

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

Tuesday, July 20, 2021

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Georgia Bulldogs

JT Daniels

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have JT Daniels. Ask him to make an opening comment about his excitement over the season. Going into 2021, what are you looking forward to heading into the season?

JT DANIELS: In general, I think we've done a great job as a team and how we've approached the off-season and how much importance we put on our core DNA and our team beliefs and really setting a standard for how we are and who we are, and I really think that's going to help prepare us for a good 2021 season.

Q. I want to ask about Demetrius Robertson. I know he's coming over to Auburn. Just what is Auburn getting in being able to add a guy like that?

JT DANIELS: A good friend of mine and a great player. I can't say enough good about D. Rob. Since he's been here, he and I have been good friends and really close. He's a good person, a great player. We wish -- I don't think anybody at Georgia will tell you anything other than we wish the best for him.

Q. JT, what would you say is your biggest strength heading into the 2021 season?

JT DANIELS: In terms of as a player?

Q. Yes.

JT DANIELS: I'd say my biggest strength is understanding my role of being the primary distributor, like that is my job. I'm okay with the ball in my hands, but like James Cook is really good with the ball in his hands, George Pickens is really good with the ball in his hands. We have a lot of players that, when they have the ball in the right situation, do a lot of really good things.

My strength and what I do is being able to read the defense and determine the best place for the ball to go that's going to help us move the chains and score points.

Q. Obviously, you went through the transfer process last year. Have you shared any advice to the guys that are going through it this year about kind of getting used to a new situation?

JT DANIELS: I really haven't had to. I'll be honest, when I transferred in, it wasn't difficult. There was no hazing process. Like I came in, and people are like who's this guy? People are like, what's up? I think there's a lot of like-minded people when you transfer from a high performing school to another high performing school, like people just take you in and like start playing. Let's compete.

Q. How is your connection and the chemistry been going with Arik Gilbert so far this summer?

JT DANIELS: It just keeps developing. I've been asked more about Arik more than anything else today, and I keep saying the same thing. He is -- like there are players who have great talent and like football, and then there's guys like Arik who have great talent and love football.

He takes the time to -- he spends time with coaches, like hours with coaches, to learn a brand-new system, learn the signals, learn how specifically we run routes and how specifically, as receivers and tight ends, they read defenses. He's a weekend worker. He does a lot of the things that really impress you regardless of his talent level, and then you add that to the level of talent he brings, and he's a special player.

Q. JT, how difficult was it watching that Florida game and not being able to help? And also, coming from Southern California, do you feel like you fully appreciate the nature of that rivalry?

JT DANIELS: So watching the game, I mean, it's tough because you lose and you lose to a rival because like nobody wants to lose and nobody wants to lose to a rival. I think it's about as simple and cut and dry as that, in terms of that.

Then I think you hit a good point. Being from Southern



Cal, I had not talked to Coach Smart until I hit the portal. I was not recruited by Georgia in high school. So understanding the true -- I didn't grow up in Georgia where I had the true Georgia-Florida rivalry ingrained. I think Florida is a great team and I have a lot of respect, but that's a game that you circle. There are games that you circle, and that's a big game.

Q. You all open up with Clemson. They've obviously been to the playoff up ten years in a row, won a lot of titles. If you all reach your goals, that's a team you might play at the end of the year. What's the process of going into that game. I know you and DJ Uigalelei are from the same area. Did you ever go against him in high school?

JT DANIELS: DJ and I played against each other twice in high school. We were each other's rivals. I was in my last year when he was a sophomore. His first high school start, I'm almost positive, was against me. DJ and I are good friends. I like DJ a lot, a really good player and a really good person.

In terms of the Clemson game, obviously, it's a huge game. It's Clemson-Georgia, it's two really good teams. But I think the biggest thing for us as a team, as much as we get hyped for it, because it's Georgia-Clemson, it's a Week 1 game. You can win Week 1, you can beat Clemson by 100 and have a terrible season, you could lose to Clemson by 100 and have a great rest of the season.

I think it's important to keep in perspective that all it is is the week one game. As fun as it is competing against a really great team, let week one be week one.

Q. I want to expand a little bit on your talk with Arik Gilbert earlier. Maybe just the year two jump overall with your receiving corps. You've got a lot of guys stepping into bigger roles. You've got newcomers, obviously. A lot of times we see the year two jump with passing games, especially in recent history. Do you see a lot of improvements, bigger expectations for yourself here in year two?

JT DANIELS: You definitely do. It's natural. Everybody that played against Cincinnati in the Peach Bowl is here, plus some newcomers, and we've had a whole spring, as opposed to last year. There's just been a lot of time and energy put into building that rapport. So I would, of course, expect it to keep progressing week by week, year by year to get better and better and better. Yeah, I agree.

Q. A lot of the agents who are helping players get NIL deals feel like the relationship they're building can help them get that player for NFL representation later on.

Do you see it that way? Or for you, will that be like a completely separate decision?

JT DANIELS: I suppose like it could be, I guess if you build that good connection during NIL. I think for me and really a lot of guys that I've talked to, being that it came out July 1, it makes it pretty difficult to do anything for it. Like for me, season mode kicks in June 1, when you come back from your May break because that May break is the only time you have off for the rest of the year. Like I won't leave Athens unless it's an away game really until after the season.

