

BRADLEY ASHMORE: You know, a few guys may have been wondering a bit and giving him a little stuff here and there for that. He's a great dude and a great asset to our program, so just excited to have him along.

Yeah, everybody's got a little beef with their high school rankings, but once you get to school, ranking's a ranking. It's about how you play football.

Q. Kind of following up on Coach Lea's background, how much do you think it means to you and to the players on the team that you have, not just a former player as a head coach, but a former Vanderbilt player?

BRADLEY ASHMORE: Yeah, no doubt. Like I said

earlier, it's invaluable. We have someone that knows what it takes to play at Vanderbilt, knows what it's like to be a Vanderbilt football player and a Vanderbilt student. So it's something that he can relate to when we have things going on, when we have things that we need help with. It's something that we can say and go to him and be like he's been through this before, right?

So it's an invaluable experience. It's just a really good thing to have.

THE MODERATOR: Talk about you played as a freshman. What did you learn that you can take from that freshman season coming in, offensive line play in the SEC, that you'll take in as a sophomore?

BRADLEY ASHMORE: No doubt. Obviously, playing as a freshman you've got to be gritty. You've got to be willing to go against guys that are bigger, stronger, and faster than you.

So I've learned how to use your body, use leverage, use angles to manipulate your opponent, and I'll use that definitely going forward in my career to win as many games and as many blocks as I can.

Q. Coach Lea talked to us about the fact that he views this as year one for Vanderbilt football, like saying that the players on the team now, they're not at the same program they originally joined. Has that message resonated among the players that it's that much of -- you're starting over basically?

BRADLEY ASHMORE: When Coach Lea got here we started doing things the way we're going to do things, right?

It's not so much -- it's just it's our team and we're going to do things how we have to do things to win games. We've been putting work in all off-season, doing things differently, doing things we need to do to put the best product on the field in the fall.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports