

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Florida vs Michigan

Thursday, December 27, 2018

Pep Hamilton
Zach Gentry
Donovan Peoples-
Jones
Shea Patterson

Michigan Wolverines

THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everybody. How is everybody doing? I know it's early. I think this is the earliest one of these we've ever done. Michigan is on their way in.

So joining us from the Michigan offense, we've got officer coordinator Pep Hamilton, quarterback Shea Patterson, receiver Donovan Peoples-Jones, and tight end Zach Gentry. So to start us off, Coach, why don't you give us an opening statement and talk about your Bowl Week experience so far and how preparations are going for the game.

PEP HAMILTON: We're excited to be here. Our players are working hard. They're jumping at the bit to get out and play the game. It's been quite some time since we've played a football game.

Right now, to be frank, we have a bad taste in our mouths. So we are looking forward to the opportunity to get out there on Saturday afternoon and play some high-level football.

THE MODERATOR: Very good. Coach, have you been in the film room the whole time, or have you gotten out to some of the events and gotten to have a good time?

PEP HAMILTON: For the most part, we've been in the film room. There were some mandates that we participate in some events, but I would say that our staff is fired up to make sure that we put our players in the best position to be successful, and we're working hard to do just that.

THE MODERATOR: Very good. Thanks for that.

Shea, we'll go down the row for you guys. Give us what's been your favorite Bowl Week event so far, and



what did you like most about it?

SHEA PATTERSON: That's tough. I'd have to say the Andretti, the go-carts would be my favorite one. That's been my favorite thing to do since a little kid. So it was just cool to go there with all my teammates and have a good time and play video games, just relax, step away from football.

THE MODERATOR: Donovan, what about you?

DONOVAN PEOPLES-JONES: I'd probably say the go-carting too. Even in the lounge, like PlayStation, Xbox games, it's pretty fun too.

THE MODERATOR: Zach?

ZACH GENTRY: I think it's hard to beat the game day we had, go-carting and just forgetting about football and being a little kid again. Unlimited tickets and stuff like that too is pretty cool.

THE MODERATOR: Did you take anybody out on the track?

ZACH GENTRY: No. I don't think so.

THE MODERATOR: You hesitated there. Are you sure?

ZACH GENTRY: I may have bumped a little bit.

SHEA PATTERSON: He actually couldn't fit in the go-carts.

ZACH GENTRY: That's crazy, because I could.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for that, guys. We'll open it up for questions.

Q. For Shea, have you kind of stepped up into the role Karan has left behind as an offensive captain, or has it been more collective from your group?

SHEA PATTERSON: I think it's been more of a collective type thing with our guys, Zach, Chase Winovich, myself. I think we all try to kind of learn by example. Karan was our guy, our offensive leader, and we all kind of followed him.

I think we're all just really excited just to play this game and push each other each and every single day this week to come out with a "W".

THE MODERATOR: Coach, I'll ask you a question. Given your recent history with the Gators, does that give you any advantage at all, that familiarity with their scheme and how you're going to attack that defense?

PEP HAMILTON: No. They have a different defensive coordinator than what they had last year when we faced this team, so it's a different scheme.

But we are aware of just the amount of talent that they have on the defensive side of the ball in particular. This is a really good defensive front, arguably the best that we've seen this season. It will be a tremendous challenge for us to control the line of scrimmage. And that's always our goal as an offense, to go out and control the line of scrimmage, both running the football and protecting the quarterback.

But it's an SEC defense. They have a lot of team speed, really aggressive. They have special playmakers on all three levels of the defense. Our guys, they'll be ready to go, and they're going to compete hard.

But we have to do the things that we've done all season long that helped us to win games and be efficient offensively. That's running the football first and letting that set up everything else for us.

Q. Shea, can you talk about how surreal it might seem to you that you and Van are playing against each other. I know you're not going head-to-head, but to be in the same bowl game after what you guys went through?

SHEA PATTERSON: I'm just kind of focused on my team, my current team right now, my teammates sitting next to me right now. Just supporting them, being behind them, and going to roll with them. Obviously, it's really cool that it's our Bowl Week and his too. I'm happy for him. I think we're both just ready to get out there and compete.

THE MODERATOR: For the players, in looking at your opposing positional group, what -- Zach, I'll start with you. What do you see in film about their defensive backs, their linebackers, on how that matches with your scheme and how you're going to be able to attack that defense?

ZACH GENTRY: Coach Pep touched on it a little bit. They're an extremely athletic defense. They have got playmakers, linebacker position, safety, corner.

So it's going to be a challenge for us. But we've been

working our tails off, and I think we've got a good scheme for this game coming up. And I think we're just going to have to attack it and just do what we need to do, do what we know we've been able to do when we've been successful in our wins.

THE MODERATOR: Donovan, same question for you, but looking at their corners and safeties. What do you see out of that group and what kind of challenge do they present for the receiving corps?

DONOVAN PEOPLES-JONES: They've got good speed. Like Zach said, athletic. Whole defense is athletic. Like Coach Pep said they're an SEC team. They'll be physical. Also, just like Zach said, we'll have to just carry out our plan, carry out our scheme and just stick to that and play our football.

