

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Florida vs Michigan

Thursday, December 27, 2018



Don Brown

Khaleke Hudson

Tryee Kinnel

Chase Winovich

Michigan Wolverines

THE MODERATOR: Welcome the Michigan defense. We've got defensive coordinator Don Brown, defensive lineman Chase Winovich, defensive back Tyree Kinnel and linebacker Khaleke Hudson.

Coach, if you can give us an opening statement on how preparations have been going so far for the game and what your experience has been like so far during Bowl Week.

DON BROWN: Bowl Week's been great. Been treated tremendously. It's a difficult time of the year to be away from home, but, I mean, the Peach Bowl Committee has done a great job of filling those gaps and making this a tremendously enjoyable experience.

Our players, you always wonder how it's going to go when you get here. But I think our guys have really done a great job, as they usually do. This is as good a practice team as I've ever been around.

So you could tell, gave us a little bounce in our step a little bit, but practicing in the Benz was obviously a heck of a thrill, and we've been able to take advantage of every repetition, both run, pass, first, second down, third down, short yardage, goal line. You name it. And I think we've had a great week of preparation.

Yesterday was our last full padded day. So today, we'll take the loads off and bounce around a little bit and make sure we're sharp with our assignments. But really, focus in and getting ready to play this football game.

THE MODERATOR: Starting with you, Chase, tell us, what's your Bowl Week experience been like so far, and what was your favorite event that you've done?

CHASE WINOVICH: My favorite event that we've done so far is maybe possibly back home, actually, was when we went to the local YMCA, a couple of guys,

and just taught the kids about diabetes and the effect that it has on people with that.

If not that, then last night was a blast too, just securing the championship belt, good vibe, and there's actually a video where they turn and you can see the Florida players, and they were pretty upset about it. It was a good feeling.

THE MODERATOR: I will tell you, that's a big deal. The team that wins the belt has gone on to win the game six out of the last eight years. Started out six in a row. So it's definitely momentum builder.

CHASE WINOVICH: Right. You can kind of see, you know, this isn't about Florida, necessarily, just more so about internal reflection about us. We got a great group of competitors and guys that want to compete and want to get better and want to win.

It's kind of the attitude we've had, just with bowl prep and just the season in general and that grittiness. So yeah, it's been -- this whole week has been a blast. This was one of the best bowl trips I've personally been a part of, a hundredth year event, it seems like of this team. But it's been great.

THE MODERATOR: Tyree, what about you? What's been your favorite Bowl Week event so far?

TYREE KINNEL: They've all been great. They've all been fun and exciting. You can tell by the teammates' reactions of who's winning and who's losing. But the thing that I cherished the most was going to the hospital yesterday and seeing the little kids and all their situations.

It kind of brings you back to reality, to life, that it's much bigger than football. Putting a smile on those kids was like the best feeling that I had with my other teammates. To see them like that, to see their families so excited and happy to see us for them.

So that was probably my favorite part of the week.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for that. Khaleke, what about you?

KHALEKE HUDSON: I'd say my favorite part of the

week is actually not an event. It's just being at practice and seeing the young guys step up, guys like, you know, Ambry Thomas and Kwity Paye and them guys. Just seeing them step up into bigger roles, stepping up and being the players everybody knows they can be and just being great people.

I can't wait for this Saturday so we're able to show the world what they're capable of.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Chase, bowl games are always a little bit about looking ahead as well as a reward for the season. But how has the decisions about four players on the team to skip this game, has that -- how much has that created opportunities for other players? Has that added to the look-ahead aspect for you guys?

CHASE WINOVICH: Added to the what? Come again?

Q. To the look-ahead with guys that now have the opportunity to move up into those four spots.

CHASE WINOVICH: Yeah, definitely added to the look-ahead. Coach Harbaugh brought this up. It was kind of like when we first came down here, he just said, like, look around the room. He named a bunch of the fifth-year seniors and seniors that were leaving and said this is going to be our team, like, the guys that are here. This is going to be our team next year.

