

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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Florida Gators

Zach Carter

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have Zach Carter, defensive lineman, University of Florida. He has a couple comments he'd like to make to start off.

ZACH CARTER: We're about 40-something days away from kickoff. I'm really excited, man, just to get back in The Swamp finally with 90,000 screaming out there. I'm really excited, man.

THE MODERATOR: Do we have anybody with questions?

Q. You were talking about 40-something days away, you're excited. When you look at this year in particular, how exciting is it that you'll be playing in kind of a more normal season, more fans? You're going to be playing in fuller stadiums as opposed to last year.

ZACH CARTER: It's pretty exciting, man. Last year was pretty tough. It was a tough year for everybody. It wasn't the same, honestly, being out there. You're used to seeing thousands and thousands of stadium packed, and it's just like 20,000 people out there.

So I know Gator Nation was hurting last year. I know they all wanted to be there. I'm just really excited to get out there in front of them, man. We love the fans. They make a huge difference when we're out there. So I'm looking forward to that, definitely.

Q. Zach, talk about the approach on defense between the coaches. You guys are trying to bounce back from a disappointing season last year. The approach of the coaches and you guys yourselves this spring.

ZACH CARTER: This spring was great for our defense, man, honestly. The guys all spring, we were juiced every day, energy. Guys playing hard, and the biggest thing is guys coming together.

I think the biggest thing about a unit is being close off the

field, and I think guys started to come together more, and you could see like the cohesiveness on the field, honestly.

We knew we had some things to work on this year on defensive definitely, and I think spring was a great step forward. Defense looked pretty good this spring. So we're looking -- going into camp, we're looking to bounce right back where we started.

Q. It's been a different Kentucky team you faced at Florida since you've been there, more tightly contested games. Has that changed the perception of Kentucky's football program at Florida?

ZACH CARTER: Not really. When we -- when I see Kentucky, I just think of Kentucky since I've been there. Are you asking like how -- are you saying because it's been like different teams every year?

Q. Yeah, closer games.

ZACH CARTER: Oh, closer games. Okay. I see what you mean. Kentucky, it's always -- it's been more closer games the last few years, but it's the SEC, you know. Teams come to play week in and week out, and we've just got to fight hard and step up to the plate every week.

Q. You guys played South Carolina last year. They had a running back, Kevin Harris, who ended up leading the conference in rushing. What do you remember about him, about going up against him, trying to tackle him? How elusive was he, and how hard was he to bring down?

ZACH CARTER: Harris, he was definitely a good back. He was pretty tough. You know, he was pretty tough to bring down, a solid runner. I definitely -- I recall it was No. 28, if I recall, but, yeah, I definitely remember him. He was a pretty good back, and he really helped South Carolina. He kind of helped lead that offense last year. Yeah, he's a pretty good back.

Q. For you entering this fifth year, you and Ventrell, the leaders on this team, how are you going to try and mold these young players to make sure this year is a



lot different than last year, and that way, come September 18th, Alabama is ready to rock and roll against a pretty vaunted defense?

ZACH CARTER: It starts on an everyday basis, just creating that culture, that we got to do what we got to do to get it done. We know last year where we left off is not where we want to be, so we had to raise the bar this whole season, this whole off-season starting in the spring. I think me and Ventrell had done a pretty good job of doing that.

It's not only me and Ventrell, it's other guys stepping up to the plate, and it's more leadership around the whole team, guys are coming together, and I think we've done a pretty good job this off-season so far.

Q. Are you a fan of the proposed idea to expand the playoff to 12 teams, or do you like where it's at at four teams right now?

ZACH CARTER: When I heard about 12 teams, I kind of was like that might have been too many. I was thinking -- personally, I was thinking like eight. I think eight would be pretty reasonable, just because 12 games, you might have to play like three extra games. So I was thinking eight games would be more reasonable.

Q. Has there been a different approach from Coach Grantham and the defensive staff to help you guys bounce back from last year?

ZACH CARTER: Well, I say, you know, Coach Grantham and his staff, our coaches, they show up every day, and they coach us hard. I say nothing has really changed. We go on about our business every day.

It's really how we attack the day, and it's really how we go out there and handle our business and practice. Guys paying close attention to small details, little things that -- you know, the margin of error is very small, and we've been working on that this off-season.

Q. Zach, a lot of the faces of the program are now in the NFL from last year. We all know Dan Mullen is a great motivator, but talk about the chip that your team has gone through this off-season program with to motivate yourself and maybe surprise some people this year.

ZACH CARTER: Well, yeah, we see things that are said about the Gators and whatnot, but like I said, this off-season guys' heads have been down, and we've just been focusing on accomplishing one goal at the end of the year. I think it's good going into a season with a chip on your shoulder because it gives you something to fall back

on.

When guys have chips on their shoulder, you know, I've seen guys working harder than ever this year. So I think it's a good thing that we have that chip on our shoulder this year. We want people to be surprised this year.

Q. I want to ask you a couple of questions about LSU. This shoe toss thing last year, was that one of the strangest things you've been a part of? Did you even realize what happened down on the field?

ZACH CARTER: I'd say I've never seen -- I've never been in a game where that happened, but it was just somebody got caught up in their emotions. People get very passionate for the game, and you can make a mistake sometimes. No, I've never been a part of that, though.

Q. (Off microphone.)

ZACH CARTER: I'm excited to be back in Death Valley. That's one of the great atmospheres in college football. It will be pretty interesting to go back there.

Q. Zach, you guys are going to take on FAU to open the season at home in front of hopefully 90,000 screaming orange and blue fans. How exciting is that for you, and what's it going to be like to run back out in the tunnel with a normal circumstance of the season as opposed to last year?

ZACH CARTER: Honestly, I can't wait, man. I think about it all the time. Just because last year it was unfortunate not to have all those fans out there, but I'm telling you, man, I think about it every day. It's really the best feeling ever running out that tunnel and running in The Swamp. I'm really excited.

Q. You moved more interior into the line now. Do you feel more comfortable there? Would you rather go back out to the end at times? Or do you feel like you're pretty set now on the interior?

ZACH CARTER: I don't really like to put a label on myself. I think I'm a pretty versatile player. I like playing outside, but wherever my team needs me, I fill in that role. I kind of went back to playing more outside this year. Last year I had to play inside just to fill a little void at the beginning of the year, but as the year went on, they kind of moved me more outside, but I'll still be moving around. I'll still be moving around a lot this year.

Q. I'm sorry if you've already addressed this, but you chose to come back when you could have easily left. What went into that decision?

ZACH CARTER: I just felt like we really have some unfinished business, and I wanted to be a part of that. I remember after the SEC Championship game, I probably stayed on the field for about five minutes after, watching the confetti come down and all of that. I'll never forget that moment. I was like -- at that moment, I knew I was like we'll be back.

I kind of made a promise to myself, I'm going to give everything I've got this year, and I'm going to try to help my team the best I can, help lead my team in some type of way.

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