

LSU COACH ED ORGERON PRESS CONFERENCE TRANSCRIPT - Arkansas week

Opening Statement...

"Welcome, everybody. It's great to be our football team all last week. They had a great mindset of preparation. We got on that plane with a great attitude. I loved the way they played physical football. Belief in the LSU Tigers all last week was about LSU and wasn't about anybody else.

Wish the fans could have heard our guys before the game and how bad they wanted to win the game for the LSU Tiger family and the State of Louisiana. I believe they gave it everything that they had.

Obviously, we fell short, and there was no room for that, and there's no moral victories. But they did everything I asked them to do, and for that, I was proud of them. The 24-hour rule today, and after we watch the film, we'll identify the positives and identify the negatives, fix the things we can fix and move on.

We have an early start on Saturday against a very tough Arkansas opponent. This is always a tough game for LSU. It's a rivalry game, 11 a.m. kickoff. We're going to need all our fans to come on up early, drink some coffee, put a little something in it and get in Tiger Stadium and come enjoy the day with us because it's going to be a great game. This is a great rivalry game, and I know our fans are going to enjoy it. It's the battle for the boot. Last year we went up there and beat a good Arkansas team, very similar. Coming off a tough loss to Alabama. So we're going to have to regather it today and get going and focus in on a very good Arkansas football team.

Some of the things about Arkansas, the turnover margin are minus two. The offense is big and physical like it's always been, with a very big offensive line. Guys are 330, 340 pounds. They have a very good run game. Pin and pull scheme that gives defenses problems. They're averaging almost 400 yards a game, 180 rushing, and 205 passing.

They have two very good running backs in Devwah Whaley and David Williams that hit the ball. They're big, they're physical, they're tough. They know how to run the football at Arkansas. They always have. Jonathan Nance is a very good wide receiver, along with Cole Kelley, a very good running back from Lafayette, Louisiana, that's doing a very good job. On defense, they've moved to the 3-4, which is different for Arkansas. They're moving guys around, they're bringing multiple looks and zone pressures.

Paul Rhoads is a former head coach there. He's a very good defensive coach. They have seven returning starters and they've given up 422 yards per game. They're allowing 26 points per game. They've forced 7 fumbles and six interceptions on the season. Their top players are McTelvin Agim, his nickname is Sosa. He's from Arkansas. I recruited him. He's very fast. One of the fastest defensive ends in the recruiting class that year, very explosive and disruptive, and he's doing very well this year.

Kevin Richardson, No. 30, cornerback plays nickel back. Has great instinct, has three interceptions, and Dwayne Eugene, field linebacker. Big, physical guy, very solid on special teams.

Our challenge this week is obviously the 24-hour rule. Our guys have done a tremendous job of that all week and moving on to Arkansas. I'm excited about this football team. I'm excited to be with them in the locker room before the game, during the game and after the game. Love their attitude, love the way they held their head up high. Knowing that we're only a couple of plays away from beating a very good Alabama football team. We believe in each other.

We believe in finishing very strong this season and having a great season starting one at a time, starting with Arkansas. Any questions?

Q. When you re-watched the game tape, what did you see from those deep balls from your quarterback and receivers?

ED ORGERON: Yeah, some of them could have been caught. Some of them were just a little bit behind. The timing could have been better. The thing I was pleased with was the protection. We said protection first, and going up to the last drive when we had to get more guys out, I thought our guys did a tremendous job of protecting the quarterback and giving enough time.

So the things were there. The timing, the throw wasn't exactly there. Some of those could have been caught. They weren't caught. It was just a combination of both.

Q. Last year you had a hard-fought game against Alabama. You go to Arkansas and you dominated. What were the keys that week, and how do you repeat those things this week?

ED ORGERON: I remember last year, obviously our goal this year is to take one game at a time, and we haven't put more emphasis on any other game than another. We didn't make this last game all or nothing, although we know how big it is in the State of Louisiana. So I think we're about to bounce back well. We're about to bounce back with some confidence. I remember last year our strength coach and the coaching staff was the MVP. Their energy, and the way they brought it all week, we have to bring extra energy this week.

But I think this year is a little bit different because our guys are feeling good about themselves right now, although they lost. They're seeing we're building a championship team. I think they're hungry. I think they'll be hungry to go out to practice and we're playing at home.

Q. Is there a case to be made for playing more of Myles Brennan, maybe even getting him a start in these final three games?

ED ORGERON: No, that's not fair. That's not fair at all. We're going to play Danny, but if Danny doesn't do the things we want him to do, we'll play Myles, just in the last game.

Q. Could you elaborate on that?

ED ORGERON: Danny is our starting quarterback, and Danny's done a good job for us. We're going to finish the season. Danny is our quarterback. Myles would have to beat Danny out on a play-by-play basis in practice. He'd have to play better than he would in a game. He hasn't done that yet. I would not give Myles the starting quarterback job just to get ready for next year. We've got a lot of things to play for. We're thinking one game at a time, and we want to have a very good year. For right now, Danny's our quarterback.

