

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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Hoover, Alabama, USA

Kentucky Wildcats

Darian Kinnard

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Darian. If you have a question, raise your hand.

Q. I want to ask you about a local guy for us, Josh Jones, young guy. Just what have you seen in his time at Kentucky and what he can do in time.

DARIAN KINNARD: Young guy, works hard. The mentality, when Josh Lyman (phonetic) was here, ingrained in all of us was work hard and bust your butt. That's exactly what he's doing. He's a good athlete, and I can see him playing very soon. He's got to keep working, and he's a very competitive guy.

Q. You were graded out as one of the better run blocking players last year. Obviously, you all were heavy inside zone team. You're going to a more wide zone approach with Liam Coen. Do you feel like you're going to be able to keep up that efficiency from a blocking stand point? And also, I think you're moving to left tackle. How excited are you to show off some of your pass protection skills to help lift your NFL Draft stock?

DARIAN KINNARD: Doing a little more outside zone I feel like is going to help me a lot, not just running down people's face. I think it's going to help me improve in terms of getting ready for NFL-type stuff.

But I also feel like I'm going to do better grading-wise. I feel like it's going to show my athletic ability, and I feel like I'm just going to just keep improving from there.

Q. Darian, I know that the College Football Playoff expansion is a little in the future for your purposes, but as a player, do you think that's something that should have come earlier? Do you have any concerns about it in the future on player safety in terms of playing too many games?

DARIAN KINNARD: We can't really say too much. NFL

plays 16 games. So get ready for it now or get ready for it later, either way.

Q. I was just wondering what your take is on the new offensive coordinator and just how you think the offense might be expanded in the passing game to get more balance. Mark talked about that.

DARIAN KINNARD: The new offensive coordinator, great guy, great energy. He's been doing it in the NFL, so I feel like we just have to trust in him and continue working.

One of the biggest things he wants is just pinpoint accuracy with everything we're doing. Everything has a purpose and a reason, and it sets up a lot of stuff for a lot of the game.

I feel like we've just got to keep sticking to it, keep working, and master this new offense that we're getting.

Q. What did you see from Joey Gatewood in the spring? And just kind of projecting forward, what are his strengths? What do you expect out of him?

DARIAN KINNARD: What I've seen from Joey, he's a huge competitor. He loves to battle. He loves to go out there and work hard and show what he's got every day.

Me personally, I love his arm. He has a great arm, and he knows when to tuck it and run.

Q. How would you describe Wan'Dale for those who haven't had a chance to really see him play yet in the SEC?

DARIAN KINNARD: Just watching him in the spring, he's an explosive player, great athlete, explosive ability. As long as he gets the ball in his hands, he can make something happen.

Q. I know you were in Ohio for high school, but growing up in Knoxville, did you know linebacker DeShawn Page now at Mississippi State? If not, what's it like playing against guys from Knoxville, especially in the SEC?



DARIAN KINNARD: Coming from certain areas and then seeing those guys be successful and playing them at the college level, I feel like it's just a good success story. It shows that you can really make it out of anything and do anything with your life.

I know about y'all's mama, I know y'all love your mama, but I think I might love mine more than y'all. That's all I'm going to say.

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So I feel like it's a great opportunity to play those guys, and I'm happy for them when they're at the next level.

Q. You guys just added Dare Rosenthal from LSU the other week. What's it like in the room when you add a player that's going to come in and compete, and does it help the vibe? And have you gotten to know him yet?

DARIAN KINNARD: Me personally, I haven't gotten to know him too well. He's so new. It takes time to really adjust. I feel like it's a good thing. If everyone is planning to go to the NFL, that's why they come to college, besides getting a degree, you're going to have somebody come for your spot every year.

So I feel like you've got to get used to it now or later. But at the end of the day, it's good competition. He's a teammate. It's healthy competition.

THE MODERATOR: Coach mentioned you had a choice to make. You could have gone on to the NFL. What were some of the factors that made in your decision to come back for your senior year?

DARIAN KINNARD: Some of the decisions, seeing the team that we had, I knew that we could have an amazing year. For more personal reasons, I knew that if I got a lot of reps at left tackle, I knew that would help me with the NFL Draft and NFL prospects and showing that I'm not just a right side player. I can play any position on O-line.

Q. Darian, can you just discuss your relationship with your mother and how much she's meant to you to get to this point in your career.

DARIAN KINNARD: Oh, man, I don't think I have enough time to really talk. I could take all day talking about why I love her so deeply and why she's gotten me to this point in my life.

She's been there with me through thick and thin, honestly. Me being with her when stuff was just tough and we didn't know how we were going to make it to the next day. Just now, looking back and seeing all the stuff we've been through, the words can't describe how much she means to me and what she has done for me in my life. I love her dearly and love her so much.

