

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

Tuesday, July 20, 2021

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Tennessee Volunteers

Velus Jones Jr.

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Velus, as you head into 2021, what are you looking forward to for the upcoming season?

VELUS JONES JR.: I'm looking forward to playing in front of 100,000 people, just putting on a show with this explosive offense, going on the field and having fun with my brothers. It's all about fun. I've been playing this game since I was four years old. I'm so excited. Words can't even explain how excited I am about it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Velus. If you have a question, raise your hand.

Q. Velus, I wanted to ask you about your thoughts on Joe Milton since he's entered the program. This off-season, what's it been like to work with kind of the four different quarterbacks, whether it be seven-on-seven in the indoor, and maybe who's been heading that up?

VELUS JONES JR.: Joe is a great guy. As soon as he came in, he fit in with the guys well, has a great personality, a great sense of humor. He's just a hard-working guy that wants to be great, and that's all of us, you know. We come in, we compete, in the weight room, everything we do, we compete. That's how you bring the best out of people.

Definitely has a strong goal, and I feel like that's one of his great traits he has about himself.

About the quarterbacks, I have confidence in any one of my quarterbacks that they can go out there and win a game and perform the way they need to perform. They all have great things and different traits about them, but, yeah, I'm really confident in all my quarterbacks.

Q. Velus, you grew up about 3 1/2 hours away from here. Did you ever see yourself being on a stage like this at SEC Media Days?



VELUS JONES JR.: I couldn't even imagine. I remember growing up in Saraland, Alabama, just wanting to play SEC football. That's how I know God is good all the time. So blessed to be here. I wouldn't have ever imagined this. I'm a transfer from the University of Southern California, and being at the conference I watched growing up, it's a blessing and a dream come true.

I'm just blessed to be here to represent for my university and this football program.

Q. I have a two-for-one, if that's okay. JT was mentioning how you guys were good buddies. Just kind of wondering what you think about him being in the SEC with you. You both end up in the SEC. I know you won't face each other on the field, but as far as playing him, his team. Also, if you were describing this offense, about what gets you excited about this offense, what do you like about that?

VELUS JONES JR.: JT is a great guy. He's like a brother to me. We both played at the University of Southern California before we transferred here to the SEC. Yeah, me and JT, we hung out a lot, played video games together, was always at my apartment. Couldn't get him out. I tried to kick him out a lot. Yeah, JT's a great guy, and he's a great competitor, I know, and I know he'll go out there and do his best, and that's what matters at the end of the day.

What was your second question again?

Q. Playing in the offense. What do you enjoy about playing in the offense?

VELUS JONES JR.: Playing in the offense, like especially this offense, when Josh Heupel came, I did my research. My family did their research and stuff like that. He's been like top five for the last years. I'm so excited with my ability to catch the ball, to get yards after the catch and deep ball threat, it's just like it's a dream come true playing in this offense, especially speaking for my receiver corps and also my tight ends. Like we're really excited about this offense.

We just put in the work every day, day by day, it's getting



better, and just waiting on September 2nd.

Q. You mentioned the research that you've done about this offense. What stood out to you whenever you watched film of Coach Heupel's offense at other places, and what is the excitement level of other receivers in the room about just being able to do that and be able to air it out like you guys should be able to?

VELUS JONES JR.: Watching film when he was at UCF, I realized from defenses it was definitely -- this offense is definitely up tempo, and I realized with defenses had a lot of busted coverages. Also, defensive line being exhausted, having to like rush over and over and over, which it opens up the run game.

So it's a lot that comes with this offense, and I know it's like a difficult offense also to stop.

So me and the receivers are definitely looking forward to fall camp and getting better each and every day, but I realize that -- you know, I definitely realize that it was difficult for defenses to make their calls and checks, and you know the littlest snap of the ball is probably six seconds off the clock. It's fast paced, up tempo. So that's where we're definitely staying in shape.

Q. I know your high school coach, Jeff Kelly, I know you played in a prolific offense at Saraland, and you had a lot of trust in him, he developed you, you were a very dynamic player in high school. You've been a great returner in college ball so far, but tell us about your skill set as a receiver. How did Josh Heupel and his staff kind of win your trust? You could have gone into the portal like a lot of your teammates, but you put the trust in the staff to play for them for your last season.

VELUS JONES JR.: Jeff Kelly was a great coach. It was an honor playing for him at Saraland High School. Taught me a lot of things outside of football on how to be a man and making great decisions because, you know, your career is based off the decisions, from the right, from the wrongs. Still go back and see that guy every chance I get when I go back home to Saraland.

