

Southeastern Conference Football Championship Game: Georgia vs Alabama

Thursday, December 4, 2025

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Alabama Crimson Tide Coach Kalen DeBoer Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Alabama coach Kalen DeBoer.

Coach, if you'll give us an opening statement.

KALEN DeBOER: You bet.

Good afternoon. Our guys are excited about this opportunity. It's one of the goals that we have in our program. Once we state that goal, it's about the work that goes into getting to this point.

We're looking forward to what we know is going to be a hard-fought contest against an extremely talented, physical Georgia team, that we respect a lot. Just looking forward to this challenge.

They've certainly from their aspect had a great, hot run here playing really good football. Our guys I think looking forward to this rematch from earlier in the season. It's been a while since we played 'em. Looking forward to this game over in Atlanta.

Just also want to note a couple things. C.J. Mosley, our legend, excited to have him there representing our program. Great career here. Great career in the NFL. 10 years there.

In the NFL, he's been around campus a number of times, getting a chance to meet with him. Excited about him representing us, what he means to this place.

Two notes also from an injury port. We do have two players that have illnesses, medical issue, whatever you want to call it, LT Overton and Kelby Collins. They won't be available for this game.

With that, I'm open for questions.

THE MODERATOR: If you have a question...

Q. With LT being out, what do you plan or who do you plan on inserting in that spot?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, fortunately throughout the year we've rotated a lot across the board on our team. Defensively in particular. So the guys that have rotated with LT, fortunately Qua Russaw, when you talk about the edge position, he's played the last couple games. We'll get more reps for him. He's ready for it.

Yhonzae will continue to ramp up his load. We have guys that have played a lot of snaps that will continue to just play the role that they've been playing. Maybe a few more snaps that they'll get.

Q. Sticking with the injuries, where do things stand with Jam, Josh Cuevas, and Kam Dewberry?

KALEN DeBOER: Jam, still questionable. We'll see here in the next couple days. Kam Dewberry is coming along here as the week progresses. Josh Cuevas, same as Jam. Kind of see here at the end of the week.

All those guys a couple weeks down the road will be definitely good to go. Kind of here one week out from last week's game, some of the injuries that have happened, we're not quite sure yet.

They're coming along, working, doing everything they can.

Q. You mentioned in the postgame locker room after the Iron Bowl that there's a difference between hope and belief. How strongly does this team just believe that when it looks like the chips are down, they're going to get it done?

KALEN DeBOER: Well, I mean, we've had enough opportunities, just like any SEC game, every single week, all these teams that you play, as well, are going to have the adversity. There's just too many talented players on the football field every single Saturday. You know there's going to be momentum swings, play-makers that can make

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plays.

I think what you really got to do is you got to go back to what we've been talking about, working on since January, the training and how that allows you to be physical on the football field, the stamina it takes at this time of year.

I feel like our guys have continued to trajectory up. They continue to get stronger. We have proof of that. We can see that. They feel it on the football field.

There's a mentality that you're building. Some of it comes from the strength. Some of it comes from the stamina that these guys have. It also comes from just a real belief that you have through reps that you've talked about, situations from a year ago that we were in, where we've the chance to learn from 'em.

All of our experiences that have shaped what this team is, how we've come through, only make us believe even more, give us that much more confidence.

Time and time again, might not always be the end of the game, might be earlier in the game where you end the half with a two-minute drive, the way your defense gets a stop, the offense can put three points on the board in a clutch period there.

Our guys really, I think, when you look at our team, it's a balanced team. It's a team that believes in each other. We understand our identity, being physical, tough, physically and mentally tough. Also just winning the turnover margin. That's a big deal for us. Going out there and playing for 60 minutes. Our guys are going to leave it on the football field.

Q. In terms of playing a team twice in a season, obviously you did it two years ago at Washington, you did it going back to Sioux Falls a couple times. What are the dynamics there? How does it matter in this game?

KALEN DeBOER: As a coordinator also at Fresno State, we played two years in a row almost back-to-back games against Boise State.

This one's a little different because the game happens so much earlier in the season. Most of those that you're referring to happened late, within a couple weeks you were playing again.

I think what you see between us and Georgia now, you see two teams that do what you know you need to do. You say it, but you do it. Doing it is the key. That's improved each and every week. You learn from your mistakes.

Understand your strengths. Develop players.

There's new guys on both of our teams that are making plays that probably weren't as big a part of the game plan back in week four. That's a tribute to Coach Smart and what he does with his program developing their players. I know that's something we take a lot of pride in, as well.

You understand what that game was about, but you also understand more who you are now. There are things that you maybe tried or that didn't go as well the first time around that you learn a lesson or two from.

But there's an identity now. You still got to do what you do. It has changed some because it's eight games since we played that one. Both teams have continued to evolve, both teams have continued to improve.

