

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

Thursday, July 22, 2021

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Arkansas Razorbacks

Grant Morgan

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Grant, as we head towards the 2021 campaign, just talk about your excitement to head back out on the field and get the season going.

GRANT MORGAN: I just want to say I love coming down here. It's been fun so far. I appreciate y'all doing what you're doing. I'm excited for this season. I think we have a really good opportunity to show where we've improved, and it will be a really good opportunity to grow in what we've been doing this past year with Coach Pittman and staff.

I'm excited to make the defense better and to be able to leave a legacy better than what we did when we came in.

Q. Sam was up here touting 23 super seniors. You're one of those. Or 23 seniors and super seniors. What does that mean to this program? Does it mean you guys make a move this year?

GRANT MORGAN: Yeah, I like the word super. That's cool, super seniors. I think it means a lot to him. I think it's a testimony to him and his staff. Shows what type of guy he is.

When you have guys who had a chance to go to the NFL and then came back and decided to stay, it really does mean a lot to -- as a senior, to be able to see how the players have reacted to it as well. The younger guys, who it was going to be their time to be the players, the starters.

The fact that they accepted everybody who came back, it just shows we have a culture here that's different than what it was in the past. To be able to have a coach like that, it was an easy choice to be able to come back, and I know it was for everyone else.

Q. You were first team All-SEC last year on both coaches and AP, 12.3 tackles per game. I'm curious how you plan on improving on that and just your reasoning for coming back to Arkansas.



GRANT MORGAN: Funny story. I'm actually reading -- I just finished reading a book called Winning by Tim Grover. He was the trainer for -- he was the personal trainer for like Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, big name guys. The fact that if you don't have anything you're trying to win every single day and trying to win every single practice, winning is everything. It's exhausting.

So that's how I'm getting better. That's how I'm trying to improve. I'm trying to win every single day. It's not the little mantra like everyone says, try to go 1-0. Everyone hears that and goes out one ear. I'm trying to win. You can ask my teammates. I've gotten more intense in my workouts this year. I try to push more weight than anything.

I know how good we can be. I know how good I can be. And the fact like everyone can work, everyone can work hard. You've got to find a way to set an edge. My edge this year is going to be knowledge and being able to push exactly how I did the past year, but I've got to adapt and change because the game's changing, our defense is changing, everyone's changing.

To be able to be better and to be able to be better as a team we have to find our edge, and I think it's been in this off-season how hard we've worked and finding every single day an aspect to win.

Q. Tell me what super means. What's super in super senior? Explain that, please.

GRANT MORGAN: Yeah, super senior, this is my -- I'm using a COVID year for my eligibility, so I get to come have some more fun and come to SEC and have some fun again this year.

Q. You were a finalist for the Burlsworth Trophy last year for the top player in America that began his career as a walk-on. Talk about how that's an important part of your story and the importance of being a walk-on. Also, you've been here, this will be your sixth year. I want to hear your frustration or irritation with the nine-game losing streak to Texas A&M and the five-game losing streak to Missouri.

GRANT MORGAN: First question, the walk-on, my pinned tweet on my Twitter is remember me as a walk-on, not an All-American. I live my life like that. I live my life every day as a walk-on. I'm not a flashy guy. I'm not anybody who's going to be big time and try to make TikToks and all that stuff. I go to work. I do my job. I focus on football. That's the only thing that matters to me when we get in that building and stuff.

To be able to be -- like I came in whatever, I didn't win the Burlsworth. That set a big precedent in my head for what my goals are this year. I wasn't the best. Obviously, I won a lot of things that I could have been happy about, but that was the only one that stood out to me. I didn't win that.

So I think that motivates me more than anything. Even if I did win it, I would try to find another way to find motivation, but I think that's purely enough for me.

In the losing streaks to A&M and Missouri, I know that means nothing for this year for me. I personally wish we could have won all of every single one of those. I think we could have won every single one of those. We didn't, and that's not an excuse at all.

I don't think that means a single thing for this year, and I promise you not a single player on our team is looking at it at all. We're not looking back at all on those wins or losses we have against anybody.

We beat Ole Miss last year. We don't care. We don't care about that at all.

You could say we won or lost against Auburn. Everyone could say, Oh, they won, they lost, they won. We lost. Do not count the record. That's another thing that happened in this book I'm reading this off-season. We don't -- there's no excuses. What happened happened. The way we treat it and the way our players are attacking it, we're going to win games. We're going to try to focus on ourselves in the best way we can to win games.

