

CFP Semifinal at the Capital One Orange Bowl: Georgia vs Michigan

Monday, December 27, 2021

Miami Gardens, Florida, USA

Hard Rock Stadium

Georgia Bulldogs Coach Dan Lanning

Press Conference

DAN LANNING: Good morning, everybody. First off, we'd like to thank the Orange Bowl. This has been a fantastic experience for our team and our staff. I think it's been since 1960 since the University of Georgia was here at the Orange Bowl. For me, this is my first time professionally, I know for several of our coaches and staff and players. Coming here is a unique experience. We got in last night, or I guess yesterday afternoon, were able to get settled, and so far everything has been absolutely first class.

I'm really proud of the work our team has done to get here, proud of their preparation here once the season wrapped up and going into the holidays. Our guys are eager and hungry to get back out there on the field together, and certainly excited to see the product that we're able to put on the field here when we hit the field against Michigan.

That being said, we can go ahead and get opened up.

Q. Wanted to ask you about the last game. I know you've been asked about that a lot. I guess what I'm wondering is when you have one bad game out of the season, how does that -- what does that look like when you go back and start reviewing that compared to other games? Is it a back to the drawing board situation, is it just, oh, no, we only need to make a couple of tweaks? When you're recovering from a game where a lot of things didn't go right, what is it like for a coach to dig in on that compared to games where a lot of things went right?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I think you have to approach it like any game that we have had this season where you go back and try to be analytical regardless of the result. We take a deep dive every single game when we're successful, we take a deep dive when we're not, and our approach didn't change after this past game. I think you give a lot of credit where credit is due. They did a great job against us,



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and I think they're left a little bit of hunger there for us to get an opportunity to go back out there and play again.

Q. Dan, is there a wounded pride factor to this, to the defense? Just digging down on this, do you have to address that first, or again, is it all technical?

DAN LANNING: Our guys are excited to compete. I mean, every time we take the field, I don't think it matters if it's practice and we're doing team run against each other or if it's game day. Our guys want to go out there and prove their worth. I think they've done that week in and week out this season, and the fact that we had a hiccup doesn't affect what we want to do going forward. Luckily for us in that game every single one of our goals still stands in front of us, and this opportunity -- there's four teams in the nation that get to go play right now at this level, and I think we recognize that opportunity in front of us and want to go take advantage of it.

Q. Can you just describe what the last few weeks have been like trying to balance the new role and your responsibilities at Georgia and keeping a proper balance? I know you've hired a couple of assistant coaches. How much have you been able to get out to Eugene, if at all?

DAN LANNING: You know, I went out one time initially right after getting hired, and really excited about what we're putting together there. My focus, the good thing, again, West Coast being three hours behind us has given us the opportunity to be able to really focus on Georgia early on during the day, and then later on at night, able to get a lot of things accomplished there with our team in Oregon and our staff as we're piecing that together.

Q. Dan, we all know what's going on in the world right now with the virus numbers, of course. We're seeing some bowl games unable to go forward. You guys are here to be safe, but also it's a bowl game; you want the kids to have an experience. How important is that balance, that you have the beach outing and team dinners and stuff like that? How important is that even at a time like this to give the kids that bowl experience?

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DAN LANNING: You know, ultimately I think every one of our kids if you asked them would tell you that we came here for one purpose, but I'll say this. I've got a tremendous amount of respect for our medical staff. Ron Courson and his staff and the precautions they've taken to prepare our kids. I also give our players a lot of credit for how diligent they've been on taking proper precautions, whether it be wearing the masks through the hotel or when they're out and about. But we came here to win a football game, and we're excited about everything that the Orange Bowl does for our players, but there's no secret what we came here for.

Q. Dan, when you look at Michigan and their offensive line and what they do with their running backs, what type of challenge do they present that might be a little bit different than what you've seen this season?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, Michigan plays football. You've got to give Coach Harbaugh and Coach Gattis credit, with the way they have running backs that can run the ball. They use tight ends like a lot of people don't use tight ends today, in some ways similar to what our offense does. They run hard mouth, smashmouth football plays. They demand some physicality up front, which I know we're excited to see, and then they have the ability to attack you downfield. I just think they show tremendous balance in the way they prepare, in the way they play the game, and it's going to be a physical football game, which I know we certainly appreciate.

Q. Cade McNamara has a very interesting throwing motion for a quarterback, sort of that side arm, almost like a shot put type of delivery. Have you seen that before with a quarterback and does that present a different challenge for your guys who are trying to disrupt passing lanes and stuff like that?

DAN LANNING: For us schematically I don't think we change a lot of how we attack that, but I do think he has an extremely quick release. That shows up on film. He's very accurate with the way he delivers the ball and the fact that he can release it from different passing angles is unique. Always for us there's going to be an emphasis in trying to affect the passer and what that looks like can be different based on each game, but for him that's no different for us. We want to be able to get our hands up, get in passing lanes. We want to be able to close to him and create some tough throws and we want to make sure he has to throw into tight windows. But he's shown that he can do that.

He is going to give us an opportunity. We have to go out there and play our best to be able to stop that.

