

# Louisiana State University Football Media Conference

Monday, September 11, 2017

## Ed Orgeron

COACH ORGERON: Welcome, everybody. Seems like we're getting into the season now. It's cranking up. And I always love tell-the-truth Monday, especially when we win.

We're very excited to walk down that Tiger Walk for our first game. It was exciting moment. It was packed. I want to thank the fans. It was a great, electric atmosphere and for that we're very grateful.

We're pleased that we won the game. We had some things that we need to get fixed. We didn't play our best game. But there's some positives on offense that we're really pleased about. Number one, zero turnovers again, five big explosive plays, the play of Danny Etling, the play of our wide receivers -- the way they're catching the football and the plays they're making. Again Mickey Joseph is doing a tremendous job with them.

On defense, two turnovers, two interceptions by two freshmen, Greedy and Kary Vincent. That was a great catch by both of them. Five sacks, two of them by K'Lavon Chaisson.

One was on the grounding. They gave him a sack. And two by Corey, who has four sacks on the year already. Eight tackles for loss and four pass breakups.

Special teams, obviously the punt return for 65 yards by D.J. Cameron Gamble had three touchbacks. One of the things that we said we wanted to fix that we fixed. Obviously we need to fix our field goal unit and we're going to work on it very hard this week and try some different things. It won't be different guys because those are the guys we have. We'll try different techniques and work very hard with them.

We played 20 freshmen this season. For that we're very proud. Again we're very proud of this freshmen class and they play very well.

We'll continue to work on the penalties. We had 10 in the first half. But we're pleased we addressed it, and we only had one in the second half. I think it was 1:45 left to go, on a hard count.



So those are the things we continue to work on and we're going to work very hard on them this week. They're unacceptable.

Arden Key has been cleared to play this week. He's going to work hard all week in full contact, and we'll play him as much as we can. We'll see during the week, see how much he can do.

A couple of things: We're plus-3 in the turnover margin this year, with three interceptions. That's one of the things we wanted to get better at. Last year we were at zero. So we're on our way to making marked improvement. We're going up against a very tough Mississippi State team.

We lead the nation in rushing defense. Again, we're going to have stiffer tests down the road. Dan Mullen, we play Mississippi State, and Billy Gonzales and John Hevesy, I know all those guys. I have a lot of respect for them. They're excellent coaches.

The year I went off I went and spent some time with Dan and I watched the way they practice. Spent three days with them, spoke at our clinic. And have utmost respect the way he recruits and the way he runs his program.

Mississippi State is number one in SEC scoring offense, 53 points a game. We have a challenge ahead of us. 507 yards for a game.

I think the biggest thing on their staff is the hired Todd Grantham, a guy I respect. He was at Louisville last year. He's a defensive line coach. He went to the Cowboys. I followed him, studied with him all my years. He's tough. He's aggressive.

And I think that you can see that he's making a difference in their football team. Louisville was 14th in the nation in total defense last year. Mississippi State has only given up 174 yards per game, 10.5 points per game. I think they were giving up close to 30 last year. His pass defense is No. 1 in the SEC at 89 yards per game.

Their special teams kickoff return about 20 yards per game. Kickoff averaged 64.8 yards. 12 touchbacks.

Field goal special (indiscernible) of the day is 2-of-4 in field goal attempts, but he's had two blocked. Punt return, special punt -- specialist Logan Cooke, 43, 43.5 yards per punt. 12 touchbacks on kickoffs and their kick returner, Keith Mixon, No. 23, has a long of 15 yards.

We're going to prepare this week, an SEC opponent. There should be a different vibe around the building. Our first SEC opponent, a very good SEC opponent. A tough physical SEC opponent on the road.

Most of the guys are healthy. I don't know if Rashard Lawrence will play this week. I don't even know how much he's going to practice this week. That's still questionable. Most of the rest of our guys will play, and obviously we're fired up to have Arden Key back. Any questions?

**Q. Could you just walk us through the process of getting Arden cleared?**

COACH ORGERON: Yeah. Jack does all that for me. And Jack does tests and he's got to pass a couple of tests here and there and some of them his strength wasn't up to par. And then every week the strength and the flexibility was getting better and better, closer to our target. And today he's at that target.

And we had planned the whole time but we thought this was a game that he would be ready at. We wasn't for sure, though. And obviously he is. He worked very hard. Obviously he's a little bit heavier than he played last year, so he's going to have to get into game shape. I'm going to see how he does this week.

**Q. Will you have a snap count on him of how many plays you want him to play? Is it kind of going --**

COACH ORGERON: This week, it's the first time as you guys have seen he's doing drills. He's going to do teamwork. He's going to take full hits, full contact. And then we'll see what's happening. But I will say this, K'Lavon Chaisson had two sacks in the game, is a very formidable backup. We can rotate him if we have to give him breaks. All depends on his conditioning.

