

Southeastern Conference Football Championship Game: Georgia vs Alabama

Sunday, November 30, 2025

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Alabama Crimson Tide

Kalen DeBoer

Press Conference



We celebrated it actually on Friday morning. He's a guy that pours everything into this program. He's poured everything into me. Something that our players know and feel. Known Shep since 2014. You can't help but be excited for someone that gets to run their own program.

We did a quick little celebration for him before we got into meetings on Friday. He's wanting to be a part of it as much as he can. I expect that, once we get to probably Tuesday, him to be with us the rest of the week getting ready for this game.

CHUCK DUNLAP: We're joined by Alabama head coach Kalen DeBoer with a 7-1 SEC record, head-to-head victory earlier in the season over Georgia. Alabama is the No. 1 seed in the SEC Championship game and the home team.

Coach, congratulations on the season, making it to the SEC Championship game. Before we take questions, would you mind commenting on the season and your team as you prepare to face Georgia again.

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, it's this kind of year that you put all the work in for starting back in January. This has been a goal of ours, to get to this point and have the opportunity to play in the SEC Championship and beyond.

Proud of the way the guys have worked, the way they've stayed focused. Even last night was just a great indication of how important it is to these guys. I'm proud of 'em. Proud of 'em.

Looking forward to Saturday and the opportunity and challenge to face Georgia again this year. It's going to be an awesome environment, one our guys are excited about already. Really looking forward to.

CHUCK DUNLAP: We'll start with questions.

Q. JaMarcus Shephard, with him taking the Oregon State job, how long is he committed to being with the program for?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, he really wants to be a part of everything that we do throughout. There's a couple things here right now early in the week that he's got to part as far as obligations with kind of getting things started there with his opportunity at Oregon State, which we're super excited for.

Q. On the topic of receivers, Ryan Williams wasn't targeted yesterday. Was that just a result of how the game played out?

KALEN DeBOER: He was out there. There was really nothing to read into that at all. I think there were opportunities where the ball could have found him. Not like they're designed specifically for him. That's really not how a lot of our offense is. There might be screens and things like that that are intentionally trying to get touches.

As far as the pass concepts, we didn't get to him in the route or things like that. We got to be intentional because he's a play-maker for us. The ball did find some other guys. They made plays, as you saw, like Isaiah Horton.

Yeah, we want to continue to be intentional. Ryan does a great job for us each and every week preparing. There's no difference this week.

Q. Is that an update on both Jam and Josh Cuevas, as well?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, I would expect Josh to probably not be with us for the weekend. Still don't have much more information on Jam. He'll continue to go through his testing here early this week, today and tomorrow.

Q. What's your message to Ty as he takes the reins? How do you encourage him as he prepares for this one?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, just keep taking the information



and the things that you've been through, learn from them. Every game is a new game. I always say every opponent's a new one. Obviously this one isn't.

There will be new things in play. I'm sure they'll present different looks to us. We'll have a game plan that probably has adjustments, as well. Just the situational things I think that he's been through.

Last night, coming through in big moments. There was times where I think we missed a few things, we left some on the table. Not necessarily just because of Ty. Some just misses in the passing game in particular. Take that, go to work. I expect nothing less than that.

When it came down to big moments, Ty came through for us over and over. The touchdown passes, none of those were gimmes. He had to go make a play. I think that's what he has more and more confidence in doing, is just knowing that he's got that ability, he's got those guys around him. Just stay within yourself.

I thought he started the game with the right mindset. He was excited about it. I think he showed that at the end, just like he has many times. He'll find a way to get it done.

Q. Do you have an update on Dre Kirkpatrick?

KALEN DeBOER: Right now there's nothing that has changed as of today.

Q. You've won at several levels. Kirby Smart making his fifth straight SEC Championship game appearance. What would you say about that accomplishment?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, that's pretty impressive. Just doing it over and over at the highest level in the toughest conference in the country. Tip the hat to Coach Smart and what he has done.

Obviously our program wouldn't be where it is with the things he did here, too, the work he put in. He's a great football coach. I know he's got a great staff there. You can see the fight his team has every single weekend when they step on the football field. They continue to get better as the season goes along.

Q. What would you say is maybe a couple of the biggest changes for Alabama? How would you say the team has changed, grown as the season has progressed?

KALEN DeBOER: I think there's a number of things. The things that jump out at me right away would be I think there were some guys that maybe early in the season were

coming off of injuries from a year ago. It's a number of them. It's a handful, for sure. They've continued to play faster, continued to play better in the second half of the season. Probably right around the start of the SEC schedule there is when it kind of took a jump to the next level.