Q. With some of the guys in the front seven being out, what kind of role can Keon Keeley have and how have you seen him develop throughout this season?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, guys like that, Keon, continue to ramp up his role. Someone who now we've really put out there, have full trust in. He's got full trust and belief, along with his teammates, in what he can do for us, too.

All those guys are more than capable. They're going to get their opportunity.

Q. With everything that's on the line this week, how much does this feel like a Playoff game?

KALEN DeBOER: Well, we're just focused on it being the SEC Championship, what that means to our program. You start the season, and this is the best conference in college football, and to be playing in this game, I tell our guys they earned this.

I mean, we're the home team, the No. 1 seed. For us, they earned every bit of this opportunity. Great challenge ahead of us, for sure. But man, this is what our program's been built on, is winning championships. It starts with an SEC Championship.

It's a long road to get to this spot, to be again 7-1, really two points away from being 8-0. That's the way we look at it. The guys are excited to go really try to attack one of the goals that we had from the beginning.

Q. There were several times in the Iron Bowl where either the clock ran really close to running out or you were forced to take timeouts. How much freedom do you give Ty as the clock is winding down?



KALEN DeBOER: I think a lot of it is when you're on the road, in the environments. We were 4-0 on the road. I think that was a common theme, is the clock gets a couple seconds lower because the communication and the movement of the quarterback to have to really get up in each lineman's ear. You can't say something and guys hear. You have to give the signals, double-checking to make sure everyone is on the same page. It does wind the clock down a little bit further.

We give him full rein to get to what he needs to get to. He has a high football IQ. We don't ever want him taking a snap that he's not comfortable with, someone not being on the same page with him.

That happens a little bit more on road games. But we do shift in motion. We do huddle. We have the ability to play faster. All those things lend to the play clock coming down. That's part of who we are. We've won the time of possession. I think our average is well over 33 minutes. That's team football. Controlling the football, taking care of it, that's what Ty and our offense do to help support the defense. The defense, of course, doing their thing to support the offense.

Q. Given the recent history between both these programs, how do you assess the mental aspect of this game?

KALEN DeBOER: Well, you wouldn't have got to this spot if you weren't mentally strong. Again, I know what I believe in our team, the mental strength that we have, just how we feel like we can overcome whatever's in our way.

The things that come along with these 60-minute heavyweight fights, we understand it's going to be a battle, it's going to be a war against Georgia. It always is.

Again, we understand that they wouldn't have got to this spot if they weren't mentally tough and have that resiliency, as well.

It's just too hard of a season to go through to get to this point. There's things beyond just executing. There's moments in games that you had to overcome. You got two teams here right now that have done exactly that, are the best in the country when it comes to it.

Q. Being that Alabama and Georgia are both dealing with some pretty significant injuries for this game, the league going to nine games next year, is there a concern that the injury situation may be worse moving forward?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, I mean, that's above me right

now. Nothing I can do with controlling that. A couple weeks off after this game at the least will be extremely helpful for us.

Right now we're extremely excited to be heading over to Atlanta. I know where I'll be Saturday. Our guys will be fired up to play this game.

Those type of conversations and things and decisions are certainly beyond me, anything that I feel.

Q. Are you expecting it to be a longer-term issue with either LT or Kelby, or would you expect them to be back for the remainder of the post-season?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, just trying to get through these next couple days here and kind of see. Obviously Kelby just popped up here. LT was yesterday. Just trying to get through this weekend and kind of see where that's at. We'll understand more details when that time comes.

Q. I know this is a little off topic, what do you think when people link you to the Penn State job and say that you and your family aren't happy at Alabama?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, we're extremely happy at Alabama. This is the first time I've been asked. I appreciate you, Charlie. We're extremely happy here. Love the challenge, love the grind, love this place.

There's never been any link, there's never been any conversation, there's never been any interest either way.

I'm glad we can put that to bed right now.

Q. You mentioned a couple times in recent weeks how the team has grown. From your standpoint emotionally, what was it like after the Florida State game and how things feel now heading into the SEC Championship, looking at the Playoff?

KALEN DeBOER: Are you referring to the Iron Bowl?

Q. Yes. You talked about after the Iron Bowl going back to the Florida State game, how the team has grown. When you look back at the beginning of the season, emotionally where did things look then and how do things look now?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, I mean, at that time I knew that this is just one of those challenges. Those are the things that when you've coached long enough you've been through. Now you just got to do it with this team.

This particular team, I knew the character of it. I knew I



really just had to hone in on the right things, keep taking the steps. I knew there was talent. Knew there was guys that were still either coming back off of things where they weren't playing full speed, they would get to that point.

There's also a lot of young talent we knew we were going to have to tap into and continue to develop guys that we were excited about that could help maximize what we're capable of.

You're right. I think the mental piece, that's a lot of it. Again, that's what you go through in the SEC. That's what it will be each and every year. It will present itself in different ways. But it's what you got to overcome.