Q. After watching the film, their punter, Scott, seemed to have a great night. Were there plays for DJ to make on any of those punt returns?

ED ORGERON: Yeah, here's a couple of things. You bring up some good points. First of all, it's the first time we've gone against a pro-style punter, and we felt that we had some opportunities to block the punt. Our execution wasn't exactly like we wanted it, and that enabled them to get the punt off, obviously, without a lot of coverage. So we did that two or three times. I think one of the biggest plays in the game was the penalty. Obviously, we turned the ball, I guess, around the 50-yard line, and we had a foolish penalty.

DJ could have caught a couple of balls. I think he should have done a better job. I think we looked at it, and we had over 75 hidden yards lost in the punt returning game, so obviously we could have done a better job. But it wasn't all on DJ.

Q. After the game, you were pretty adamant about what direction the program was going in. I know you were speaking to several of your client el there. Were recruits one of them?

ED ORGERON: No question. We're a couple players away. You've got to give the credit to their

quarterback. You just think about the plays that Jalen Hurts has made against us the last two years.

Look, man, we held them to 3.2 yards per carry. We rushed the ball well. We had more yards than they did. We just didn't make the plays at the opportune times. Their quarterback did, we didn't.

So, with another recruiting class, with some skill guys that we need, we feel that we can compete with them and anybody else in the SEC on a toe-to-toe basis. It was obvious, I thought our defensive line played very well. I thought guys like Frank Herron played his best game. Ed Alexander, Rashard Lawrence, they came to play. That was the best running game I felt we had to defend with 33 years of coaching, besides the year I had to play Oregon. I thought our guys did a tremendous job going toe to toe in the trenches.

Q. So, as a follow-up, you feel like you were one more recruiting class away at being at the level that it needs to win this thing?

ED ORGERON: I'll say this, I think if you look at this last game and you look at a couple of plays here and there that we make, we make two of those long throws, the game is tied. But I guess a lot of people could say that. I guess a lot of people almost beat us too and understand that. But I feel with another recruiting class that we're going to be very close to where we want to get.

I think the year 2019 is one of the best years for Louisiana. That's when we're going to have our best recruiting class, and we're building a championship program here, and I think everybody can see it.

Q. This 11 a.m. start, do you think that's tougher on the players or the fans?

ED ORGERON: I think it's tougher on the fans. I think that everybody has their little routine, and they like to go through it, and I understand that. The players, we adapt. Last Citrus Bowl we played Louisville, we played them at 11 o'clock, and we played one of the best bowl games we've played here in a while.

I think it's the mindset, the mindset of the coaches. We can use it as an advantage. It's early for both teams, and we're going to be very well prepared to play early on Saturday morning. Obviously, it helps us with a sold out crowd.

Q. Would you like to consider getting Myles a series or some snaps when the game is still in doubt, like in the first or second quarter, something like that?

ED ORGERON: That could happen. He could play more. But he would play more because he is equal or better to Danny, that's the reason he'd play. If Danny's in there, and he's hot and playing well, he's our quarterback. We're playing to win.

Q. How much better do you feel about your offensive line, the young guys that have played, gotten the experience, and moving into next year with a lost those guys coming back?

ED ORGERON: I'm proud of them. You know, we faced a lot of growing pains at beginning of the year. We faced a lot of growing pains in camp and we could not scrimmage like we wanted to. We weren't too deep in a lot of positions. Thank God we had a lot of guys that walked on to this football team two deep. But those guys have gotten better, and I'm proud of them. I'm proud of Saahdiq, I'm proud of Ed Ingram. I'm proud of the older guys. That puts less pressure on us of finding a junior college guy that has to start. Now if we can get a junior college guy that's better than them, he could start, and we are looking for junior college linemen that could help us. But we've got five guys returning that have started football games.

Q. Right along those same lines, you talked a lot last week about in the trenches what you thought kind of the talent gap might be. How much did your perception of that change after Saturday night?

ED ORGERON: We went toe to toe. No question. I didn't see a gap, to be honest with you. I think in a lot

of situations we won. But I don't know if that was attitude, technique, a combination of everything. But I felt like we delivered some blows, especially on the defensive line. I thought we played well. I think we only gave up two sacks and that was at the end. We ran the ball well.

They were averaging 43 points a game. We held them to 24. We held them to 3.2 yards per carry which is pretty good. We did not get pushed around. We did the pushing around in a lot of instances. So I think that we made some progress there. The mindset, technique, and talent. Are we where we need to be? No. Are we getting there? Yes.

