

Southeastern Conference Football Championship Game: LSU vs Georgia

Monday, November 28, 2022

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Georgia Bulldogs

Chris Smith

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to today's SEC football championship media teleconference with student-athletes. This is Ben Beaty at the SEC office in Birmingham.

We begin the call with Georgia's Chris Smith. If you have a question for Chris...

Q. What has it meant to you to play in the SEC championship games in the past? I know whenever the sport expands the Playoffs to 12, you'll be long gone, but that said, I'm wondering if you have any thoughts on how that change might affect the stakes and the excitement of conference championships, if at all?

CHRIS SMITH: Well, first, it's definitely always great to be able to compete in the SEC championship, the best conference in college football. This will be my fourth time. Haven't been able to get a win, so definitely want to come out on top.

Back to the Playoff expansion, I don't think it will really affect the stakes of the way college football has been going 'cause, I mean, I feel like people thought when it got to four teams it was going to affect the stakes.

12 teams, I mean, it will just up the stakes for a lot more other teams that want an opportunity to compete for a championship. I think it will be great for the game at the end of the day.

Q. Could you explain the difference from pursuing a long-lost national championship last year to now defending it, trying to go back to back.

CHRIS SMITH: Well, I'd say probably the main difference is the target is more so on your back coming off of a national championship rather than just winning one for the

first time.

We won last year. We had a lot of hunger and ambition to get to that point, from coming close so many times and not being able to make it.

It was great for us to get over that hump, get that monkey off our back. But now when you're pursuing it for the second time, everybody knows what you're about. I feel like you have a lot more respect as a team. You're going to get every team's best shot every weekend.

Q. Give me an example of that, having a target on your back.

CHRIS SMITH: I just feel like we get teams' best shots every week. I don't think no team is going to lay down to us 'cause they want to be able to spoil our season.

Luckily we were able to go 12-0 during the regular season. That's not the end-all, be-all for us. We want to be SEC champions, national champions once again. We got to do everything possible to do that. There's going to be teams in our way trying to stop that. I fully respect them for it. We just got to go out there and play it out on the field.

Q. In those SEC championship games that you have played, could you just share a defining memory, whether it was of the crowd or the hope, the anxiety, disappointment. Could you paint a picture of one that stays with you.

CHRIS SMITH: Number one, speaking to the atmosphere of the game, it's just a crazy atmosphere. I think it's probably one of the best atmospheres in college football, period. You know how the fans are in the SEC. They're very passionate about their team.

During that game, there's a lot of passion and emotion going throughout the building. You can feel the intensity. You just ready to go out there and compete for the fans and your brothers and your coaches. Everybody want to come out on top at the end of the day.

Don't have too many great memories because every time I



played in it, I've had an L. It's always good to be able to get to that point and compete against another great team. We get to do that again on Saturday.

Q. How much motivation is there to break through? Not many people that were around in 2017 when Georgia won its last SEC title. How much motivation is there to avenge last year's result and previous results?

CHRIS SMITH: There's definitely a lot of motivation coming from me, also the rest of our team, especially a lot of those guys that were here for a lot of those losses that were handed to us.

Definitely a lot of motivation. This is a tough game to get to, even a tougher game to win. We're going to do everything we can and put it out on the line.

Q. Regarding Ladd, he got there after you, he wasn't exactly a five star when he arrived. What are some of your first memories about going up against Ladd? Has he surprised you what he's been able to accomplish?

CHRIS SMITH: Well, first of all, he hasn't surprised me at all. He's been like that since day one. He's always going out day in, day out to put in the work to compete at the highest level.

Very special, talented, gifted athlete. He's a very special man as well on and off the field. He's just a really humble guy.

He always put his head down and work. I respect that a lot about him. He presents challenges for me day in, day out. Just honored to go out there on the field and go to war with him.

Q. Could you talk about not maturation of your unit, but just the progress of it. You're one of the best in the country. Specifically about Kelee Ringo, do you have a nickname you and others have given to the unit?

CHRIS SMITH: Well, yeah, first of all, our nickname, we call ourselves The Mob. It's a certain mentality and a family feel that Coach brought to us when he got here. It just stands for more opportunity to build your brand. It also stands for, when we go out there, we want to be at the top of our game.

Kelee is a very vital part to that. Malaki, David Daniel. Kamari, Dan. He's not able to be able to go out there on the field there with us, but he's in the meeting room with us day in, day out, bringing that encouragement to us.

We definitely been able to mature a lot throughout the season. We had a lot of younger guys, Javon Bullard as well, that has been able to get a lot of experience and playing time this year. Helping us out a lot. I know they going to do everything they can for us to go out there and succeed.

THE MODERATOR: Chris, thank you.

CHRIS SMITH: Thank you.

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