So we're fully in season mode. I wish I could give you more about NIL, but it's just not a huge focus for really a lot of people that I've talked to.

Q. As a transfer yourself and just the proliferation of the transfer portal, Georgia's been able to really kind of dominate the portal in getting former five star guys. How important do you think that is to being able to compete for a championship this season nationally, but also why Georgia for all these guys, do you think?

JT DANIELS: It's really difficult to beat Georgia. Like when Georgia called me right away, I'm like that's a top five team, it's a great school, it's a great staff, they have great players. Like what bad can you say about it? What can you say is a reason that I wouldn't go there? I can't find any. So I think that definitely helps.

I think Coach Smart is -- he's the hardest worker you'll meet. So any chance that he can get to give us an edge to win games, he's going to do. So I think those two are some reasons I would contribute to Georgia being prominent in the transfer portal.

Then in terms of transferring in general, it's just kind of the nature of the game as it is now. You either choose to play it or you choose to not, but I think when you get guys like Arik and you just get -- there's so many good players like Tykee and Derion Kendrick, like you get a lot of great players in the transfer portal that come and compete and are great people, I don't see why you wouldn't take advantage of it.

Q. Can you speak on your time with Velus Jones at USC and just any connection you've been able to maintain with them through your time at Georgia.

JT DANIELS: I've been trying to see him. I heard he's coming in around the same time I am. Velus and I are really good friends. So when I was going into my freshman year -- I graduated a whole year early, so I didn't get to do spring. During that spring period going into USC, I would

come up to USC and spend the weekend or spend almost the whole week there to watch spring practice and try and learn, and I stayed with Velus. So like Velus and I have been really good friends since I was 17.

So he's just a really good guy. I'm pumped to see him succeeding back in the South where he's from, having a good time.

Q. What sense do you have for the longing at Georgia to win a championship again? And what happened on the trip to California with the receivers? Who put that together? What did you get accomplished? That sort of thing.

JT DANIELS: In terms of a championship, every team wants to win the National Championship every year, but for us, it's not the way that we go about being the best team we can is we have goals we want to achieve.

But we're focused on the week to week, the day to day in terms of appreciating what we get to do and in terms of really building our core DNA and our standard that's ingrained in us, and it's something that we think is going to be a competitive edge for us.

In terms of my California trip, I took a bunch of my receivers out to California. A lot of them hadn't been there. That's where I'm from. I wanted to show them around, just spent ten days out there, had a good time.

Q. I know you're friends with Bryce Young. Just what are you expecting from him this season? Also, what does it say about the presence of southern California players with you, Bryce, and Matt?

JT DANIELS: Yeah, from that area, from like a probably 40, 50-mile area, you got C.J. Stroud at Ohio State, Matt at Ole Miss, Bryce, DJ -- there's a lot of guys from that area. Just a really good couple of classes, I guess.

But in terms of Bryce, he's a stud. He's a star player. When I had left Mater Dei, and they got Bryce, I had known Bryce since he was an eighth grader, I was a seventh grader. I knew back then that he was a special player. Honestly, when Mater Dei got him, I was excited. I told MaxPreps that he would be the best quarterback in the country by the time he was a junior in high school because I'd seen him play and I think he's a really good player. I expect a lot of success for Bryce.

Q. JT, I know I talked to you around last year at the Peach Bowl and you talked about when you first came to UGA you were just on campus, hadn't figured things out. My question is how has your relationship with

offensive coordinator Todd Monken been since you've been at UGA, just in comparison to last season? And how do you embrace the challenge of the experts, quote/unquote, ranking you all one of the top offenses in the SEC in the country?

JT DANIELS: So in terms of Monken, ever since his first call with me, like we've had -- we see the game the same way, which is hugely important between your offensive coordinator and your quarterback. It's a relationship building that's arguably one of the most important.

I think he's a really good guy, he genuinely cares about the kids. It's hard to knock Monken on anything really. We've always had a good connection.

What was the second question?

Q. How do you embrace the challenge of having the top offense in the SEC and the nation?

JT DANIELS: The preseason rankings are what they are. We don't have any say over them. It's cool when they say you're good. It's cool when they say you suck. It really doesn't matter either way. You go out and play football.

I don't know what they ranked our offense honestly. We just focus on like what we can do in this coming week to be ready for next week, and then next week it's what can we do to be ready for camp? Then camp, you go through camp, and it's what can we do to be ready for Clemson. As soon as the horn blows at Clemson, what can we do to be focused on the next week? We're too focused on week to week to take too much into consideration.

Q. I'll ask you about another California quarterback. What do you remember about competing against Matt Corral, and how do you sort of stack your game up to his?

JT DANIELS: The first time I met Matt -- I met a lot of these guys when I was elementary, middle school. Matt and I did an FBU camp together. He's a little farther away than Bryce and DJ were, in terms of California location.

I remember in seventh grade I did a camp, and I came there and thought I was going to be by far the strongest, biggest arm. I had a good arm when I was a seventh grader, and that dude Matt rips it, like as a seventh grader. I thought he was a high schooler.

He's just always had a cannon. We became buddies instantly. Honestly, we've been good friends since then. We still talk, Manning camp last year, we hang out whenever we're around each other. It's just a good

relationship I have, similar with Bryce, similar with DJ.

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