**Q. After kind of taking a look at some of the film, what are the biggest takeaways from Etling's performance and just his overall comfort and poise in the pocket?**

COACH ORGERON: First of all, protection. First of all, the knowledge of the offense. I think Matt is -- I don't think, I know Matt is doing a great job of managing Danny. In the spring Matt did not know what Danny's strengths or weaknesses are like he does now.

He knows the things he can do with Danny that he does very well. He knows the things that Danny

doesn't do very well, we're not doing them. I think that's the difference.

**Q. What is your biggest takeaway; is it a surprise how well your wide receivers have played? And I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, but what specifically do you think they got from working with Jerry Sullivan?**

COACH ORGERON: Here's, first of all, the way that college football is now, Mickey is a great coach. He's been all over the place. But he didn't have all that experience coaching wide receivers. So Jerry Sullivan's name came across my desk as a guy that we could use as a consultant to coach Mickey. And Mickey was open arms.

And Jerry did a tremendous job of teaching him not only route concepts but the techniques within the route concepts and the footwork. And that's what the difference is with our guys -- the footwork and the way they run the routes and the timing between them and Danny. Plus they're catching every ball we're throwing them.

Stephen had a mis-drop. If he would have caught that ball it would have been a touchdown, we think. And that's the only drop we had.

**Q. What have you thought now through two weeks of Greedy, obviously his first time being on the field? And then as a defensive coach, Aranda, how do you manage a guy, Kevin, who started last year and is coming back now with a guy who is playing so well?**

COACH ORGERON: It's a good problem to have, obviously, that Greedy waited his turn. Someone blinked. He moved in. And he's holding on to that spot. He doesn't want to give it up. That's what we like about competition.

There's no sacred spots on our football team. We're going to play the best players regardless of seniority of anything. And we want the guys that are playing the best. And right now Greedy is doing that.

**Q. So kind of building off of that Corey Thompson's played pretty incredible through the first two games. I know last year a lot of times when you all went to the nickel that position came off the field. How do you look to keep him on the field more this year so he can continue to --**

COACH ORGERON: Good question. First of all, we have a new grouping, which I won't name because y'all will write about it and my opponents will know about it. So I'm just joking, Ross; you do a very detailed job. But we have a new grouping. And we have a new grouping that keeps Corey in the game. And that's

what Dave has worked on just for that reason.

**Q. You say you're familiar with Dan Mullen. He's had Tim Tebow at Florida and Dak Prescott and now Fitzgerald, all big quarterbacks who can run. What type of problem do those style of quarterbacks give you and what does Dan do to get the best out of them?**

COACH ORGERON: It's interesting, because I've tried to share ideas with other coaches, especially, and recruiting. I said, Dan, you've had success recruiting a lot of quarterbacks; what is the main ingredient you look for in a quarterback? He did not hesitate: Toughness.

And that's what this guy is. He's tough. He can run the football. And he can read. And Dan's a great coordinator. He's seen all the defenses against a zone read, against the offense that he runs. He does a tremendous job of calling plays on the sideline, changing plays on the sideline. And obviously Fitzgerald is very smart.

**Q. 17 of your total penalties have been in the first half. Can you tell me what's going on with all the early first half penalties?**

COACH ORGERON: I think we need to settle down. Obviously we're coming out very fired up. We have some young players. Give you an example, Xavier Lewis missed the first game. He was so fired up to go hit somebody over on the kickoff team. He's offsides, which is not an excuse.

We have a lot of shifts and motions. Guys are a little jittery and they jump and they try to get lined up.

The quarterback is giving us a hard count. When we want to get a great pass rush, we're jumping off on first down. We shouldn't be doing that. We have to coach them better.

I think once we settle down, like we saw in this half, that the guys are more disciplined. So we have to calm them down, maybe not as many shifts and motions at the beginning, calm them down, play the older guys at first and quit creating all these penalties that put us in negative situations.

**Q. Could you talk about Fitzgerald a little bit more and the challenges that go along with defending a guy like that, somebody you haven't seen with so many young guys on the field?**

COACH ORGERON: Yeah, here's the deal: They do a tremendous job of reading the box. And they're going to take -- just like what our guys do -- they're going to take what they give you.

So if you put too many people in the box, he can throw that football. And they've got darned good receivers. He can make the reads on the zone read that he needs to and keep the ball and scramble out of the pocket.

He's a good decision-maker. He's a good runner. He can scramble. And he can throw the deep ball. He's a complete quarterback, in my mind.

**Q. Noise is going to be a really big factor in this upcoming game. What will you do to prepare your guys for it?**

COACH ORGERON: Obviously I think Matt has a lot of techniques that he uses on the road. We're going to practice them this week.

