

# Southeastern Conference Football Championship Game: LSU vs Georgia

Saturday, December 3, 2022

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

**LSU Tigers**

**Brian Kelly**

**Mekhi Wingo**

**Malik Nabers**

Press Conference

Georgia - 50, LSU - 30

THE MODERATOR: Coach, give us a recap of the game.

BRIAN KELLY: Congratulations to Kirby Smart and the University of Georgia of being the SEC champs. They were the better football team today. Proud of my team. Proud of the fight that they gave today. We were just a little short.

Some key plays obviously in the game were pivotal. Obviously the special teams play early. Inability to get off the field on third down. Fourth down, a couple opportunities that we had to convert.

In its totality, you're talking about five or six plays where, look, could have, would have, should have, right? The best team won today. I love the way our guys competed. They fought. That's who they are. That's the identity of this team all year.

Unfortunately we were not clean enough in some of those areas against the No. 1 team in the country. When you're playing the best team in the country for an SEC championship, those things are going to come back and affect the outcome.

But as I told them in the locker room, we've got a great foundation. It's a young football team that will take this lesson and build off of it.

So excited to have the opportunity to coach 'em.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach Kelly or the



players.

**Q. Coach, on the blocked field goal early, do you feel like your guys weren't coached on that? They got confused?**

BRIAN KELLY: Obviously we did a poor job coaching. It's our responsibility to have our guys alert in that situation. They were not alert. That falls on coaching. That falls on my shoulders. I take full responsibility for that.

**Q. Mekhi, the fight that you guys showed in this game, obviously getting down early, the situation with the quarterback going out, Garrett stepping in, the ability to fight through that to show who you have been. What are you going to take away from this game?**

MEKHI WINGO: I would say I'm glad the team fought. That's what we've done all year. We've had multiple comebacks. Just different things. I'm proud of the team. I'm happy to go to war with these guys any day.

I will say we just fell back on our traits, who we were. We're a team that fight.

MALIK NABERS: Obviously how we looked at it didn't matter. Quarterback came in. There were just plays to be made on the field. I feel like Garrett gave us opportunities to make plays on the field and we did it in the second half.

I was very proud of the offense that we didn't give up, we kept striving and putting plays together.

**Q. Brian, Jayden, was he limited coming into the game or did something happen within the game that made his ankle injury seem to get more aggravated?**

BRIAN KELLY: No, I thought he started off really well. He was throwing the ball accurate. The early drive, obviously. He looked good, poised in the pocket.

It was second quarter, when he stepped up in the pocket, he got rolled up on. It was a reinjury, reinjured the ankle that had been injured.



But, no, I think he felt good, looked good. Our assessment was that he was moving the team in the manner that we wanted him to. It was just a matter of getting rolled up again.

**Q. Mekhi, what was it like going against that Georgia offensive line and that run game, how they kind of attacked y'all?**

MEKHI WINGO: I mean, it's a challenge every single week playing in the SEC going against good O-lines. We've played a great running back almost every week. It was just another bump in the road for us. Same preparation throughout the week. We got to fall back on our traits and do what we do, and everything will fall in line.

**Q. Coach, were you surprised they went for two to make it 50 in the fourth?**

BRIAN KELLY: Not really. I don't get too caught up in what other teams are doing. It's not my job. It's my job to stop 'em, not to figure out whether they should go for two or not.

No, I really didn't give it much thought.

**Q. Brian, you talk about not playing clean today. Was this also an illustration of how far this team needs to evolve? Do you see them being at a different level where you guys need to be?**

BRIAN KELLY: Not really. I mean, look, I'm not going to sit here and say would have, could have, should have, like I said in my opening comments.

If we just do a little bit better job on a field goal situation, take 7 off the board, it's 43 points, maybe we convert that, it's 37. You got a one-score game, you know what I mean? Now you got a one-score game going into the fourth quarter, we get stopped on fourth and inches, that's a pretty close game.

