

# Southeastern Conference Football Championship Game: Alabama vs Georgia

Monday, November 27, 2023

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

## Alabama Crimson Tide Deontae Lawson

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Deontae, please take a moment to give us your general thoughts on the upcoming game against Georgia.

DEONTAE LAWSON: Yeah, I think it's going to be a great atmosphere. This is always the type of game that you want to play in growing up, and I think it's going to be a challenge for us as a team, and we love that.

**Q. If you go back to the Texas game and the South Florida game, there would be a whole lot of people that would think that Alabama would not be where it is right now. Where do you think kind of turned things around for you guys?**

DEONTAE LAWSON: Yeah, I think we just started to come together and know it goes back to our training and just trying to practice the best way we can so we can perform well in the game.

I think that just goes back to how we practice.

**Q. How difficult is it defending Jalen Milroe in practice, and have there been some examples where he's left you flat-footed before in the open field?**

DEONTAE LAWSON: Oh, yes, sir, no doubt, all the time. Jalen Milroe, he's very elusive, and he's also explosive. He's stronger than most people think, and he can make you miss. Yeah, there's plenty of times that he kind of just outran me, but it's always good competing against him.

**Q. What's unique about Georgia's running game, and have you played against a team of that caliber and that style of run game?**

DEONTAE LAWSON: Yeah, they've got a big offensive line. They block together to create lanes for the backs.



They also have great backs that can make the yards after contact and just make the plays.

I think our offensive line has really helped us throughout the year just on stopping the run, just on how we practice on those days, and we're looking forward to the challenge that we have coming up ahead.

**Q. You mentioned your offensive line; how have they improved throughout the season, better pass blocking and opening up holes for the running backs?**

DEONTAE LAWSON: Yeah, I think the communication got a lot better. That was a big thing for them with some new guys that we had that had to step up. I think that's just the big thing for them, just being able to communicate, and they're doing that at an elite level right now.

**Q. You mentioned going against Milroe in practice and his athletic ability and all that. Was there ever early on in the season when you guys were struggling a little bit, and of course he didn't play in the one game, did you ever doubt that he would be a success, and also could you speak to kind of the -- he seems to sort of have that infectious ability to impact the team just with his attitude, his big smile, just that infectious ability to be a leader. Could you talk a little bit about that, as well.**

DEONTAE LAWSON: Yes, sir. Jalen Milroe is a guy I came in with. I never doubted J-Mill even after the Texas game we lost. I kind of met with him alone and just told him I believe in him and just keep having faith and you will be the guy.

But yeah, his leadership is unmatched. He's just a great teammate. His personality is great. He's always smiling, always getting people in better moods.

But when it's time to work, he's serious about his business, and he prepares like no one else. I think that's what makes him elite.

**Q. Could you also kind of just speak to the magnitude of this game, playing in an SEC Championship, playing**



**against a team like Georgia that's on such an incredible streak, just the bigness, really, of this game?**

DEONTAE LAWSON: Yes, sir. We all know this is a big game. This is championship week. This is one of our goals that we had coming up for the season. This is something you dream of as a kid.

We've just got to do what we've got to do throughout the week and prepare the right way so that we can execute on Saturday.

**Q. You guys have obviously been playing really good ball. I think Kirby Smart said today he thought you were playing as well as anybody in the country, maybe better. I can't remember his exact words. Has it been frustrating to look at those College Football Playoff standings and kind of be stuck behind a team you played in week 2 or week 3 and lost to? Is there a thought that you've got to win impressively to make sure you get in the playoff?**

DEONTAE LAWSON: You know, we just try to control what we can control, just keep on week in and week out and just trying our best to win the game and dominate our opponent.

I think that's just been our focus from the start of the season, just keep doing what we can and control what we can control, and everything will work itself out.

**Q. To follow up on that, a lot of people have said you guys are a different team and you're playing better. How confident are you guys you would beat that team if you got a second chance? How much better are you now than when you played Texas?**

DEONTAE LAWSON: Yeah, I think our confidence as a team has grown tremendously. Just the way we've improved and how we came together as a team is pretty unique. We think we are a dangerous team, so that's always good, and we've just got to keep doing what we're doing, keep practicing hard, keep preparing the right way, and we'll be good.

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