

Louisiana State University Football Media Conference

Monday, August 28, 2017

Ed Orgeron Joe Alleva

JOE ALLEVA: Obviously the first thing I want to do is give our thoughts and prayers to all the people in Houston and surrounding vicinities on what's going on over there. I think we in Louisiana have a pretty good idea what they are going through, and it's really bad. Our thoughts and prayers go out to them.

We as a university, our athletic department and university will be working together to reach out to the folks in Texas to do anything we can to help them.

Over the weekend and this morning, we've been in constant communication with ESPN and the folks over in Texas. I am not prepared right now to tell you where the game's going to be. I do hope, though, by no later than tomorrow, we will have a site where this game will be.

To all of our ticket holders, we will be issuing policies and how we can go about getting tickets to the new venue and redeeming your tickets if you can't make it for your purchase in Houston.

I really don't have much more to tell you than that right now. I wanted to give you an update and that's about all I can give you at this point. As you know, ESPN -- this is ESPN's game. It's not LSU's game. It's ESPN's game. They have the rights to it and they are negotiating where the game will be located, and like I said, we've been in constant contact with them. As soon as we know something, we'll let you know and I hope that will be within the next 24 hours.

I'll be happy to answer any questions but I don't really think I can answer a lot of your questions.

Q. Can you discuss the options that are on the table?

JOE ALLEVA: No, I can't. I'm sorry. I wish I could. I wish I could but I can't.

Q. Are there any parameters on where the game cannot be in terms of maybe a maximum distance



away it can be or things like that?

JOE ALLEVA: No. No parameters.

Q. Is ESPN seeking your input or BYU's input on the game at all?

JOE ALLEVA: Yes, they have been great. They have been in constant contact with myself and Tom Holmoe, athletic director of BYU. They have kept us in the loop. They have been good.

The No. 1 goal in this whole thing is to play the game and that's everybody's goal is to play the game.

Q. Have you offered up Tiger Stadium? Is that a possibility to play there?

JOE ALLEVA: It been offered up but I frankly don't think that's going to happen.

Q. As far as waiting, this will give you a better idea where the storm is going, and maybe as far as New Orleans goes, as far as playing the game there, waiting till Tuesday morning to make a decision?

JOE ALLEVA: I think right now, the biggest thing that's going through their minds is where is the best venue to play this game and the storm is a factor, fans are a factor. There's a lot of things that are factors. But right now, ESPN is in negotiations with various venues to see which is the best place for this game to be played.

Q. How confident are you the game will be played somewhere?

JOE ALLEVA: Barring something crazy happening, I'm very confident that the game is going to be played.

Thank you all. We'll let you know as soon as we know something.

COACH ORGERON: Like to welcome the media. Obviously excited for the start of a great season. I want to echo what Joe said. Our thoughts and prayers to the wonderful people of south Texas. We understand what we are going through. We called the parents of all our players last night. They are in good shape. Got in touch with most of our recruits and our thoughts and prayers are with their families.

On the game, I totally trust Joe and the administration. They lead the way. My job is to get the team ready. We're going to focus in on the task at hand and

wherever they tell me we're going to play, we're going to get the team ready to go and compete like Tigers.

We just completed our fourth preseason game. It was sort of a walk through. We simulated a game-type situation with substitutes, time-outs, special teams. We had a scout team out there. Our guys did a very good job and now we have finished preseason camp and we're very proud of our guys. We've had a good camp.

Matt Canada has all his offense in. He's ready to go. Our special teams have all the special teams ready. Dave has all the things ready that he wants to in the first game. So now, our attention is completely to BYU.

On to BYU, a little scouting report. First of all, they are very well-coached. They are tough. They are hard-nosed. They are experienced. Their record was 9-4 last year. They won eight out of their last nine games. The four losses were by a combined eight total points. This is a good football team. They know how to win.

BYU historically has wanted to stay in tight games and win it at the end, so we know we're in for a battle and we look forward to it.

On offense, they are a pro-style offense. Their offensive coordinator is Ty Detmer, which as you guys know, I played against them in 1990. Was at Miami and Utah. Wasn't a good outcome for the Hurricanes. He was a 1990 Heisman Trophy winner and in the College Hall of Fame. Now he's calling plays for the BYU Cougars. He's a very good coordinator.