The divide is not huge, but we got work to do. As I told our guys. It's 24/7. It's not just on the field. It's how we do things away from the building. It's every day in the classroom, in the community, all the little things that are going to allow us to be more aware and to be better communicators and have an attention to detail in all those areas.

We got to continue to develop our football team. This foundation is really strong, and we'll be able to continue to build on it.

But I don't believe that the gap is something that we can't

continue to close and get back here again next year. That will be our goal, to get back here and to win it.

**Q. Malik, the pass game, with both quarterbacks was working, what specifically were y'all doing well in this game?**

MALIK NABERS: You know, it was just our guys just playing, being better than other people, just pushing the ball down the field, creating matchups with speed guys, other guys in the cornerback position.

I feel like Garrett gave us opportunities down the field, trusting us to make plays. We came out and made those plays.

**Q. Brian, about Garrett's play today, some good and some bad.**

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, he did some really good things. He's called upon to come in and be aggressive, which he was. For a guy that's coming in off not playing a lot of football, really pleased.

Look, there's a learning experience out there. There's some throws that obviously he'd like to have back. Look, he's got a quarterback mentality that he wants to be aggressive. As Malik said, he's pushing the ball down the field, giving these guys a chance to make some plays down the field, and they did.

Sometimes there are plays where they're 50/50 balls, but he gives them a chance to make some plays. He did a nice job with that.

**Q. Coach, the next couple weeks, obviously you're focused on recruiting, but internally with this team, what are the goals that you have?**

BRIAN KELLY: Well, they got exams. They got to take care of their academics. So, first and foremost, academics. We'll give them a chance to rest up a little bit, get them in the training room, some weight training. We have our end-of-the-year banquet where we're going to celebrate our seniors on Sunday, thank them for what they've contributed to an SEC West championship.

We'll do exit meetings with our players, what they've done well, what we can do better as we look forwards another game, as well. We'll practice next week.

Again, there are other things that are as important as recruiting, and that is your team. We're not going to rush off and forget about our players and the development of our players at this very crucial time, as well.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**Q. Jayden playing through that in the second quarter, particularly the last drive, what did that tell you about him?**

MALIK NABERS: I feel like that tells me that he's passionate about playing the game of football for this team. He's a fighter. He came in here with a bump on his ankle, but he just never backed down through practice or anything. He just kept fighting.

To say that he fought through three quarters of play against the No. 1 team on a bum ankle shows that he's a pretty strong player.

**Q. Speaking for the team, the idea of looking forward towards a bowl game, the end of the season didn't finish the way you wanted it to, but you have one game left. What are your thoughts?**

MEKHI WINGO: I would say we just want to finish off the right way, get back to it, back to our process, going at it in the weight room, working hard, practicing, paying attention to the smaller details. Just end the season on a good note, send the seniors out right.

MALIK NABERS: Like Coach Kelly told us when we were talking, going out on a winning season, not a three-game losing streak. That's all I would say.

**Q. Coach, I think before the Texas A&M game, you won every November game for five seasons straight.**

BRIAN KELLY: That's correct.

**Q. What is the approach here across the next month, the off-season, to not let the final two games here take anything away from what you accomplished?**

BRIAN KELLY: Well, I don't think there's anything that can take away from what this team accomplished on the field relative to winning an SEC West championship. They won that on the field.

What I think it does is it brings into light clearly the progress that we've made and the things that we have to continue to work on.

I think for everybody, it clearly defines who we want to be and that we're not there yet. That's okay. You know, that's okay. We're not happy that we're not the SEC champs. That's not what we wanted today. We wanted to win this game. But we know where we're at.

We've clearly talked about what we need to do to be the

SEC champs. That's okay. We need to go to work and get better at the things necessary for us to be better collectively, individually and as a football program.

THE MODERATOR: Coach and guys, thank you very much. Appreciate your time.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