I think we've really built our depth. It's important because we're playing so many of those guys more and more as the season goes on. Defensively Dijon Lee is a starter for us. London Simmons. Justin Hill played a ton of snaps on defense, along with a new others. Nikhai Hill-Green isn't a freshman, but he's a transfer that came in. The second half of the season has been playing lights out for us.

Offensively add Brooks to the equation, not just as an offensive player, but as a special teams player. Michael Carroll starting at right tackle for us in the last few games. Kaleb Edwards at tight end. Marshall Pritchett playing a ton of downs at tight end.

Again, a lot of young guys that early in the season were getting their feet wet, were on the field. I could list more. It's been that way.

Kind of started with a lot of special teams reps from week one. Now it's progressed to where they're incorporated into the rotation on their side of the ball, as well.

Q. You were asked after the game about how special your football team is. You kind of got choked up talking about them. Could you elaborate on that, please.

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, I mean, Ty was a part of that. He kind of walked up. Just looking at that guy, knowing how important it is to him. He's just one piece of what I think of when I think about our team. Guys who make a commitment to each other, to myself and our staff, to this program.

Commitment has to be something supported by action. The action that these guys have had, it goes back to the beginning of the year, just the way they've stayed the course, the way they've been resilient. Winning really 10 of our last 11 games with eyeballs on them every single weekend, kind of waiting for something, you know?

These guys are just grinding. They are resilient. They're a really close group that truly believes. They don't just hope they can find a way to win, they're going to go make it happen. You can see again last night there's some that we left on the table, and we're going to get those things corrected, go make those plays this weekend.

There's times where you just face really good opponents. We knew Auburn, you can go down the list of games they played that were close. Overtime losses to Vanderbilt, Missouri. One of those being on the road. Close losses to Texas A&M and Oklahoma. Tight game with Georgia for much of the game there. More games, as well.

These guys, just love what they stand for, love the character in who they are, not just on the football field but off the football field. These guys just give me everything they have. They give our staff everything they have. Each other, as well.

I'm proud to be their football coach. Love going to battle with these guys each and every week. Just know every single day on the football field what I'm going to get from them.

Q. Obviously it's been mentioned before, Kirby's experience in SEC Championship games. You have a lot of that experience, as well. These two teams have played each other. How is it different preparing for a championship situation where have you played 12 games, both teams have been through a lot to get this point? What's the difference as a coach trying to prepare a team?

KALEN DeBOER: I think at this point of the season you have an identity. You've hung your hat, if you're at a championship level, on some things that are really important to you, that are your strengths. You understand at this point now, too, a lot of what your opponent's all about. Especially having played each other already, that's certainly the case.

You got to do what you do best. Yeah, you got to have some wrinkles, you got to tweak the game plan for maybe the first time you played here and there. There's things you do now that are different than what you did then. That's the evolution of really good football teams: they improve, but they also continue to adjust to what your strengths are. That's the key.

We're a much different team. I tell our guys that before the season starts. I know we're going to be a different team after three games, after six games, after nine games, 12 games. We're going to be completely different -- not completely, but a different team as we go through the year.

As we adjust and new guys get their opportunities, we really find out what we do best, whether it's concepts or who's on the football field.

Q. Obviously you had to focus on you getting here. How much have you seen of Georgia, how they have

changed?

KALEN DeBOER: I can't say a lot. Just what I see maybe catching part of a game on a trip home, from a road trip or something like that. Before we play, if the game times are opposite on a Saturday.

I just know, again, it's about resiliency. That first game early in the conference schedule, no one's beat 'em since. I know how hard it is to go through this schedule that we have. Again, it's the toughest in the country. For them to do that, much like I'm proud of what we've gone through, both teams being 7-1 in conference play, that's again a lot of respect that I know we got for them.

We know it's going to be a battle. It's going to be an awesome challenge. I know it's one that you come here, that you want to be a part of. We're really looking forward to that.

Q. Two years ago at Washington you had the experience of beating Oregon in the regular season, then playing them again in the conference championship. Is that something you use as an example for your team this week, like it doesn't have to be a huge challenge to beat the same team again? Is it an example you can call on?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, I think anytime personally your experiences that you have that give you reasoning for whatever it might be. You just stated the case that I have as far as people can say one thing, it's hard to beat a team twice. Well, the game's going to be played. How do you prepare to be your best? What is it that you got to continue to do?

A lot of it comes down to what I said earlier: you know what you are as a team, you have your identity, you hang your hat on that. You just go play the game. You go play with confidence. You go play because you love the challenge. You love the environment that you're going to get to be a part of.