Q. Can you talk about some of the things that -- Coach Pittman talked with us about the roster and development of the roster, trying to get more guys to push for starting positions. Can you talk about the other guys in the linebacker group with you. He said you guys are pretty well settled there. In addition to that, talk about some of the guys that are pushing you that are behind you at linebacker.

GRANT MORGAN: Depth was a big issue for us last year, and I think one of the issues was us not defense specifically. We didn't get off the field, so depth had to be there. If we didn't get off the field on third down -- our third

down percentage wasn't great. If we didn't get off the field, then we needed depth.

I think the first issue we had to focus on was getting off the field, and then you don't need as much depth.

The D-line has caused a lot of competition, as you spoke of. Getting new transfers in, grad transfers in, I think is huge because it puts a precedent that these guys are going to play right away. It makes these other guys who are here, like a Taurean Carter, Dorian Gerald, Isaiah Nichols, it pushes them to be so much better because they want to play now too. They think their time is now too, and it could be.

Having older guys in one room together causes a lot of competition. Then for linebackers, me, Bump, Hayden -- sorry. Me, Bumper Pool, Hayden Henry, and DD Edwards, four guys who continuously improve. We're four guys who push the standard for the linebacker group every single day. The fact that we have those guys and the way they're growing besides the older two, the way they're growing behind us has been tremendous. They've had the best off-season they've had, and they're our age.

The guys below them, Andrew Parker, Jackson Woodard, Kelin Burrle has done really good. There's a lot of good guys. I know I've missed some that I just can't think about right now. Those guys are people who aren't acting like their age. They're maturing, but I think this off-season has really stepped up linebacker depth, and I think that we won't have a dropoff. We'll be able to rotate people in and be able to continue the standard that we want.

Q. I want to ask you about a freshman who enrolled early, Jaden Jones on defense. He flashed in the amount we saw. What did you see from the entirety of spring out of Jaden Jones?

GRANT MORGAN: Are you thinking Jayden Johnson? Jayden Johnson, I'll tell you right now, I don't like making predictions. I don't make predictions. That kid's going to be a heck of a football player. We saw it the first day he came on there. He was moving around like he's played in the SEC for four years already. He continues to just grow and continues to keep his mind on straight and be able to focus on football.

Hopefully, this name, image, and likeness stuff doesn't mess with him, which I 100 percent don't think it will because he's not that type of kid. He's going to have a really good career at Arkansas.

Q. You have been able to benefit off of name, image, and likeness so far. Would you be able to kind of

explain the deal that you've been able to set up?

GRANT MORGAN: Yeah, so I can't talk money. I can't speak on any terms of that. That's what I agreed with my agent. So I signed an agent so I wouldn't have to deal with this so I could focus on football. I think I came here to play football.

I would say it's a lifetime sponsorship. There's cash up front and so forth. So it will be for an ad, and then for the rest of our lives we have incentives and stuff with them too. But none of it's football based. It's all along the guidelines so we're following the rules. That's pretty much all I can get to. I'm sorry.

Q. I was curious if you could talk about the transfer additions on defense, how they could help you, Utsey, Williams, Ridgeway.

GRANT MORGAN: Those three guys are very good. This off-season they've done very well. Ridgeway is the type of guy we can go on a three down, and he can hold two gaps in the middle, and he'll make mine and Bumper's life really easy. He can also be in a four down.

The thing with the three of them, and I'll say this now, they all three can play both. Their bodies fit both. They've played in both before.

Utsey, or Markell -- we call him Kell. Kell, he's smart. He's real strong. He's physical. The way we've seen him, he's really fluid in his hips. How he gets around the edge, he turns -- they do a back drill where they flip their hips, and the way he flips his hips, it looks like he's not 300 pounds. That's really good to see that. He can play in, he can play inside.

I'll tell you right now, Tre Williams, he's very impressive. I think we're going to see him a lot off the edge this year just because that's what we needed and that's what we obviously needed to go get. But he's helped that group. He's helped Dorian. He's helped Sully. He's helped them compete too, and he's helped them like on what works for him, and so they try it out or something like that.

He's brought a lot of insight. They've all three brought a lot of insight. They're going to be a good addition to our football team.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports