

Southeastern Conference Football Championship Game: Georgia vs Alabama

Sunday, November 28, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Alabama Crimson Tide Nick Saban

Workout Day Press Conference

CHUCK DUNLAP: We're now ready to continue with Coach Saban. Thanks for being with us this afternoon. As we wait on questions, can you please comment on your team as you prepare to face Georgia in the SEC Championship next Saturday in Atlanta.

NICK SABAN: First of all, the SEC Championship Game is a great competitive venue. The environment is outstanding. It's a great college football atmosphere. This is one of those games that you work all year to have the opportunity to play in.

Georgia has been the No. 1 team in the country for good reason. They're probably the most consistent, most dominant team week in and week out. So obviously going to be our biggest challenge, toughest test of the year.

Take a lot of quality work this week, attention to detail, good preparation, and do the best we can against an outstanding team, both sides of the ball and on special teams. These guys score a lot of points. They can run the ball. They can make big plays passing it, and their defense is No. 1 in the nation. So that kind of speaks for itself.

Q. I'm just wondering if you had an update on Brian Robinson. We saw he left the game after his 37-yard run and didn't come back.

NICK SABAN: He has a lower body pulled muscle. We'll kind of see how he progresses during the course of the week and see where he's at. I can't tell you any more than that right now. We'll just kind of see how he progresses during the course of the week.

Q. Coach, obviously you guys played a strenuous game last night, and Georgia finished up early on the day. You're very experienced in this game and in playoff games. Does that matter a week ahead of time,



recovery time? Can that make a difference in even a miniscule amount, in your opinion?

NICK SABAN: You know, you never know how players are going to respond to those types of things. I think it would be difficult to say. We certainly don't view it as an advantage or a disadvantage. We all had to play games yesterday. Our teams had to prepare for them. We've got to go through the process of getting ready for the next game.

I think the players are sort of used to playing day games, night games, night games on the road, getting home at 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning and having to play the next week. These guys are young, so they've got plenty of time to recover.

I think probably psychologically it's probably more important in terms of how you look at what's coming up. I think sometimes that can get affected by the last game. But hopefully, given the opportunity to play the No. 1 team in the country, our players will look at it like a real challenge.

Q. You've had some dominant nose guards and defensive tackles in your stint there at Alabama. When you look at Jordan Davis, what stands out to you?

NICK SABAN: I mean, I think the guy is one of the most dominant players in college football. Any defensive lineman, I guess you can look at a lot of things, but the number one thing is how hard are they to block? And he's really hard to block. He's got great size. He's very powerful, but he's got really good initial quickness, short area quickness, and can push the pocket and pass rush.

He's about as good a player as I've seen for a long time as an inside player on any college football team.

Q. Obviously, Alabama's had some success with Georgia the last few years. Is there carryover? Can your team gain any confidence from last year's game, or do you think there's any momentum that comes from that experience of playing Georgia?



NICK SABAN: No. I think that's what's happened in the past in games really doesn't have a lot of impact on what happens in the future. I think that you've got to line up and play well in this game. What happened last year doesn't matter. What happened the year before that doesn't matter. You've got to play well in this game. So that's the challenge that we all have.

Q. Over the course of the season, you guys have dealt with some adversity in different ways. Of course a lot last night. How have you seen your team grow when it comes to facing adversity through the season?

NICK SABAN: I would say the way they faced it last night, the resiliency that they showed, making plays in critical situations in the game, not giving up in the game, defense making critical stops, getting the ball back in the four-minute situation. Giving our offense a chance to score, and then the offense making the plays they needed to make to tie the game up. A lot of adversity in and of itself in the game last night.

I think the players, it wasn't always pretty. We didn't always execute perfectly. But we were able to make the plays we needed to make to get back in the game and eventually have success in the overtime.

Over the course of the season, I think sometimes when things have gone poorly, players have responded very well, but I also think that it's something that you need to do on a consistent basis. Because sometimes you create your own adversity by not executing or making mental errors and thing that you do puts you in the situation that you're in. It's great to have the resiliency to overcome it, but you'd like to be able to sustain with consistency so you don't get in those situations.