This is a 'get-to' moment for us. The energy should be at the highest level possible. We should be extremely excited for this.

Even last night, we were excited about just being in that moment, the challenge. Even with everything that was at stake, that's the way we always want to approach every game we get a chance to play. SEC football is special. These guys playing in front of our fan base and the entire country each and every Saturday is awesome.

Q. What does it mean for you personally to have

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Alabama in the SEC game in year two year?

KALEN DeBOER: Personally it's what your goals are, come here to do. Wanted to be a part of here at Alabama. There's so many great people, coaches, players that have built this program up to what it is with the expectations it has.

You're here to carry that on. You're here to honor those that came before you and continue to make this place special for someday down the road when players are gone and coaches are gone, whoever it might be, you want to carry it on, you want to continue to have that legacy of our program be what it is.

So conference championships, SEC championships, that's the staple, that's a staple in this program. Obviously there's even a higher level to it with the national championships that have been won, too.

First things first: we got to have the opportunity to go compete for an SEC Championship. One of the top two teams in an extremely strong conference.

Q. With Jam Miller going down, Kevin Riley being out, what have you seen from your other backs that might have to step up?

KALEN DeBOER: They'll all have to do their part. We have AK Dear a few more reps on top of what Daniel Hill has done. Dre'lyn Washington is ready. He continues to take reps in practice. We just got to keep plugging away with guys that are excited about their opportunity.

Obviously you don't like the situation that has presented itself and why they are going to be on the football field. These guys are going to give everything they've got to help our team.

Q. It was mentioned earlier the two months, all the progress since the last time you played Georgia. Where do you feel like you've seen the most growth in Ty?

KALEN DeBOER: We've been in a lot of situations that are high pressure. He's come through. It might be the third downs, which that game I think was a really good example of kind of where it started. The Georgia game there. He kept us on the field, made some throws. I think he's just continued to do it over and over again.

If you just do it once in a while, I don't know how much real deep confidence and belief you have, that your teammates have. He's done it over and over. Game-winning drives, ways of staying on the field to seal victories. Starting fast

in games. He understands the importance of that. Just staying the course.

I think if you really narrowed it down, he's gotten better I think, especially last night showed, at handling adversity. Early on missing some throws, but finding a way to make those big touchdown passes. Control the environment, embrace the environment. It's loud there. He had to make some checks. He stood right in there and did everything he could, everything that we expected him to do and needed him to do.

Q. There's a conversation out there that if Alabama does not win this game, it could jeopardize Playoff potential moving forward. Being the 1 seed overall, what would be your message to the committee about the Playoff résumé that Alabama has?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, I mean, I don't have anything prescribed. The things that come right now is we're in the championship game with a 7-1 record. Won four conference games on the road in the toughest conference. I mean, it's the toughest conference in the country. For us to be in this spot and to do what we do, won 10 of our last 11 games... You can get into a lot more details on it.

I just think when you're really trying to have a Playoff, you need your best teams in there. There's no doubt in my mind that we are one of the best teams.

I don't say that arrogantly. I just really believe that's what it is. There's a ton of metrics I know people look at: strength of record, FPI. We're right at the top. Especially if you're even considering us to even be a bubble team, we definitely are above those teams that are in that realm as far as those bubble teams.

Playing in your conference championship in the SEC shouldn't be something that we're worried about as far as what that would do to our Playoff hopes. We got here by earning it.

Q. I was hoping you could speak to your offensive line, specifically your run game. Where has that line improved the most since the LSU game?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, I think they've continued to start with communication and just doing a good job of getting it started. It's not like we had miscommunication. I think confidence that we know exactly who we're going to.

There's been a little bit more continuity. Some of that has been just by who had to be on the football field, the continuity, the intentionality I think the guys have had.



Technically they've been working extremely hard going back really since the beginning. If you just stay persistent with things, you might not reap the rewards right away, especially when you're facing such great fronts and great defenses like you're going to see every single week here in the SEC.

These guys have just kept plugging away. I think the meshing with the running backs and the running backs, again, I thought some of the guys, especially Jam, made some cuts that I hadn't seen him make for a while. The reason is because he's just confident, more and more reps. Those guys are more consistent.

You can kind of see and trust things, then be instinctive off the guys you need to miss. The run game last night was about guys blocking, but it was also about us making some guys miss and breaking some tackles.

CHUCK DUNLAP: Coach, we appreciate your time today. We look forward to hosting you in Atlanta later this week.

KALEN DeBOER: Thank you.

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