

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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Hoover, Alabama, USA

Missouri Tigers

Case Cook

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Case, as we head towards the 2021 season, talk about your excitement for getting back out on the field and what you're looking for for you and the team this year.

CASE COOK: I'm extremely excited. I think the work we've put in this off-season has been great. At the end of the day, last year we went 5-5. So we're an average football team. I think we're going to come in this year with a chip on our shoulder. We've got something to prove. We're here to make the state of Missouri proud all the way from the top to bottom.

Let's do this thing. I'm excited. I'm ready to get to the season. So I'm excited, and I think the work that we've put in is going to pay off.

Q. You've been working with Marcus Johnson for a couple years now. What's he been like as your offensive line coach?

CASE COOK: Coach Johnson is awesome. He's extremely detail oriented. He's a great personality, great guy. He treats us like pros, and he expects us to act like pros. I think that's been huge for us.

He's got a lot of tips and tricks and techniques that have helped us out tremendously. So it's been a joy to play for Coach Johnson over the past year, and I'm looking forward to playing this next one under him also.

Q. You probably heard a lot of things about Connor Bazelak after his first year. When someone calls him a game manager, what's your reaction to that?

CASE COOK: Game manager, honestly, I don't even know what that means, but he does a great job playing quarterback for us. He's calm, cool, and collected back there. I'm sure those words get thrown in with his name a lot.



Man, he's a gamer. He shows up on game day, and he's got a winning mindset, and he's a stud. He don't care about nothing but getting the game won on game day. Like I said, I don't really know what game manager means, so that's my best answer for you.

Q. I wanted to ask you, as an older guy from out of state, you look at the job that Coach Drinkwitz has done the last couple years with recruiting, done a good job, bringing a lot of guys from outside the state of Missouri. Why has Missouri become such an appeal to young kids? And also, as a sidenote, you're from Carrollton. What do you know about Chaz Chambliss?

CASE COOK: I do know Chaz Chambliss. I trained with him when I went home a couple years ago. He's a good dude. He works really hard. I'll see him at some point this fall when we come to Athens. He works extremely hard and he's a great guy. I'm excited to see what the future has in store for him.

In terms of Missouri and Coach Drink recruiting and all, he's done an unbelievable job turning this thing into The New Zou, as we call it now. Just changing the mindset, changing the script on everything. We're here to win games. We're not known as the powerhouse of the SEC right now, but that's what we're going to get to. He's done an unbelievable job. We have an energy that surrounds the program. He's unreal. I haven't really seen anything like it before.

I'm excited for year 2 to kind of see how that builds, and when I'm gone, to see how we build the program, see how it builds after I'm done here.

Q. I was just wondering, as a player, what would your reaction be to the news or the possibility that you could add Texas and Oklahoma to the SEC?

CASE COOK: Honestly, if that ever happened, I'd probably be long gone, so I wouldn't get the chance to play them. I think any time you're able to increase your competitiveness within the conference, I think that's awesome. I think Texas and Oklahoma are good football programs, and any time you're able to add teams that bring

competitive value to the conference, I think it will make everybody better.

But I don't know how that will play out because it's a little bit above my pay grade. I think it would be cool, and I think it would be great if they were here. If not, I think we'd be just fine without them too.

Q. Talk about playing an all-SEC schedule last year. Talk about game in and game out, what it takes to win in this league.

CASE COOK: It takes a lot. I think it's apparent. You see a lot of teams down the road that are 8-4, 6-6, 5-5, stuff like that, and only a handful of teams are winning big time games. I think it speaks volumes to the level of play in this conference. Playing an all-SEC schedule last year, I think it's a great measuring tool to see where you're at.

Let's make no bones about it. We were 5-5. We were an average football team last year, but we've put in the work, and that's what it takes. So we're trying to get past that, and we're going to get past that. Playing an all-SEC schedule was tough. It was a long year. Even though it was less games, it was a long grinder of a year.

I'm looking forward to playing a regular season this year. We've got what it takes to win, so we're ready to put that on display.

Q. Case, who are some guys that have given you some of your best battles since you've been playing at Missouri? And what's an area you want to improve in in 2021?

CASE COOK: I'd say some of the best battles I've had in games was 2018, Quinnen Williams. He's a handful, obviously. He's a great player, playing in the NFL now. Javon Kinlaw is a great player, just to name a few.

One thing working on for me is I think my flexibility, being able to bend and move. I play really hard and I'm known for effort. That's probably one of my redeeming qualities on the field, so I know what to do.

But improving in every aspect of my game is what I'm trying to do. The moment you think that you've arrived is when someone's going to come hit you in the mouth and remind you that you haven't arrived yet.

So I'm always trying to work to improve my craft and improve my skills.

Q. After the unfortunate cancellation of the Music City Bowl last season and the unfair bowl ban the previous

season, of course you're motivated to get to a bowl game this season, but how much of that serves as extra motivation coming into this season after, unfortunately, missing the last two bowl games?

CASE COOK: Yeah, it's been unfortunate we haven't been able to play in a bowl game for whatever reason the last two years. At the end of the day, we're going to make a bowl game this year, and whatever one we're in, we're going to win that thing.

Motivation, I guess you could call it that, but stuff happens to you. Sometimes you've just got to move on, and I think we're just trying to win football games.

Whatever bowl game we end up in this year, we're going to try to win that thing.

THE MODERATOR: Last year Coach Drinkwitz came in, there was adjustment to a new system and all of that. How much better is it going into year 2 and how your teammates feel as what's expected being part of his program?

CASE COOK: I think being able to settle into his system and his personality after a year has been huge. I think we all kind of know what's expected of us and how to work and everything like that. Obviously, another year in his offensive system has been awesome, getting everybody on the same page.

I'm excited for this year coming up just because we're all familiar with one another and we're close. It's not so much of an adjustment year. It's not a crazy COVID schedule, nothing like that. It's a normal year. We've got a year with our coach and stuff like that. So I'm excited to see where this thing goes.

Q. Coach talked about adding some playmakers on the offensive side of the ball. Can you talk about some of the guys you've seen?

CASE COOK: Absolutely. We had Mookie Cooper come in from Ohio State. I think he's going to be a great player for us. Tauskie Dove is somebody to watch out for this year. He's put an unbelievable amount of work in to get ready for this year. The guys we have established, Connor Bazalak, Tyler Badie, Keke Chism, guys like that. We have a lot of guys returning on offense.

So I think with that combination, with having a year in the system, I think we're going to be dangerous.

Q. You guys open up with Alabama last season. I was wondering what were you able to learn from that game? And what did you see in Will Anderson at

linebacker for Alabama?

CASE COOK: It's a good football team. Coming out of Game 1, Game 1 is always tricky no matter what you play. He's a great player. I believe he was a freshman last year. He's an unbelievable player. He's playing -- if you didn't know any better, you'd think he's a second- or third-year guy. So I give a lot of respect. He's a great player.

I didn't get the chance to block him too many times. He played more on the edge, but he's a great player. I'm sure he's got big things coming his way. So good for him, man.

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