We're going to -- I kind of like playing on the road because on Tuesdays we get to get -- we get a John Deere tractor and we get right behind the offense and we bring some big speakers out and we kind of play their fight songs and crowd noise and cowbells and all that stuff.

But I respect them. Listen, I've been there many a times. I respect the Mississippi State people. They're tough. They're blue-collar. They're hard-nosed. They love their football team.

The last time I was in their stadium I was amazed about the improvements that they made and modernized that stadium. It's loud. A lot of music. The fans are into it. It's college football.

We're going to respect that. It's going to fire up our guys. But we have to get the snap count down, and we need to get offense going, because that's where it's going to be the loudest.

**Q. Moving on to the kickers. Not having a special teams coordinator, does that complicate at all this process of trying to work through these issues?**

COACH ORGERON: I don't think so. I really don't think so. Because Chris does a tremendous job. Matt watches all the film. He coaches Chris up. Chris is with him the whole time.

I think that they're getting coached by one of the best in techniques available. Coach Mack is watching film at 4:00 in the morning until 10:00 at night. Only on special teams. We're about as detailed as we've ever been.

Before, in the past, the special teams coach would be in a defensive meeting room and then go in to special teams.

This is 24/7 committed to special teams. Obviously I

do believe that -- you bring up a good point -- that if Coach Mack were a full-time coach, they could get coached better.

And he will be a guy to highly consider when the tenth coach becomes available.

**Q. First time all season that your team will probably be under stress in a game. Are you curious to see how they respond to that?**

COACH ORGERON: We have to. We're playing the SEC West. Might be the first time, but won't be the last. We'll see how we respond.

But I do believe we have enough veteran players. I do believe we have enough ability to respond with the deep ball, if we ever get behind.

We have the ability to run the football and match people's physicality. We can stop the run on defense. We're getting better on special teams.

But obviously this is going to take 60 minutes from all three phases. Look at Mississippi State, the last two years we've been here, we get up on them; they get behind. They come back. They almost tie the game. Both games I believe ended on the last play or close to the last play. It's going to be a battle.

**Q. You mentioned the other night how you look at other teams like Washington and the turnover deal. How much time did you spend on that, and what do you specifically get out of it?**

COACH ORGERON: How are they getting them? Especially how are they getting them. And look at the techniques that they used on strip attempts, interceptions, pressures. Are they going four-man rush, five-man rush, full-out blitz, how are they getting their picks?

Obviously ball security is something that I think we've done here very well. We haven't done a good enough job of creating turnovers.

And in practice it's more or less not exactly getting the turnover, but it's the strip attempt. I think the more attempts that you get, the more turnovers that you get.

So we started gauging strip attempts every practice, and we have a goal of creating three turnovers per practice. And most of the time we've done that.

**Q. How much time did you spend on that in the spring, studying?**

COACH ORGERON: A bunch in the spring. I've studied that myself. That was my baby. And Derrick helped me out with that. We studied film. We studied

teams. Austin Thomas helped me out. We had the film, and that was kind of our little study.

**Q. Arden Key and his weight, I think fans got excited when they heard he was up to 250 or 260 or whatever. But when you have a shoulder surgery, it's difficult to lift and everything. So was that good weight that he was bulking up on?**

COACH ORGERON: Not bad, we'll see. It's not bad. Again, before his shoulder surgery he was a little heavier. He started gaining weight before his shoulder surgery. I think Arden right now is close to 265. So we definitely want to get him down to 260, 255. But it's going to take a little while to get that done.

**Q. We talked a little bit about your adaptive coaches and their ability to play off with whatever the oppositions do. Have you ever had a staff like this where they're both so similar?**

COACH ORGERON: They're the two best I've been around. I've been around Pete Carroll as a defensive coordinator, and Jimmy Johnson.

But these guys are very, very talented. They're different, and both their styles are different and their personalities are different. But the results are the same.

Matt knows this offense like the back of his hand. And I don't think there's many things that startle him, because he's seen it and he knows what people are going to try to do to defend him.

Although they may not show it that week, they can show it in a game, and he can make an adjustment like that: Guys, they're doing this, we ain't seen them, drawing it up on the board, here's what we're going to do and they go to it. And they fix it immediately.

Dave is the same way. I've never been a part -- Matt's in the box. I've never been a part, with a coach, on the sideline, that can see all 22 players when the ball is snapped and know what everyone did.

He still hasn't told me that secret. I tried to figure it out.

But the good part about offense and defense is it's not halftime adjustments, it's sideline adjustments. And we're doing it right now. And they're excellent at it. I'm glad we've got them.

**Q. Mississippi State has the ball between the tackles. How do they compare to the two teams you faced already? And what is the status of your interior linemen on defense?**

COACH ORGERON: We're physical. They're more physical. The year before I got here, at halftime,

Mississippi State had 200 yards running between the tackles. That's where they're really good, especially with the quarterback.