Q. Kind of an adversity question. You've gone down double digits. Obviously you did it yesterday, even against Texas A&M. I know the past games against Georgia don't matter, but you've gone down double digits against them when you faced them in Atlanta. What is the key -- I know you don't go out with that being the goal. But what is the key when things don't go your way and you're down double digits? Is it composure? Is it adjustments? What is the biggest key at that point when you do go down double digits?

NICK SABAN: It's probably a combination of all the things that you mentioned. I also think you've got to have -- the players have to have the right mindset to keep playing. Play the next play, try to win the next play. Everybody do that. Keep your poise. Make the adjustments that we need to make and just keep playing the next play and don't look at the scoreboard and look at it like I'm going to play

different when I'm 14 points behind and I'm going to play different when I'm 14 points ahead.

Because really you should be trying to do the best you can in every one of those scenarios. So just keep playing the next play. That's something that we really try to get our players to sort of have the mindset to -- that's how you compete in the game. Keep focusing on what you need to do to get the result and do it one play at a time.

Q. Also want to add just a quick recruiting follow. The other teams in the league, except for you and Georgia, can be out and about recruiting this week. Is that something that bothers you that other teams are out there doing that, or does the magnitude and exposure of this game outweigh that given that everybody wants to be in this game?

NICK SABAN: I think it goes both ways. I think your point about the magnitude of the game helps your exposure is something that's significant in recruiting. Relationships are significant in recruiting. We both have to postpone those things for a week. I don't know if that's significant. It probably depends on the player.

Q. Is there anyone in Georgia that sticks out to you, other than Jordan Davis, as someone who's given you an issue to deal with?

NICK SABAN: I think the fact that they've got like nine different players that have 4 1/2 tackles for a loss. One guy has 8 1/2. They've got five different players that have multiple sacks. There's nine different players that have at least two sacks. So there's a lot of issues.

They're well coached. They've got a good scheme. The players do a good job of executing it. They've got good linebackers. They've got good front people. They're aggressive in the secondary.

This is not a one-man wrecking crew. This is a really, really good group of players who play well together. There's multiple players that have ability to make plays.

Q. We didn't see Jalyn Armour-Davis last night. Do you have an update on him?

NICK SABAN: He had a little hip injury and wasn't full speed. So we'll see how he responds this week and see if he can be able to play in this game. That's something that will be kind of day to day as well.

Q. And a quick follow-up. You mentioned Brian Robinson earlier. How did you think Trey Sanders kind of stepped in and filled the void for him in the

fourth quarter in overtime?

NICK SABAN: He did a good job. He did a nice job with catching the ball. He did a good job in block protection, especially on some critical passing situations. When they blitzed, he made great pickups and ran the ball fairly effectively. So we were pleased.

Q. Just after watching the film, what did you think of the offensive line in terms of the sacks that were allowed and some of the rushing yards in the first half?

NICK SABAN: Obviously, it wasn't very good. We didn't do a very good job of pass blocking. We didn't do a very good job of finishing blocks on the running plays. So it's pretty obviously to everybody that we didn't execute very well.

Did a much better job in the second half, I think. Wasn't always perfect, but much, much better. I think some of the adjustments that we made were a little better for them to execute relative to the way Auburn was playing us.

So we made some improvement during the game, but it wasn't very good in the first half.

Q. I think you all threw for 417 yards last year against Georgia. What stands out about how they're holding up this year against the pass?

NICK SABAN: To me they've got some really good rushers up front. They do a great job of pressuring the quarterback. They've got really good scheme in terms of how they pressure the quarterback. They mix up the coverages in the back end quite a bit.

They've been very effective with the way they play pass defense all year long. So it's going to be very challenging for us. It's not just about throwing the ball. It's about protecting, whether it's man to man, zone, reading it, throwing the ball to the right guys. There's a lot of things that go with that.

When we play the best, we have some kind of balance on offense, which really wasn't the case last night. So it's going to be important for us to be able to create that as well.

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