

Southeastern Conference Football Championship Game: Georgia vs Alabama

Saturday, December 4, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Georgia Bulldogs

Nolan Smith

Postgame Press Conference



Alabama 41, Georgia 24

Q. Nolan, was this a game that kind of exposed you all as a defense? What went wrong, and what do you need to fix?

NOLAN SMITH: First, I want to start off by saying good evening to everybody. Hope you all had a great Saturday.

Really just explosives. Explosive plays, and that's on us. That's on us up front not hitting home, and it's just really on all of us, as we've got to be more in tune to they came out with a great plan and they hit some explosives, and we didn't.

They were the better team on this Saturday. In the SEC, you've got to bring it every Saturday, like I always said. They just had a great plan, and they brought it more than us.

Q. This is a team that had a lot of sacks coming into the season, a lot of tackles for a loss. Alabama kept you all from knocking them down behind the line of scrimmage. How much did that surprise you, the fact that you weren't able to get more plays like that?

NOLAN SMITH: Again, they had a really good scheme. They did a lot of naked, boots. They did a lot of quick passes and stuff like that. He made great calls in the protection. He slid the front, and obviously they knew what we were doing. Sometimes they didn't.

I mean, we've just got to hit home. The quarterback had a good game. As a pass rusher, it's on me to affect the quarterback.

Q. Nolan, I just wanted to ask you just about Alabama's drives, the rhythm they got into. I think

they scored on five series in a row. Was there some disbelief in your huddle? I mean, you guys have been so dominant all season long. What was that like on the field when that onslaught was happening there in the second and third quarters?

NOLAN SMITH: I really think it wasn't a mindset. We had a bust, and then they hit explosive plays. He threw the ball in the right place at the right time. Guys made plays on their team, and they just had a better game plan than us this Saturday.

We've got to go back to the drawing board and get a new plan and pick out our weaknesses. That's all on the defense as a whole. 31 points, that's just not the Georgia way. That's just unacceptable. They scored a lot of points today.

Q. Odds are you're still in the playoffs and all. As a team leader, what do you tell the team and the other guys to really kind of attack that as, hey, we've still got a lot to play for?

NOLAN SMITH: If it didn't hurt you, if you didn't feel the pain of not holding a trophy or getting a ring for this, then you shouldn't be on our team. That should drive you all to more. Losing this game, and Coach Smart said it the best, it's a wakeup call. We've got to bring it every Saturday, and we've got to take what's ours, and nothing's going to be given to us.

Q. Nolan, are you surprised on any level? Because you don't know. You know what Alabama can do. You're preparing for it, but nobody's done the type of things they've done against you. On any level, are you surprised? Coming out of this, what are your thoughts on Bryce Young?

NOLAN SMITH: I played him in high school, and I knew he was a big, elusive guy, and I needed to get him on the ground. Sometimes I missed some opportunities, and I caused some bad throws. We've got to sack the quarterback. He's a great quarterback, and he moves around the pocket very well. He knows his escape lanes, and he knows how to place the ball and where to place it.

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I mean, I thought their game plan was excellent. It was really good. They had a lot of plays drawn up for us and a lot of plays drawn up for what we do.

Q. Nolan, when you look at that first quarter, you shut them out, and you all go up 10-0. Then all of a sudden, their big plays start. What's it like getting over on the sidelines when they're hitting those three-play, 75-yard drives? What are you trying to do on the sideline at that point?

NOLAN SMITH: Keep our composure. That's always the No. 1 thing to do is keep your composure and try to get the guys going. Rally the guys around you and say we're good. Everything's going to be okay. We made some mistakes, and that's on all of us, all 11 of us on the field. That's not on one person.

We don't point fingers. Like Ladd was saying, we're one team. That's on all of us, and we've got to go back and get back to the drawing board and fix it.

Q. This is a very, very proud defense. How much does a game like this damage that pride?

NOLAN SMITH: I wouldn't say it damaged it at all. We either elite or we're not. We weren't elite this game. We've got to get back to the drawing board. It's just that simple. It's not about having pride. It's about having pride in the G. We wear a G on the chest for something bigger than us. That's what I tell the guys. We wear it for the state of Georgia. We play defense for the state of Georgia. That's how we go out every game, and we're going to continue to go out every game like that.

Q. It's unusual you get three weeks after a game to prepare for the next one, but how unique is that after a loss? How do you guys spin these next three weeks making sure it doesn't happen again?

NOLAN SMITH: We get better. We go to the doctor, like we always say. Even with the Kentucky game, when a lot of guys were hitting us on QB draws and strings and stuff, we got to go to the doctor and fix that, and we've got to go to the doctor and fix this.

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