Q. Two-part question here. One, Michigan does profile as a power team and yet they have all these explosive plays over 50, 60 and 70 yards. Can you explain that paradox? And two, what was it like when Will slid into the secondary and what was it like working with Coach Muschamp back there on defense?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, absolutely. First starting off with the explosive plays, I think what you'll see is they're very creative on offense with what they do and they do a great job attacking poor eye discipline. There's multiple plays they use to set up the next play whether it be play-action runs to set up play-action shots downfield, whether it be their misdirection game with reverses, flea flickers. They do a great job utilizing trick plays to get the ball down, extend it down the field as well as those shots.

To answer the second part of your question, Coach Muschamp has been invaluable to us just from an experience standpoint. I think he does a good job of communicating with our players. I know our guys really love being coached by Will. I certainly love having him in the room. He's been a good guy for me to be able to lean on and our coaching staff to be able to lean on with his experience, and just with his demeanor and his approach every day, the way he comes to work. It's been fun to be around.

Q. Probably the craziest thing about that SEC championship game when I look at it is zero sacks. That was certainly not you guys' MO at all this year. Was that a product of scheme do you think, or was that more of just what Alabama was able to do on the offensive line, and how different is it going to be, is that necessary when playing somebody like Michigan?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I mean, always you want to be able to affect the passer, like I said before. I think it's a combination. They did a great job doing some things different schematically and then obviously they have a quarterback back there that's elusive and able to run, created some opportunities that made it hard for us to get him down.

Several close calls that we weren't able to finish on, so certainly been a point of emphasis for us moving forward and something we want to be able to take advantage of in this game. They're a good offensive line. They do a good job protecting the quarterback, so we have to try to find unique ways to create that pass rush.

Q. In terms of the defense for this game, what is different about the operation of the coaching staff wise, given that your plate has been full, and in the

lead-up to the game, the game planning and who will call the plays Friday night?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, our approach will be very similar to what it's been all season. Nothing is really going to change from the way we operate. Luckily with bowl prep there is a lot more time. There is a lot of time to be able to get ready, and I think a lot of times people make the mistake of trying to do too much in a shortened window.

We'll operate very similar to the way we've operated all season, I'll still be making the calls, but every single one of our defensive coaches have been extremely involved throughout the week, throughout our preparation, and this has been a team effort. It's been a team effort all season. That doesn't change for just this one game, whether it be Coach Smart's involvement, Coach Schumann, Coach Scott, Coach Addae, Coach Muschamp, there's a lot of hats and there's a brain trust that kind of goes into how we operate, and our players are involved in that. So everything is going to be operating like it has all season.

Q. What has Hassan Haskins done to get cooking lately, seven touchdowns his final two games, and have you broken down a meeting by saying Go Ducks instead of Go Dawgs?

DAN LANNING: No meetings here have been broken down like that, no. Great question. Hassan and really their whole backfield, those guys are extremely physical. They run tough. I know for us personally we've shown a lot of film of these guys breaking tackles, and the way they run, they run hard. Very rarely are they running to avoid contact. They're running to create contact. I think that shows up in the way that they play week in and week out, but they have a real disciplined approach. They're going to make sure they emphasize running the ball, and that's shown up a lot with Hassan and all their running backs.

Q. You mentioned how they attack eye discipline. How would you say that your guys' eye discipline has been, and how do you coach that?

DAN LANNING: I think you just have to re-create as much of that as possible within practice and walk throughs and film study. Our players take a tremendous amount of pride in doing their jobs and doing it correctly, but you have to recreate some of those tough moments, some of those conflict plays within practice, and you have to work setup plays in practice to set up a tougher play throughout the game.

I would say at the end of the day our guys have been really solid all season from an eye discipline standpoint. Certainly there's some moments we feel like we could be a

lot better, but we challenge ourselves to try to make practice harder than the game, and we've been able to do that for the most part this season.

Q. Wanted to ask you about Glenn Schumann and how he has grown as a coach over your time together at Georgia, especially with him already having the co-defensive coordinator role?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, Glenn is a phenomenal coach. He's also a great friend. He cares about his players tremendously. They have a huge amount of respect for Glenn and the way he works day in and day out. He's a diligent worker. He's extremely smart. He's somebody that I've leaned on my entire time here at Georgia just because I have a lot of respect for how Glenn handles himself. He's obviously extremely intelligent and does a great job of helping us game plan and create opportunities for our players.

He's grown every single year as a coach. I think that's one of the things that's unique about this environment is coaches have developed this setup here where people can grow. We're lifelong learners in this group, and Glenn is certainly an example of that.

Q. I'll ask you about Chris Smith just real quick. I know he was banged up from the SEC championship game. How much has the three weeks off allowed him to maybe get back to his old self, and the star position, is this a game where maybe Latavious Brini is brought back to fold? It seems like this more suits his style of play?

DAN LANNING: Yeah, I think the time off in general for all of our players, including Chris, has been very beneficial from a recovery standpoint. Our guys have been really working hard in the training room to accelerate some of that recovery, and I know going into this game that both Poole and Brini both are attacking this thing ready to go play and go get to work, so excited to see what both those guys are able to do.

Q. You mentioned the time difference in the West Coast; how late are you working if you're keeping the Oregon work to the second half of the day?

DAN LANNING: You know, I don't clock in and clock out. We work until the work is done. Sometimes that's later than other nights. We've had a couple late nights, but no lack of energy or ability to roll here. I'm excited about the opportunity obviously out there, tremendous opportunity, but our players and coaches here have done a great job of affording me that opportunity, so I'm not going to do a disservice to our guys by not finishing this the right way

and the effort that I've put in to what we've done here.

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