This offense is amazing, like I said before. Everybody that stayed trust in the process with Coach Heupel and the staff. It's been up ever since he told us, he kept his word, and he's definitely going to push us to be our best, and so, you know, everybody's bought in and everybody's just working day by day.

So, yeah, that's pretty much on that. We're definitely

looking forward to this offense.

Q. Coach Heupel talked a lot about the emphasis of having fun with the kind of dodgeball sessions after practice and things like that. What was your experience in being able to do things like that with your teammates, and how important are those kinds of things in building a relationship with his staff?

VELUS JONES JR.: What I realized from that, you know, I knew that bonding with our team is very important when I came to Tennessee. Coach Heupel coming in and giving us activities and stuff that you could just see the connection and how close it brought the team together. Definitely switching the locker room around, putting upperclassmen with lowerclassmen, like seniors and freshmen or walk-ons and mixing it up like that, how close our team is.

We just went to the main event together, just seeing everybody having fun because at the end of the day, you know it's about brotherhood.

Those are my brothers, and that's who we're going to be going to war with each other. Without brothers and bonding and connection, you have nothing. You stand no chance. And I feel like our team has come a long way. Everybody interacting with each other, it's an amazing sight, honestly.

After workouts and stuff, people probably won't leave the locker room until an hour later because we're talking about anything, everybody just talking, laughing. I feel like that's what it's all about, connection.

Q. You also have two other former USC teammates with you in Tennessee, Chase McGrath, the kicker who was there in the spring, and then Caleb Tremblay, defensive lineman. Can you tell us a little bit about what Tennessee is getting in Caleb Tremblay. Second question is with JaVonta Payton, what is Tennessee getting in JaVonta Payton?

VELUS JONES JR.: I feel like that was a great choice by the staff of bringing Caleb Tremblay and Chase McGrath, both two great players. Chase McGrath with his clutch field goals. You probably remember the Texas game that was played at USC a couple years ago, won that for us. Also, he has a record tied for most field goals at USC. Chase is a veteran, and I know he's going to win some games for us.

With Caleb Tremblay, you have a very strong, smart player with technique. You know just motivated in his passion for the game, especially his work ethic in the weight room.



Those two guys are great guys, you know, just to be around and stuff like that. I'm so excited for them to be here with me at Tennessee. It's definitely going to be a great time.

With JaVonta, older guy, veteran and stuff, and you know, working out with him really -- I didn't know he was going to be as tall as he was, but he's really explosive and also fast and has like a big catch radius. So working with that guy, he has something to prove, I have something to prove, we all have something to prove. So we talk and how we're going to better the younger guys and just take a step forward with this program to have the season I know we can have.

Q. You touched on the quarterbacks a little bit earlier, but just how challenging has it been to build continuity and timing with three different quarterbacks that could potentially be the starter this fall?

VELUS JONES JR.: They're all great quarterbacks. We get our work in. Yeah, we get a lot of the work in on our weekends, and each quarterback has like different traits to him. So that's why it's important to make sure you get in extra work because we all know you get better in the off-season, especially during the summer.

I have confidence in each and every one of those quarterbacks that they can go out on Saturday and win the game for us, so we're just going to keep putting in work.

Q. Velus, I know last year you were a guy who came in as a transfer, and you talked a few times about how it took you several games into the year to get comfortable. That's why your numbers really got going later in the year. You all have got a lot of transfers coming in this year. Any advice you can give to those guys on how they can hit the ground running basically and maybe try to assimilate as quickly as possible?

VELUS JONES JR.: Practice is really important, especially before a game. Like you said, even in the off-season, we're getting extra work. If you prepare yourself, like the rest will take care of itself. Don't worry about having a great game or having 200 yards, 12 catches. You know, let the game come to you. Just take it play by play. That's what I'll tell them, and I'll keep telling them that. Any advice they need, I'll definitely be there.

Q. You talked about your connection you built with your teammates and some of the staff. What about Coach Heupel's personality off the field specifically that makes him so relatable that you guys have been able to build that over the off-season?

VELUS JONES JR.: He has an amazing personality. He's a real open guy. I feel comfortable going up there any time the second I need to. Just the whole staff is amazing. With Coach Heupel, he really interacts with the players a lot, always around us, whether it's like tossing the football or coming in the weight room, checking on us, asking us about our personal lives, like he's just an amazing guy. He's always involved, he's always around, you're always seeing his face, so he's a really likable guy.

I'm so proud to go to war for that man this fall.

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