

# Southeastern Conference Football Championship Game: Florida vs Alabama

Sunday, December 20, 2020

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

## Nick Saban

Alabama Crimson Tide

Alabama 52, Florida 46

NICK SABAN: Really proud of our team for the way they competed in the game. I think I'm really proud of our team for the way they competed all year long. This has been a year of lots of disruptions, a lot of abnormal things happening. The resiliency that our team has shown throughout the season to win 11 games is pretty phenomenal. I think it speaks to the togetherness on the team, everybody sort of buying in, trying to do the things they needed to do to contribute to the team.

The game tonight was we found a way to win. I knew it was going to be a tough matchup with Florida because of No. 84 and No. 1 are really good players, tough guys to cover. They certainly hurt us. We couldn't get the stops on defense on third down that we needed to to get off the field. They ended up scoring a lot of points.

I have to give our offense a lot of credit. They answered the bell pretty consistently in the game, over 600 yards, Smitty had 15 catches, Najee scored five touchdowns, had 178 yards rushing, caught five passes. These guys were pretty phenomenal all year. They certainly delivered tonight when we needed them to.

This is a great team win. Really, really proud of our players. I really love this team. What we've had to kind of go through all season long, to me this is great for our fans, great for the state of Alabama. We're just excited.

I think winning the SEC is really, really a significant thing to me, always has been. I certainly appreciate the coaches and everybody who contributed to developing and helping this team have success this year. Our coaching staff did a phenomenal job. We have a great support staff, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. What is the latest on Landon Dickerson?**



NICK SABAN: He has a knee injury. We don't know the extent of it. We'll do an MRI tomorrow and find out. It's pretty serious, I think, but we don't know for sure how serious.

**Q. You talked about all the challenges that this year presented for your team. Some of your guys haven't been home. What does that say about the maturity and unselfishness of your team? How much of a pleasure has it been for you to coach them?**

NICK SABAN: I think that unselfishness and everybody trying to contribute in a positive way, whatever their role is, has really been heartfelt to me. That's why I enjoy this team so much. I've enjoyed this team all year long.

We found a way to win. I think the relentless sort of competitive spirit that this team has is something that you don't really make or develop. It's just the kind of people that they are. We're really, really pleased and happy that they're going to get rewarded for this. They accomplished something significant that they'll remember the rest of their life.

I mean, you win the SEC championship, you came back 25 years later and show your kids, I was on that team. You can also show them the ring you get for doing it. So I'm very, very happy this team is going to get that kind of positive reinforcement for their efforts this year.

**Q. What does it say with the Florida team, coming out in the second half, really pushing back?**

NICK SABAN: I fully expected that is exactly what would happen in the game. These guys have too much talent on their team on offense, with their quarterback who does a fabulous job. They have a really good receiving corps. 84 and 1 are really serious mismatch players. Both guys had phenomenal games tonight. Then when we do get them guarded, you get pass interference because they're so big, it's just hard to play.

So I can't say enough good things about their team. They certainly showed a lot of competitive character to come



back in the game, keep fighting to get back in the game, give themselves a chance to win.

They were an on-side kick away from having a chance to win.

**Q. Time of possession, you really controlled the pace. I know for Florida it was really fast. Was that the game plan coming in, to try to slow them down?**

NICK SABAN: We wanted to control the tempo of the game on offense. We knew time of possession would be really, really important. They have a good offense. We have a good offense.

I knew that if we were going to have a chance to win this game, we were going to have to really control the ball on offense, control the tempo of the game, and score points. Even when Florida has lost two games this year, they scored points. 38 and 34 or whatever.

You have to know when you come in to play these guys that you're going to have to score points to win.

**Q. We saw the team rally behind Landon. What does that say about the team and what he means to these guys as a player and person?**

NICK SABAN: I think he's probably one of the most popular guys on our team. He has great leadership qualities. His impact can affect guys in a positive way. He's got a great personality. I don't know anybody on our team that doesn't really like him.

I think that was demonstrated by how everybody reacted to him getting injured.

**Q. Did Najee come to Alabama with those receiving skills out of background?**

NICK SABAN: Najee is a really good receiver. He always has been a really good receiver. I think he's worked really hard to fine tune his game as a receiver, learn how to run routes out of the backfield, option routes, different things to get open.

I think he's gotten very, very good at that kind of stuff. I think our coaches have done a good job of helping him.

**Q. The play that John made, forcing the fumble, getting the ball back to your offense, talk about his competitive character?**

NICK SABAN: That was a great play, no doubt. I mean, not a great play for us, for them to get an interception. But

for guys to keep hustling. We do every day for the first five minutes of practice, we do maybe eight or nine different sort of take-care-of-the-ball-type drills.

He's always on the other end of that. We do circle chase, we do midline, we do stumble bum, stiff arm. He knows exactly what the defensive players are trying to do to get the ball out because we do it every day.

He's the other guy, all right? Tonight he had a chance to strip it out. I'm sure that those experiences of working every day against the defensive players, trying to get it out on him, was where he got the idea of how to get it out.

But it was a big play in the game. We were down in the red zone. When you turn it over down there, it's a double whammy lots of times. So to get the ball back was really important. Then to be able to score was huge because we stayed two scores ahead in the game until the end of the game. That was critical against a good Florida offensive team.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you.

NICK SABAN: I'd like to thank everybody. You guys have done a really good job of promoting our players this year, giving them a lot of positive self-gratification for their efforts. I know they appreciate it. We certainly appreciate it from a program and team standpoint.

You are kind of the conduit to the public in terms of the players, the teams. I think the interest you create is really significant, and appreciate it. Thank you.

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