You got to be built for it. You got to be built for it to lead. You got to be built for it to be able to go out there and play. Our guys had an edge, had a chip on their shoulder. A lot of the doubters that continue to maybe even doubt what this team is, even though we are in the SEC Championship, these guys thrive in that. They thrive off of that 'cause they know that they are capable. That gives them the confidence. They just know they got to continue each and every day to put in the work, go out there and keep getting better.

Q. This being your first experience competing in the SEC Championship game, but you've seen this game throughout the years, what have been your impressions of this game as you've watched it through the years?

KALEN DeBOER: This is the game. This is the one. When it comes to what you're trying to do when you set out at the beginning of the season, you're first trying to get to this one. You know this is going to set up what lies ahead in the future with the Playoffs.

When you're asking the question, I think about going way back, small college days, playing a semifinal game usually on this Saturday, enjoying that victory, knowing a couple weeks down the road you're playing in a championship. But going home that night and relaxing and watching this game. This was the one. All eyes are on the SEC Championship this time of year.

Q. How important is it for recruiting to still be on television and playing into December, whereas teams may not be on TV, using that as a recruiting mechanism?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, I think just generally speaking, our brand is that strong. I mean, the attention that you continue to get always helps. With the signing class for the most part being pretty much locked in now after yesterday,

there certainly will be more things as we get to the transfer portal and such.

Yeah, it matters 'cause guys want to go to places where they can experience this opportunity, go experience being the best at the pinnacle of college football.

This is a big deal. It's a big deal. A lot of eyes. Again, showing that we can continue on with the tradition, the pride of this program, carrying on what so many of the great coaches, Coach Saban, those that came before him, all the great players, what they've laid for a foundation that we can continue to build, continue to grow, continue to add onto the legacy of those that came before us. I take a lot of pride in that.

Thankful to our players for what they've put into this season to make it that.

Q. How do you respond to maybe the narrative that Alabama has to win this game to stay in the Playoff field?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, I mean, I think I kind of hit on that earlier in the week after our game.

I mean, it kind of blows my mind. That's the exact words I used before, that we're really having this debate. I don't say that with any arrogance, 'cause I understand there's a lot of good football teams out there.

But we earned getting to this point. We're 4-1 against ranked teams. Two points away from being 5-0 against ranked teams throughout the year. Every A4 team we played except Wisconsin this season, before, during or after us was ranked.

Again 7-1 record, two points from being 8-0, 4-0 on the road in the second, that jumps out at me. That's hard to do in the environments. Our guys have been tested.

Teams coming off byes. It doesn't matter. Our guys have been tested. We get to this point, we are Playoff ready. We are focused on this game. We have not had one conversation about that. But we want to take care of business this Saturday and enjoy, again, the opportunity that lies right in front of us to play in the SEC Championship.

Q. What would your message to the Selection Committee be regarding the overall strength of schedule and the depth of the SEC?

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, I mean, I hit on a few of the pointers just there.



I think when it comes down to -- let's just use last week's game, a rivalry game. Not all 5-7 teams are built the same. A team like Auburn, and let's go -- I think we should be highlighting the games that we did win against the ranked teams. I already did that.

Even last week's game, they were a team that had been -- I think they had seven losses. All seven of those games in the SEC were within one score. I think six ended up being one score or less in all of their losses.

Again, when you talk about the SEC, what the grind is each and every week, it stacks upon itself. Just the toughness that it brings out in you and forces you to have. There's no league like it.

I mean, it's just something that is fact. To be at the spot where we're at now, 7-1 in the league, 10-2 overall, just speaks to our football team, the quality of it.

When I look at our football team, to really get into it, I see us as a balanced team. We have an offense and defense that play off each other. Our defense is a championship-caliber with any defense out there across the country. Our offense controls the football, takes care of business, comes up with big scores.

Last week, again, we put up as many points as really almost anyone did. Again, using a rivalry game, using the last game we played. Running the football. People have hit us on that. Running the football, we've done that as good in the last two conference games that anyone else has that have played. I think in the top three in those opponents that have faced Oklahoma and Auburn.

We can go on and on. I think you just really look at the league we're in, that we're in this game, and it is what it is. We're going to love the opportunity we get to play on Saturday.

Q. A lot of talk about the CFP rankings. What would winning a conference championship mean to your team to be able to lift that trophy on Saturday night? Does a conference championship still resonate with players today?

KALEN DeBOER: Oh, this is a huge deal for us. Again, all the questions that are getting asked about the Playoffs, I mean, we are completely focused on the excitement of playing for the SEC Championship because that's, again, the epitome of all championships. Just excited about what this means to our program, how important it is, wanting to carry on the tradition of what's been done in the past.

Again, we know we have a great challenge with a really good Georgia team, a ton of respect for them. That makes it even all the more worth everything that we're fighting for.

THE MODERATOR: Coach DeBoer, thank you for your time this afternoon. We will see you here in Atlanta.

KALEN DeBOER: Thank you. Roll Tide.

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