There's four returning starters, three on the offensive line. Wafield (ph) is the strength of their offense. They are very well-coached on the offensive line. Their center is a good football player and they are very physical and they are very big.

They are averaging about 400 yards a game, 200 running, 200 passing. They are very balanced. Their top player, as I mentioned; Tejan Koroma at center. He's only about 6-1. He's started every game. His number is 56. Every game that he played at BYU, me and Pete have been studying the guy all summer. He is a very good technician. Plays with a very low center of gravity, and we're going to have our hands full with him. This is a big battle for Gilmore and Alexander.

Tanner Magnum is the quarterback. Throws the ball very well. He's a junior. He's experienced. He started 12 games as a freshman, one game as a sophomore; a guy that's in command of his offense. Squally Canada is the running back, No. 22. He has a tough, physical style. Had 100 yards with Portland State.

On defense, their head coach is a defensive guy. They

play the same defense we play. They are good friends with Dave. They play a 4-3 defense. They play over, they play 3-4, very similar to the things that we do. They are very stout, especially against the run. They only gave up 112 yards rushing last year and I think they only gave up, let's see, six points to Portland state and they only gave up a few yards rushing to Portland State.

I think they are very good up front. They are coached very well. They have 42 tackles for loss and 18 sacks on the season. Their top player is Fred Warner, senior, outside linebacker. He plays the f-position which is the field linebacker, the same thing for us that Corey Thompson plays. He's a very good run defender, a very good pass defender.

Micah Hannemann, strong safety, No. 7, is their best guy in the strong safety department.

Corbin Kaufusi, junior, defensive end. He's a big, physical guy. He's a great pass rusher. He's a guy that we need to know at all times where he's at to protect Danny. And their No. 1 cornerback is Troy Warner, sophomore. They are very good on special teams, especially in their coverage unit.

Okay. Now on to the LSU Tigers. It's always going to be about us and never about our opponent. Our starting offensive line for this game as we going in through the week -- things may change up to game time. Left tackle will be KJ Malone. Left guard will be Garrett Brumfield. Center will be Will Clapp. Right guard will be out of two freshmen, which I'm very proud of, I've been bragging on them the whole time, one of them are going to start and I think they are going to do a very good job: Either Saahdiq Charles or Ed Ingram. Both of them will play.

At right tackle will be Toby Weathersby. Obviously our quarterback will be Danny Etling. Tight ends, our No. 1 tight ends are Foster Moreau and J.D. Moore, backed up by David Ducre, Jamal Pettigrew and Tory Carter. Those guys have done a tremendous job for us in camp.

Our three starting wide receivers will be DJ Chark, Russell Gage and Derrick Dillon, with Stephen Sullivan, Drake Davis, JaCoby Stephens, Racey McMath getting a bunch of reps; also Justin Jefferson.

Our running back, our starting running back will be Derrius Guice, backed up by Darrel Williams, and you will see Clyde Edwards-Helaire and Nick Brossette get into the game.

On defense, our field linebacker will be Corey Thompson and/or Michael Divinity. Starting left end

will be Christian LaCouture, nose tackle will be Greg Gilmore backed up by Ed Alexander. As I said, they will have a tough job; one of the toughest centers we're going to see.

Our starting right end is our most consistent player all camp, Rashard Lawrence, and our bench linebacker is still up in the air. We have not decided who our bench linebacker is going to be. I coach that position.

Arden Key will not play in this game. Ray Thornton, K'Lavon Chaisson or Andre Anthony will be the starter. That could be an up-to-game-time decision. I want to see how they practice all week. Very young players and we still need a week of work there.

At middle linebacker will be Donnie Alexander backed up by Tyler Taylor or Jacob Phillips. Those guys are really close.

At robe (ph) will be Devin White backed up by Jonathan Rucker and Patrick Queen.

Left corner will be Donte Jackson backed up by Jontre Kirklin. Strong safety start will be John Battle, backed up by Eric Monroe. Todd Harris is going to play a little at strong safety but we'll start with all our special teams. I'm very proud of Todd, a freshman, one of our best special teams players already as a freshman.