THE MODERATOR: Shea, for you, you get the whole group. Where do you see your advantage, either on their defensive line, their linebackers, or their defensive backs? What are you guys going to be looking to exploit?

SHEA PATTERSON: At the end of the day, we're just going to go out there and play our game. Like Donovan and Zach said, they're fast and athletic. They make plays, but we've got a lot of playmakers too. At the end of the day, we're just going to go out there and compete and just play our game and trust in the game plan.

Q. Shea, what have you seen from Joe Milton? Have you kind of put him under your wing or something like that? But I know that he's a guy who came in here with a lot of hype, a guy who could have went to Florida, being that it's his home state so this game means a lot to him too. The hype has been not only warranted by the media but the fact that he's a good player. Have you taken him under your wing and what have you seen so far with his maturation?

SHEA PATTERSON: Joe is a special talent. He's my brother just like the rest of the guys. It's been cool working with that group of guys. Brandon Peters and Dylan McCaffrey and Joe, all the in the same room. We all feed off each other's energy and get better every single day.

Coach Pep pushes us to be our best every single day, day in and day out. But I think Joe, he has a cannon, and I think he has a very, very, very bright future ahead of him.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, what Big Ten team does Florida, in their scheme and their game plan, what team are they closest to in the Big Ten, and how have

you fared against that team?

PEP HAMILTON: Scheme-wise, they're probably most similar to Penn State. As far as the personnel that they have, they just have a tremendous amount of talent as we've mentioned several times here. They're similar to the team down south. And that's south of Michigan.

But, I mean, irregardless, our guys are going to be ready to go out and compete and play at a high level. I think one of the many things that Shea has brought to our program is just that no moment is too big. He's stepped up and made the plays when our team has needed big plays the most.

Even last night, at the College Hall of Fame tour that we did, the competition that we had last night, we needed Shea to make a play. He made the play for us.

THE MODERATOR: That was a pressure-packed moment.

PEP HAMILTON: It was.

THE MODERATOR: It was all on the line right there.

PEP HAMILTON: It was.

THE MODERATOR: That was like overtime, one-on-one.

PEP HAMILTON: I'm standing on the side of the stage yelling can't touch this. MC Hammer. Can't touch this. And he rode me off. He was right.

THE MODERATOR: Did you know the answer, Shea, or were you guessing? It's just us.

SHEA PATTERSON: So who is more likely to be left-handed, men or women, I did not know that. A few questions before that, I didn't know that. But the Eminem or MC Hammer, I definitely knew that one. So I got lucky on that.

Q. Piggybacking off the question to Shea about filling the leadership void, it's not just at running back, but you guys have, I think, four players who won't be in the game. Today, can you talk about moving past that, what that's been like for the practices, as that's become evident? And then, also, on the flip side, what did Shea's announcement that he'll be back, what did that mean for this team, for this game, especially?

SHEA PATTERSON: It was definitely fun, a big honor to play with those guys, Devin Bush and Karan and Rashan and Juwann Bushell-Beatty, we're just focused

on ourselves right now, and I think with our mind set, that we're all we've got, we're all we need. I don't think there's any other way to go about that.

And I think with my decision, I don't know if it was a decision. I think it was just an announcement. I definitely just got a taste of it this year with my teammates and my coaches, and I couldn't have been more happy to come back for one more.

Q. This question is mainly for Shea Patterson. Of course, we know you were a transfer from Ole Miss last year. And I'm not sure if any other media person's asked but, of course, there's a lot of discussion about people transferring, not staying, you know, not being dedicated to one school. Can you just give your opinions on that and just the benefit that you've had since you've been here, since you've been here at Michigan?

SHEA PATTERSON: I think coming to Michigan was the best decision I've made for myself so far, and I think my situation is a little different.

Every transfer situation is different. We weren't eligible to play for a lot of things, and I wasn't aware of that before I kind of committed to that school. But there's all types of different scenarios for every single player. So it's all about just doing what's best for that player, yourself, and your family and your future.

Q. Shea, Van took to kind of asking about how Michigan did when we talked to him after games. Did you follow Florida or check box scores to see how he did? What was your relationship when you two were teammates?

SHEA PATTERSON: Yeah, me and Van were really close at Ole Miss. I'm pretty tight with his family. So always keeping me updated and we're always checking on each other, whether three-week span or five-month span. We'll leave off at the same spot we left off.

So just excited for him and his future success.

Q. This is only a question you get from somebody from Gainesville. Can you talk about what it was like working with Jim McElwain this year and how that all went? The fact that he's not with the team anymore.

PEP HAMILTON: It was great. It was great for not only our coaching staff but for our players. Just Coach Mac brought a wealth of experience and his people skills are off the chart.

We gave him the nickname, Uncle Mac. He had a way of just calming everybody down and just really just sharing the experience that he accrued over the years

with not only myself, but the rest of our staff and our players.

And we miss Coach Mac, and we wish him the best down at central Michigan.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. We'll end it right there.