

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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Hoover, Alabama, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide Phidarian Mathis

Press Conference



Q. Phil, you know the standards of defense at Alabama are very high, and when those standards aren't met, I'm sure you guys hear the noise on social media from your coaches, whatever. How personal does the defense take it when those levels aren't met?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: It's a very big challenge because you've got coach, and a lot of people don't get excited when we're not doing our job. So we've got to go back and re-evaluate ourself and look at what we do wrong and pick it up.

Q. I want to ask you about Javion Cohen. He's a local guy for us. I want to know what you've seen across the line and how he's progressed getting ready for his second year.

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: I love his technique. He's grown also, man. Like I say, a lot of these young guys are coming along, and I love the way they're forming out. Like I said, I can't wait to see what they bring to the table.

Q. The topic of vaccines is such a big topic of discussion this summer. What's it like in the locker room, talking with players, talking with teammates? What are those discussions like in making those decisions to get the vaccination?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: Everybody got their own reason why they want to get it and why they don't want to get it, so at the end of the day, you've just got to support everybody's decision. I got it, so I don't see nothing wrong with it, but at the end of the day, you've got to respect everybody's decision on why they don't want it or do want it.

Q. You hired a company to help you with your social media marketing. Just how much pressure have you felt to grow your audience on social media because of NIL, and is that a possibility for distraction just in being focused on social media?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: I think it's a very great thing for me. I don't have to worry about trying to go out here and do all this when I can let those guys handle it and I can focus more on football and my schoolwork.

Q. Coach Saban has been doing this for a long time. Why do you think he's someone who's been able to sustain success in such a fickle business?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: Coach is a great guy. He's dedicated to what he do, and he really loves the game. I'm just happy for Coach, all the things he's able to do and receive and also just make all of us guys better players. So I'm very grateful for Coach.

Q. What are your thoughts in the early part of the schedule having such a heavy Sunshine State flavor with Miami and Florida? And what do you know about The Swamp and the atmosphere you guys are going to face there?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: That's something I always watch on ESPN, how the atmosphere is there. I dream of playing in games like that, so I can't wait to get out there just to see how their fans are, the electric, and all that.

Q. Nick Saban said yesterday that Bryce Young was making near seven figures with name, image, and likeness deals. I was just wondering kind of what your thoughts are about hearing that and seeing the early success he's had with this.

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: At the end of the day, if that's the case, I'm happy for him. I just want to see everybody win at the end of the day.

Q. I was going to kind of touch on that too, so I'll make it a two-parter for a different one. Is there any chance of jealousy in the locker room when the quarterback, kind of glamour spot, may make more than you guys in the trenches doing all of the heavy lifting? And also, obviously, players come and go at Alabama, go out in the Draft, whatever, assistants come and go. Nick Saban is obviously the constant. Why do you think



you guys are at the top every year?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: Just our hard work and dedication to the game, going out, not taking anything for granted, showing up on time. It starts with the little things, just buying in to the team.

Q. And do you feel like there's any dynamic with NIL within the locker room with the discrepancies there?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: Not really, because at the end of the day, that's why I love my team. Everybody's happy for everybody. This is something we all think we deserve as players, so I don't think it's jealousy. I think it's more of everybody happy for everybody. We want to see everybody win.

Q. Following up on Edgar's question, I'm curious how much have you looked into Miami and kind of getting ready for that, and what are your initial impressions of the Hurricanes?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: We really haven't started on those guys yet. We're just focused on going into the off-season, really just getting our young guys ready and getting them deep in the playbook. We haven't really started on Miami just yet.

Q. Following up on what you said on the vaccines, you've been vaccinated, the players who you know that haven't been vaccinated, are they afraid of shots? What are some of the reasons that maybe they don't have it?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: I really don't know their personal reason, but at the end of the day, I was taught just to accept the fact they probably got something going on, reason they don't want it. So that's their opinion on how they feel about it at the end of the day.

Q. Just like this year, last year you were a major leader on the team. Being a criminal justice major, we're coming up on the one year anniversary of the march to the schoolhouse door that you guys did. I was wondering if you could reflect on that and how it's affected you and affected the team.

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: It really didn't affect me, but I just love to see the whole team come together and support that type of movement last year, and that showed a lot of things, the reason why we won a championship. We didn't have self-pity guys on the team. Everybody came together, and that says a lot about it right there.

Q. Last year the offense had a lot of experience

coming back, and this year it seems like it's flipped with the defense having eight or nine guys back, you included being one of those veterans. Just how good can this unit be in getting back to that Alabama standard of defense?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: I think this is going to be a very good unit. I feel like we've just got to take on a role and live up to the hype. Don't buy into it, but also show them what we're capable of once it comes game time.

Q. Phil, he's about to go into his fourth year, I'm referring to Pete Golding. Where have you seen him grow the most as a defensive coordinator and now working with him again this year?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: I love Coach Pete, man. I love his energy when he's on the field, and the most I've seen him growing is relating to the players more, just knowing us and getting to know us better, and I think that takes the whole team a long way.

Q. There's a recommendation to expand the playoff to 12 teams. When it happens your playing career will be over, but if it wasn't, would you be in favor of a 12-team playoff, or do you think that's too many games for the players?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: From being at 'Bama since I've been here, we were just taught to accept whatever comes with it. If that's the case, it happens. We've got to make it to the playoffs first. So it really wouldn't matter if we don't make it to the playoffs.

Q. There have been a few videos posted of Evan Neal working out this summer. How athletic of an offensive lineman is he to face?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: He's a freak athlete. Big Neal, man, Big Neal can do a lot of things. He's very flexible, and I love going up against him every day at practice because he makes everybody better. I love his leadership as he's been growing.

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