

Aflac Kickoff Game: Virginia Tech vs. South Carolina

Sunday, August 31, 2025

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

South Carolina Gamecocks

Vicari Swain

Fred "JayR" Johnson

Postgame Press Conference



myself making a lot of plays. It feel good to have a game like this.

Q. Vicari, on his interception, it looked like you kind of saw him coming. What was your perspective on that play? What can you share about that?

VICARI SWAIN: Somebody had to come down with it. I didn't want to be selfish. He was right there and happened to get in front of me, so he got it.

Q. Fred, what was your mentality when you seen the ball coming right to you in a situation like that?

FRED JOHNSON: I'm going to catch it every time. I didn't even see him right there honestly.

Q. Fred, when I asked Shane about what happened on that play, he said you used to play offense in high school and he probably thought you could take that ball back 102 yards. Do you feel like you probably could have taken that ball back?

FRED JOHNSON: Yeah, that's why I tried.

Q. Vicari, when did you feel like that punt return was opening up for you? Were you surprised that Shane elected to have that ball re-kicked versus just taking the penalty?

VICARI SWAIN: I was kind of surprised when he wanted to re-kick, but when I seen they were backed up, the ball was going to be kicked deep, so I trusted my guys up front to make the blocks. Made it happen.

Q. Vicari, when you start out with an 80-yard return in the first game of the season, what does that say about what's to come for you this season at South Carolina and what we can expect from the Gamecocks when you have a play like that right out of the gate?

VICARI SWAIN: I'm just going to give it my best, my all every single time I'm out there, make the most of my ability every time I'm out there.

Q. Vicari, first off, after you had one punt come off your hands, what did Coach Beamer say to you then, and what were you thinking about before you got the punt that you scored on?

VICARI SWAIN: Coach Beamer was like this is going to happen. It's your first time being out there. Make sure on the next one, just take it to the house, so I took it to the house.

I messed up the first time; I can't mess up again. That's my only shot.

Q. Vicari, when Judge went down, what was the message with the secondary? You guys came in and filled his spot.

VICARI SWAIN: Just next man up. In practice we always rotate. So we're always prepared if somebody goes down.

Q. Fred, if you could, could you just please take us through your interception there. What kind of happened on the -- you didn't go down. You took it to like the 2 yard line there.

FRED JOHNSON: So what happened is it was a plaster play he rolled out. I just found the closest receiver, tight end, and I stuck to him. He threw the ball to me and I caught it. With the two-yard return, I really didn't know where I was, so I just, yeah.

Q. JayR, at the end of last off-season, a lot of the senior defensive leaders were saying you're going to be the next guy to step up on this defense. After a long off-season, to have a first game like this this year, how does it feel?

FRED JOHNSON: It felt good. I prayed a lot, envision



What to expect? Just go out there and execute every time I'm out there.

Q. Vicari, Shane Beamer said the offense was kind of struggling before you made the punt return. What does it mean to have him trust you to return that kick, and like how big was that in the flow of the game to be like that game changing play for the team? After that, that's when the offense started clicking after you made the punt return.

VICARI SWAIN: I would just say somebody had to be a game changer, and it just happened to be me. I embraced it and ball came to me, and I scored. It was just that.

Q. I think the fans, a lot of people were concerned about the defense going into the season because you lost so many players from last year. How does it feel to you guys to step in and play the way you did today, not giving up a touchdown? Do you think you answered a lot of those questions about the defense? I know it's just a one-game sample, but in this type of setting to do what you did, what did you take away from that?

FRED JOHNSON: I feel like with them saying that we lost a lot of players and just questioning what we had on defense, I feel like they found out today for sure. Yeah, it's not the old team.

VICARI SWAIN: Yeah, like he just said, we've got a lot of weapons on defense as well. We replaced a lot of good shoes. I'd say this year we're probably more talented than we were last year, yeah.

Q. Can you talk about the opportunity of coming down here and playing on national TV, huge crowd, the environment today, and getting the big win to start the season, both of you?

VICARI SWAIN: I would just say just embracing the moment, just living in the moment. I mean, and Williams Brice has a lot of people, we have great fans, we're used to large crowds. So nothing changes for us, yeah.

FRED JOHNSON: Like he said, just embracing it. Pray about it a lot, envision myself making the plays, and it was a good experience.

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