Free safety will be Ed Paris. We'll go throughout the week to see who has the best practice. Right corner will be Kevin Toliver and Williams. Nickelback will be Benson or Xavier Lewis.

Special teams, snapper will be Blake Ferguson. Blake is a very good snapper for us. Our punter will be Josh Growden. We're proud to see that we had a field goal competition and Jack Gonsoulin won it. He kicked 85 percent of his kicks in camp, and I'm very proud to say that Jack has fought very hard to win that position.

Kickoff, we also had a competition and Connor Culp won that competition. We are excited about Connor. He kicked several into the end zone and that is the best kickoff coverage that we can get.

Our returners on kickoff return, Clive Evans, freshman who has had a great camp, has very good ball skills. Is going to start there, and at punt return will be Donte Jackson and/or Derrick Dillon.

Any questions?

Q. For people that say, they didn't look that impressive in that game, what would be your message?

COACH ORGERON: I'm going to show them the film.

I'll show the defensive line the film where Portland State's line is getting crushed. Their running backers are running over people. They are very physical and very good. Show them on the film where the defensive line is crushing their offensive line. They are a good football team. They will get that message today.

Q. Do you believe -- inaudible.

COACH ORGERON: Sure. That's where they have the advantage. There's no question. There's no coaches in there, they are making adjustments, they saw him live. We don't have that luxury. But also they didn't see us play, neither. So we got the advantage to see their guys. Made a lot of cut-offs from the TV copies. So we understand what they are trying to do. Obviously they are going to put in new wrinkles that we have to make adjustments, but we are very well prepared for that.

Q. The right guard spot, you mentioned two true freshmen. For a coach, is that nerve wronging going in that you're going to have a true freshman?

COACH ORGERON: Lloyd can also play there. He's going to back up Will, the center, and obviously during the game stuff happens to Jeff is going to mix and match those guys.

But let me say something. I'm proud of those guys and I've seen them work throughout camp and see them go against very good defensive linemen. They are ready to go. Are they going to make freshmen mistakes? Yes. But it's not like they are physically prepared to it. I think they are physically prepared to do it.

Q. Just the uncertainty of where the game will be played. What do you tell your team? How do you prepare? Does it affect you in any way? Or the are the guys -- it's just what it is.

COACH ORGERON: We're trained. I think the answer is going to come soon enough where these guys are going to know. Our focus is going to be on BYU today. These guys are well prepared for this. It will not be a distraction, I promise you.

Q. Do you think yu is going to do some things radically different than they did in the first game against you? They got some things in the vault; one. And two, I think everyone in Louisiana is asking: Why not play in New Orleans?

COACH ORGERON: Well, No. 1 is obviously they are going to put in new wrinkles for us. I think that from what I'm hearing, they have been game planning for us for a long time. They have been calling other schools about information and stuff like that. So we've got that word.

So obviously I think those guys like anybody else

would have made a game plan throughout the summer and we said, we're going to show this against Portland State, we're not going to show. We know that.

But we've gone back through 12 games of last year and we've gone through every formation and every play, so as a defense, every defense, every blitz, so we're prepared for it.

As far as the other question, I totally let Joe and them handle that and I don't even worry about it.

Q. You mentioned a lot of freshman in that two-deep, some guys starting. Where do you sense that they are at mentally now that camp is behind you and game week is here?

COACH ORGERON: Find out Saturday night at 8:30. We put them through as much preseason prep -- listen, we try to manufacture all the pressure we can for those guys, and they have done well. But until they get under the lights and until they get in a game-type situation, we kind of have an educated guess but we're going to see.

But we do believe in them and we do believe that they are prepared to do it.

Q. LSU sold 23,000 tickets for the game in Houston. Are you concerned that the game will be played so far away from Baton Rouge that fans won't show up nearly as much as they would for Houston?

COACH ORGERON: Yeah, you know, here is what I've got to say to that. Again, I trust what Joe and them are going to do are going to be great, and I know that it's always going to have the best interests of our fans in mind.

Q. Wonder if you can go in any more specifics on the families of the players who are from Houston? I know you said they have been in touch with their families and okay, but do you know about what kind of damage they have or hardship they are going through?

COACH ORGERON: Yeah, good question. We talked to most of them. Most of them said they were okay.