Q. That play call with Darrel and the wildcat, is that something that's been in the playbook all year and you were hiding it in your back pocket for a game like this? Speak to his play, I guess. How important is it to have him also protect Danny? I saw three or four times he saved Danny from getting sacked?

ED ORGERON: He does a great job. Darrel is one of our Most Valuable Players. That is something that Matt came up with during the open date. It is something that he felt would be successful, and it was. Obviously Darrel is an all-around back, first, second, and third down back. He's very good at protection. He's probably one of our better backs in pass protection.

Q. Coach, Coastal Carolina was beating these guys pretty much the whole game until the end. It's the same league that has Troy. Is this evidence that the players those schools are getting are on the level of Power Five conferences or is it maybe evidence that maybe the Power Five guys aren't as hungry when they play these games, and guys at those schools have that hunger?

ED ORGERON: Yeah, I think it's a combination of both. Obviously I played at Northwestern State, so I played with some very good football players. I played in the NFL. So I always have respect for the lower-tier schools, and I know what type of football is being played there.

But you've got to get your team up to play every week. You cannot play to your opponent's level. That's one thing I think we've learned this year after the Troy game. We have to play LSU football, and I think for the most part, we've done that.

Q. Could you talk a little bit more about Darrel? He's a guy that came in with Leonard Fournette. He knows that Derrius is coming the year after, but he kind of sticks with it, and now he's proven the kind of back he is.

ED ORGERON: Humble, mature, leadership, hard worker. He actually you ask him to lose weight, he loses weight. He doesn't say a word. He's one of our best special teams players. He's there early to work, smiles every day, hardly ever hurt. I've hardly ever heard him complain. He's the ultimate Tiger. He's a great young man.

Q. Just curious from last spring, Noel nor cease, how much better has he gotten? Confident and recovering from those injuries. How much better does he get running your scout squad having to go up against your defense every day?

ED ORGERON: He's done a good job. He's gotten in shape. He's lost some weight. I think that for the first time in a couple years he's healthy. He's done a tremendous job doing the things we've asked him to do. His time to compete is coming up. After these three weeks hopefully we have some bowl practice, and we'll have a tremendous opportunity to go in there and show us what he has.

Q. Going into that game I was a little skeptical about Matt's shifts and motions and how they would stack up against a premier defense. Coming out of it, it looks like they did quite well. Does it help to add some belief to the team, the coaches and to everyone to buy in that let's go with this thing?

ED ORGERON: It gives confidence, obviously. He had more yards, I guess, than they had against us, and that was evident with his game plan, the shifts and motions were very hard. Although they stopped some plays, the things that they stopped, he was able to do something else. He had options. Again, I think that

he had a great play call in the first down, play-action pass, that was our game plan to go deep, but we had a chance to make those plays. If we make those plays, that's a different ballgame.

Q. One quick follow-up on Myles. Did you consider going to him earlier in the game at any point?

ED ORGERON: You know, here's the way we go into the game. Myles can go in any time, but Danny would have to be not executing the game plan. He would have to go to maybe two series not doing the things that Matt wants him to do, and then obviously at the end we felt that we wanted Myles to get a shot. That Danny wasn't playing that well at the end and wanted to give Myles a shot. But it could happen. It could happen a second series or third series, but Danny hasn't warranted that yet.

Q. With Arkansas, I know Austin Allen's been out, but seems like he's getting healthier. How do you prepare for both guys this week or how do you handle that?

ED ORGERON: No question. We'll make a cut up of Austin Allen. We'll make a cut up of the quarterback they have now. And there will be a different computer report and different game plan for each quarterback, if it warrants.

Q. What do you see from those guys? They're a lot different?

ED ORGERON: Well, Austin has a lot of experience. Obviously, he's a winner. He's got a lot of heritage there at Arkansas. His family, he's a great young man, and he's won a lot of games. The other guy is a young guy. He's taller. Maybe not as mobile as Austin, but he's a different pocket passer, but doing a good job.

Q. Does it help at all that Matt has experience with Brett being one year up there? How does it help?

ED ORGERON: Yeah, I think that's overrated a little bit, you know what I'm saying? You get all the stuff with the film. You might get a little tip here and there, but not really.

Q. The 75 yard -- would have been a 75-yard touchdown, I think, to chalk the one down in front of your sideline early in the third quarter. Was that one of the big misses that you're referring to?

ED ORGERON: Yeah, yeah. Probably could have caught the ball if he slowed down a little bit. But it's hard to tell a receiver to slow down. This time it wasn't right. But that was on both of the guys. You know, we could have got it.

Q. There are so many of those deep balls that could have been completed and it's just game changing. I know you're tired of us asking. Are those things that keep a coach up at night? Do you have almost nightmares?

ED ORGERON: No regrets. Let me say this, I'm with those guys, man. They gave us every ounce of energy that they had, and that's going to happen. It's football. You know, I have no regrets in this football game, not one. I was so proud of everything that they gave.