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Vanderbilt Commodores

Daevion Davis

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by Vanderbilt defensive lineman Daevion Davis. Daevion, just talk about, as you head into the 2021 season, your excitement for the campaign ahead.

DAEVION DAVIS: For the 2021 season, I think the sky's the limit. I think everything is in front of us here. So we're just going to take the opportunity to continue to be humble workers, show respect and appreciation, grind our tails off, and really kind of surprise a lot of people but do what we know we can do.

Q. Daevion, how tough was last season on the field when you played a very tough schedule and weren't able to get a win, and then with all the COVID issues off the field, guys opting out. I know a lot of guys had to miss games for contact tracing or different reasons. How tough was all that, and how do you feel you guys are going to be able to bounce back this season?

DAEVION DAVIS: I think everybody went through their difficulties as far as college sports when it came to COVID, guys being contact traced sitting out. As far as that, there's no excuse for that. You've just got to make adjustments and roll with the game plan.

This year coming into this new season there's a new standard. There's a new culture here. We're building a lot upon just being tougher, being tough guys and working on staying together and being about us, being selfless and humble workers, like I said. I think that will show a lot on the field coming this year. So I think that's kind of the difference here.

Q. I want to ask you about Derek Mason, of what was your relationship like with him? And what do you think the Auburn players can sort of expect from Coach Mason?

DAEVION DAVIS: My experience with Coach Derek Mason was awesome. He recruited me pretty heavy, and I



love the guy. He was a fair guy, a great dude, very enthusiastic, and loved the game, so I think Auburn got a great deal with that, and he'll go in there and coach guys up real hard and get the best out of them. So that's great for them.

Q. For you, is there anything different playing DT, moving into a new scheme? Then also, what have you learned so far from Inoke Breckterfield?

DAEVION DAVIS: As far as the scheme, I kind of have the same role. I just disrupt. I might play a gap out wider than I used to, so that will be fun to enable a little more pass rush ability. But as far as Coach Inoke Breckterfield, he's one of the smartest guys I know. I think he could be a defensive coordinator honestly somewhere. He knows a lot about the game, and as far as his history, he's coached a lot of winners and a lot of winning programs.

Being someone I look up to in the professional league, Aaron Donnelly, coached him. He's obviously one of the greatest players to play that position and I think that's pretty cool.

So he brings a lot to the table as far as technique and just knowing the game presnap, so I'm just honored to get to work with him.

Q. Clark Lea mentioned that this is team one, and he's basically trying to start over within the program. So as somebody who's been in the program for a couple years, how does it feel to kind of be kind of starting all the way from the bottom again?

DAEVION DAVIS: As far as starting from the bottom, it's a humbling experience, but it's definitely one that was needed. So I take it with a grain of salt, and I came in every day, and I just look at the new opportunity that's able to be there for us to grow.

I definitely have learned to make it about the whole team and the program and the guys that come after me. So just becoming that humble worker and taking that role on head on, it's definitely a humbling experience, but it's working. When you see the work just starting to get results, it only



make you want to go harder. So it's a great thing that we started over.

Q. Clark Lea played at Vanderbilt not that long ago, I guess 20 years. It's not like it was a hundred years ago or something. What sense do you get about what being the Vanderbilt coach means to him? And what does it mean to you guys to be coached by a guy who was in your shoes not that long ago?

DAEVION DAVIS: In an interview I watched even before I met him he said clear as day that he's been waiting 16 years in his coaching career to coach here because he played here and that this was his university. So he takes a lot of pride in the Vanderbilt community and being a Nashville guy. I think that that shows in his work, that he shows up every day and just grinds and gives us his best and expects nothing less from us.

That building on us just is reflected, and we come in every day and we are able to have an atmosphere that gives us resources to work as hard as we can.

Q. What's telling you there's a new standard, new culture to the program? Also, I know you guys went through spring where you didn't have your jersey numbers. Have you earned yours now?

DAEVION DAVIS: I do. I got my number back. It's mine.

Q. What was the reasons that you were able to do that?

DAEVION DAVIS: That whole ordeal started a long time ago, like seven months ago. Basically, we were stripped of logos, stripped of numbers. We had a black T-shirt coming into seven months of workouts. It's just coming down to like I got a question about restarting.

That's just what had to happen. We were told that we were restarting, we were stripping it all by our head man, Coach Lea. He wanted a new culture, a new feel for us. He wanted us to not just slap logos on something and make it a T-shirt or something like that or have a slogan, but he wanted us to live it. He wanted us to make what we were seeing committable and actionable.

Just having those things made it way more important. It was a lot more than just talking it or putting it in an Instagram caption. It's who we are now. I couldn't thank him more for that because it's made me a lot better player, a lot better man, and just learning what it means to take action and responsibility and being real selfless and giving yourself to a team.

So that's kind of what it looks like to earn your number, somebody who's extrinsic and cares for the team, puts himself out there, brings guys along as himself, starts moving forward in the program. That's how you earn your number, and it takes a long time, but once you get it, you have a lot of respect and appreciation for the seven months or however many months it took for you to get that number.

You have a lot of respect for something as little as a number, then just think about how that correlates into the game of football or life.

Q. Was it hard to be able to recognize teammates with that and to be able to practice with those, not having logos and numbers and stuff, just from an on-field perspective? I get all of the reasons why to do something like that, but was it complicated for you to know, hey, who do you even go after or who do you tackle and all those things?

DAEVION DAVIS: No doubt. I think the O-line and quarterbacks hated it all spring because they couldn't ID anybody. We were having fun with it. We were kicking their tails. They were just trying to figure out who's who, but at the end of the day, we knew who everybody was. No number, but you had your last name on the back of the jersey. You knew somebody's face, and it's football, so see ball, get ball.

THE MODERATOR: You talk about a new coaching staff coming in as a leader on the team. What was important, and how did the team take to Coach Lea and some of the new philosophies? You mentioned the numbers, but how did you feel like the team responded with Coach Lea's leadership?

DAEVION DAVIS: In our program now, in order to thrive, in order to be the player that you want to be, you just have to immerse yourself completely. Our guys are just diving in head first, no questions asked. I think they're getting the results they want and need, and they're seeing a lost things that the philosophy is coming into fruition. It's just coming along quite well.

When you have guys that are just willing to dive in headfirst, you're going to have a good team, and you're going to have a good culture there. So the standard continues to be pushed forward, and we just have guys coming along and hopping on board, so that's always good.

Q. Do you just flush last season? Are there lessons to be learned from that? How do you approach that, I guess, mentally? Do you know that's your coach's old

helmet there? I guess he's had it on the book shelf in the office and stuff. Is that kind of archaic? What do you think of that?

DAEVION DAVIS: It's pretty ancient, when you think about it. I just saw him walk in. Also, his head is huge. This helmet is ginormous.

As far as flushing the season, that's what you've got to do. It's in the past. We've learned what we've learned. We know what we have to fix, and we're working on fixing it. We're not dwelling on anything that happened before. It's just the first team moving forward right now.

Q. Daevion, from the spring we've talked about the offensive linemen who opted out, opted out last fall. Did you notice -- how big of a difference did you notice just going against more experienced, bigger guys on the offensive line over the course of spring ball?

DAEVION DAVIS: Guys are just coming along. They're working hard. So as far as experience, there's experience to be gained, and there's experience on our offensive line. So I know that they get out there, and they work their tails off. I know that I'll be ready because of them, and they'll be ready because of me.

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