I talked to Toby Weathersby's mother, was concerned about her mother, Toby's grandmother, was going to get out of a situation she was struggling in.

I talked to the rest of the parents and got in touch with most of them. Either had little water or none and they felt they were on an island. They felt like they were trapped and couldn't move. I felt bad for them. But they were very appreciative that we did call.

Q. You've been talking about the freshmen that are

going to play. BYU's lineup has a lot of grown men in it. How much is that a concern to you?

COACH ORGERON: Well, here is, throughout the years, people that played BYU that are experienced, their toughness, the way they are coached, they stay in tight games and they want to win it at the end.

This is going to be a battle. This is a football team that's a very good football team and it's going to be a battle. We're going to go in there and give it all we've got. I know our guys are going to play well. There are going some first game mistakes that are we are going to have to fix. But we will be totally prepared if a freshman is in there and he's not doing it, we have an older guy to back him up, if we can.

Q. There seems to be a lot of confidence in Will Clapp at center there, award watch list and things like that. Why so much confidence in a guy who has never started center and never played at centre?

COACH ORGERON: He's a technician. Will was a very good guard. He knows the little nuances of playing center.

The thing that we like about our center, he is the captain of the offensive line. He makes all the calls. He calls the protection, he checks, Mike here, Mike there, he makes all the checks up front. So that's why we want an experienced guy. Maybe not necessarily the physicality, because Lloyd has it. It was the ability to make the adjustments and protection in the run game and he makes those calls.

Q. Do you expect Derrius to be back at practice today?

COACH ORGERON: I talked to his trainer today. We expect to ease him into practice and we're going to see how this week goes.

Do I think Derrius is going to play? Yes. Am I 100 percent sure right now? No. Have to see how he practices this week. We're going to ease him into practice this week.

Q. With those battles you still have the starting jobs open for, do you want anything named Saturday or will it be a competition all week?

COACH ORGERON: All depends. First of all, I let the assistant coaches handle it and they are going to tell me if the guy is ready or not, and I ask them on a daily basis. As far as the B-linebacker, I need to see them go through the whole process. I need to see what they do in pregame warmup.

Going to have a lot of young guys. Want to see how they feel on game day. I think it's going to be a process

throughout the week, and I don't expect us to name -- some right before game time.

Anybody else?

Q. Derrius was on social media, Tweeting about his tooth?

COACH ORGERON: Derrius was out last week with an injury. He'll be back today, though.

Q. Obviously with all the talk about moving the game and how it affects the fans and all that, speak if you would to the resilience of the players. Unfortunately not the first time they have had to go through this. They have been through a lot of uncertainty in the last couple years with these kind of situations.

COACH ORGERON: You know what, since we took over, tell the truth Monday, competition Tuesday. It's all built on focusing on the task at hand on a daily basis.

I told the team, block out the doors. Look at all the stuff we went through last year, going into the last week, who is going to be the coach and who is not going to be the coach. Our focus was an Texas A&M and we did it.

I think this team is trained. I think that when I talked to them today, focus on the task at hand. All of them have come through the office today and said: Coach, I don't care where we play. Let's go, we're ready to play. Just tell us what to do. So I think that's the mindset of the team.

Q. I don't know how much of this you're going to share but do you expect everyone to make the trip for your team?

COACH ORGERON: I'll see. We've got a long week.

Q. I know there's been so much talk about the offense. How much better do you think you will be on offense this year? Can you quantify that without playing a game yet?

COACH ORGERON: Well, let me say this to you. When we took over, we broke a bunch of records on offense. Our first game, we had 670-something yards on offense, so I don't know how much better you're going to be there.

But I think consistency, running the ball 50 percent of the time, throwing the ball 50 percent of the time, being unpredictable in formations, running a spread offense; I know all those things are going to be there, you know what I'm saying.

But since we took over, I think we're very good on offense, except for the Alabama game. We ran for so

many yards against Texas A&M. I don't remember how many yards that was. Went to Arkansas and did very well. I think our guys are going to improve throughout the year. I think Matt Canada does a tremendous job on offense. He's averaged 40 to 43 points a game wherever he's been, or at Pittsburgh, for sure.

So if we can get that points per game average up, from last year, I would say we'll be a lot better.