They had a quarterback named Dak Prescott that was pretty good. So we tried to eliminate that in our game plan, and we'll have to do that the same thing this year.

Obviously if Rashard Lawrence doesn't play, we may have to move some guys around.

**Q. Last year Fitzgerald didn't really do much against y'all. Another guy came in and put the scare into you at the end of the game. When did the light bulb go off for him and what's the biggest difference for him now and then?**

COACH ORGERON: I think it's another year on offense. Offensive line is playing better. They're doing things that in the offense similar to what we're doing with Danny, that he does very well. They cut out the stuff that he doesn't do very well. I think that's a combination of those things.

**Q. Curious if you feel you've gotten a good impression of defensive tackle Jeffery Simmons from Mississippi State. Obviously had some highlights at Tech. But just as a guy with expertise in that position, can you kind of comment on what you see on him?**

COACH ORGERON: I wanted to get him. He was one of my number one guys on the board. He's a difference-maker, first-round draft choice, coached very well. No. 94, blocked the punt already.

What's the stats? Couple of sacks. Let's see his stats here. Got it right here. Ten tackles, tackle for loss and a sack and a blocked punt already.

He's a first-round pick. We've got to know where he's at at all times. Double team him. Protect. He's going to be a challenge for our guys, first-round draft pick.

When I went to Mississippi State, I guess it was three springs ago, I was amazed at the size of their defense and their defensive line.

They put out NFL players there. And the thing about Mississippi, as we all know, it may be a five-star player but you can also get a two-star player from the delta that nobody knows about.

And he gains about 30 pounds and he's an excellent football player. A great state to recruit, especially in that area.

**Q. When you look at Danny's film from this past week, do you see like maybe a couple of throws,**

**when you talk to him, like against an SEC defense this might be get intercepted?**

COACH ORGERON: Saw a couple of throws that wasn't on the money at the beginning of the game we need to -- that first out route was not on the money. We missed some throws in the red zone. We had some guys wide open. And we did not make the proper reads. So there's a lot of things to improve in that area.

**Q. I know it was 10 years ago, but do you ever think how different your life would be if you had punted the ball against them in that situation that you were in?**

COACH ORGERON: Yeah, I thank the good Lord every day. (Laughter) it's just been a great journey. I live like this: Whatever happens, it happens for a reason and I move on to the next day.

I should have punted the ball. It was an emotional decision. That's why I have mentors nowadays, especially when I get emotional and I ask them what do you think, and I ask Matt what do you think, I ask Pete what do you think, I ask Dave what do you think?

So those are the things I've grown in that area. But I will say this to you: We beat a team called Stanford who was ranked No. 4 in the country and most people wouldn't have went for it fourth down and we did. And they crowded the stadium for us. Those things can happen, but that was not a very good call. But I'm very appreciative to be at LSU.

**Q. If that situation comes up again, how much more deliberative will you be in that kind of spot, or will you go back to being a little bit of a riverboat gambler?**

COACH ORGERON: No, I'm punting. (Laughter) I want to keep this job. (Laughter).

**Q. Can you go over each assistant and their special teams responsibilities, I think you have five or six?**

COACH ORGERON: No problem. Jeff Grimes handles the field goal protection unit. Chris coaches the holder, the snapper and the kicker. The Geronimo unit is coached by Dennis Johnson, myself and Corey Raymond. Dennis is the chief guy there.

The kickoff unit is coached by Dennis Johnson. The punt return unit, which we call Charlie, is coached by Corey Raymond. The kickoff return unit, which we call House Call, is coached by Mickey Joseph.

And Steve Ensminger does a great job assisting all assistants assist on every of them. And the punt unit is coached by Tommie Robinson.

**Q. Chris?**

COACH ORGERON: Chris is our GA, our graduate assistant coach that handles the special teams through Coach Mack.

**Q. McMahon can't be on the field during the games, or is he on the field during the games?**

COACH ORGERON: No, he's not on the field.

**Q. More of an SEC question and a poll question. You probably disagree with this perception but there seems to be one that the SEC is a little top heavy; you have Alabama number one and then no other SEC team in the top 10. Why do you think that is? Do you understand it? And what do you make of it?**

COACH ORGERON: Well, first of all, Alabama has done a great job. They deserve to be where they are until somebody beats them. I really don't worry about the rankings at this time of the year because they're going to change. And they change in a hurry.

And we just take it one game at a time. We know we've got Mississippi State. To me Mississippi State is the number one in the country. Right now we've got to go beat them. That's how focused we are. And all that stuff doesn't matter.

I think the only time a ranking matters is when the season is over and you play the final game and you pick up the paper the next day. I think that's when the rankings matter.