So yeah, it's already kind of created that look-ahead aspect, where the guys that maybe wouldn't have got as much opportunity in the game are all excited just at the forefront of this team, and their responsibilities are just the same and their expectations are just the same, if not even higher with the added pressure from what happened at Ohio State.

But at the end of the day, it's football, and we're a bunch of football players. That's what we were created to do. Yeah, we take pride of that and we're excited for this opportunity across the board from coaches to players to managers. We're just all in it to win it.

Q. For Coach Brown, and one of the players can elaborate on this. You guys ranked second in total defense. Can you just talk about just your feeling as a coach, being able to rank second and what you can do to further along, possibly get to first. And just for the players, how does it feel to be on a team ranked second in defense?

CHASE WINOVICH: I thought we were first.

DON BROWN: We have high expectations. In '16, we were first. In '17, we were third. So, you know, it's kind

of a rite of passage when we're in a room as a full defense, those expectations don't change. The faces change, coaches, players.

But we all just kind of take our turn representing Michigan the best way we know how and to the best of our ability. And at the end of the day, really, you're just trying to win the next game.

And then after the season, you look up at the end of it and see where you are, evaluate your statistics and how they fit in with where we've got to improve and so forth.

But at the end of the day, each guy knows in that room that expectations are high and best effort has to be guaranteed.

TYREE KINNEL: Like he said, expectation. It's an exciting feeling for yourself, knowing that you're one of the top defenses in the country. It also comes with hard work. It also comes with a team effort. Coach gives us a great game plan every week and the players got to go execute it as best they can.

So it just draws down from practice during the week and executing, and then finalizing it on Saturday in the games. So it's a great feeling to be one of the top defenses in the country.

Q. Coach, Dan Mullen, we told him you hadn't had much crossover. He said, I think, you were at Brown, and he was at Columbia. And they played you. But he wasn't calling plays again. What does he do as a play caller that you've seen on film, and what does he do to maybe hide weaknesses on his offense and how is he calling plays?

DON BROWN: Well, they're a really solid offensive football team. They have two outstanding tailbacks. I think the line is vastly improved from a year ago. Tight end's better. He's a year older.

There is familiarity with us and Florida obviously, so, you know, I think he's done a great job of giving them an identity, you know. They run the ball extremely well, first and second down.

They'll keep you -- usually, on third down, there's a demarcation line. It's usually around third and three, third and four, where he'll mix run and pass all the way up to seven. So, you know, that's a challenge for us, moving forward and making sure that we are making the proper calls so we can defend the run and defend the pass as you're chasing the quarterback around on third down.

So I think he's done a great job of taking advantage of their strengths and the improvement of the quarterback, Franks, is marked. You know, he's done a good job of taking him from Point A to Point B.

Q. Scheme and personnel-wise, do they remind you of anyone you've played this year?

DON BROWN: Indiana, kind of a cross between Indiana -- there's some similarities with Ohio State in the run game because there's some power elements, even out of the one-back set. They'll play some multiple tight end looks, which very similar to Nebraska. So there's some crossover.

We see 10 or 11 spread offenses a year. Now, there's spread offense with a toughness element. There's spread offense with finesse elements. They have a toughness element out of their spread.

So when you combine that with the ability to throw the football around, they do a good job with the screen game and getting the ball out for the quarterback. So there's some definite crossover for us.

THE MODERATOR: I've got a question for the players. Chase, we'll start with you and go down the line.

In looking at your oppositional unit, in looking at their O-line, scheme-wise, how do they match up with your scheme and what do you think you'll be able to exploit in their protection?

CHASE WINOVICH: Well, I'm obviously not going to reveal what we're going to exploit in their protection. But I think more so, just focus on them. I think they definitely improved from the last time we played them, and they're tough and they're a big group of offensive linemen.

I think, just like most teams are, some of these guys, you look at them and say holy cow, just, I don't know, whatever. But yeah, so it's like anybody. Just each individual person, going through this process of scouting, from the offense to defense, everybody has their kind of tendencies of how they like to set, how they disguise their passes. Does this team do max protection? Do they do a lot of play action? How do they create these opportunities?

So that's what it's all about for me is just being able to decipher when it's run and when it's pass and the faster I get acclimated, because most of the time when you're in a game, you can kind of feel it out towards the end.

But like the faster you can get to that level, where you're just playing full speed and you're at your max

play, the better just across the board.

Like I said, their offensive line creates some challenges. I've played both their tackles before, and it's a great opportunity for myself just because of how talented they are and I look forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: Tyree, talk about their receivers. What sort of challenges does that receiving group create for you?

TYREE KINNEL: They're fast. As an offense, as a whole, they seem like they play a lot tougher than they have in the past. So you know they're going to bring their A-game and they're going to play really hard. The receivers give us a challenge because you know they can line up in the backfield. They going to be inside, they going to be outside. They have a lot of options, a lot of deep threats, a lot of short threats. So it's going to be exciting.

I can't wait. I can't wait for Saturday.

THE MODERATOR: Khaleke, what about the tight end group?

KHALEKE HUDSON: Like Coach Brown said, they have great backs, they're fresh, they're powerful. They can do it all. They can catch out the backfield and, you know, it's going to be a fun challenge for us to stop those guys. We're going to come in, we're going to do what we do, and we're going to try to get the win.

The tight end group, they're a lot better than the last time we played them. They move like receivers, they play fast. They improved in blocking and fitting in with their scheme, it's going to be a great game on Saturday. Can't wait.

Q. Chase, what was your favorite post-game interview of the year?

CHASE WINOVICH: I've got a lot of good ones, I'd say. My favorite's probably Michigan State. It kind of sounded like I was learning to speak for a quick sec just because I was so out of breath. But it was actually because I was taking the trophy and just showing it around to the whole stadium.

But yeah, it was probably my favorite one, just because for me, it's like if you knew where I was from and just like my relationships with my friends growing up, you would understand, like, it really wasn't intentional. Had nothing to do with the Michigan State/Michigan rivalry, coming from Pittsburgh. It was just kind of like me messing around with them and razzing them because I knew how upset they'd get.

But I did -- at the same time, they took it way too

personal, I think. It really wasn't meant to be that ill-intentioned is what I'd say on that. It's not an apology. I'm just stating how I feel.

But yeah, that's just kind of how I feel, because any time now these Michigan State guys come at me, the random fans on Twitter and Instagram, I always have to go, Easy there, little brother. Don't get too upset now.

So you always have that card in your pocket. But it's a rivalry game, and emotions and feelings are always going to be intense, and so that was kind of just like my favorite just because we'd just beat them, and it was just a fun day in general.

THE MODERATOR: Khaleke, give us your impressions of Mercedes-Benz Stadium. A lot of people say it's the best stadium in the world. I know it's going to be your first opportunity to play there.

Being in there this week, practicing, getting a feel for it, what do you think it's going to be like? What do you like about it?

KHALEKE HUDSON: I think it's going to be awesome. Just practicing in there, you just get this energy out of nowhere, and just a great feeling just to see the new stadium, how beautiful it is. I think it's probably one of the best stadiums I've been at. I think it's probably tied with AT&T Stadium, because that was a pretty nice stadium.

Overall, Mercedes-Benz Stadium is beautiful. I can't wait to see the environment on game day. I can't wait to get after it.

THE MODERATOR: Tyree?

TYREE KINNEL: As he said, as soon as you walk in, you can feel the energy and the stadium is empty at that moment. I can't wait for Saturday to walk in and it's all filled up and everyone's cheering. Bright lights, big stage. I can't wait.

THE MODERATOR: Chase?

CHASE WINOVICH: I can't wait for the game and the chance to compete. We're competitors. We're looking forward to this. We were born to do this. We were created to play football, and what better stage to do this than this. It's the finest football stadium in America now.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thanks very much.