

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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Hoover, Alabama, USA

Mississippi State Bulldogs

Aaron Brule

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Looks like we've got a question to our right-hand side.

Q. Defensive coordinator Zach Arnett brought that three-three stack defense in for you all last year. You all had some success with it. It's a different defense. Was it difficult to learn how to play? Is there stuff that you all do that makes it a fun scheme to play in?

AARON BRULE: It's the mentality that I think Coach Arnett brings to our team, really basically making us know the defense. Leading up to the season last year, obviously, we had some unfortunate circumstances with COVID and things of that sort. Even during the LSU game, which was the first game of the season, we were putting in plays and timeouts and things of that sort. Eventually, you get a hold of it at the time.

Q. Aaron, when we're in a setting with Coach Leach, we get all kind of interesting references to different historic things and all that. I wonder, in football settings is he funny? Does he drop the same kind of historical references and things about the way things work? What one thing did he maybe talk to you guys about that stuck with you guys, that you went back to your dorm rooms or whatever and laughed about or talked about?

AARON BRULE: Yes, we gives great reference points. When he's talking about things, he's great at giving examples and making you understand exactly what he's talking about. Something that I'll definitely go back and tell my teammates actually that we were on the plane talking about today. He was talking about how -- it was a boxing story. I can't remember exactly the boxer he was talking about, but it was a boxing story on why he started making his O-linemen do boxing on bags and things like that.

He was saying that O-linemen, usually they bench press a lot of weight, squat a lot of weight, they don't necessarily have fast hands, but when you're dealing with defensive

ends, linebackers blitzing and stuff like that, you've got to have real fast hands. Just that he had a story for something like that was pretty unique.

Q. You mentioned the mentality that Coach Arnett has and that he brings. How would you describe that mentality that he has?

AARON BRULE: It's an attack-first mentality, meaning there's no excuses for anything. You either do what he asks you to do or you'll be held accountable by your teammates, by him, and anyone involved with our defense.

Q. Areas of improvement for you guys to build upon last season's record, where do you have to get better specifically?

AARON BRULE: Not so much as get better but really chemistry with each other. We didn't have enough time last year to implement everything we wanted to, and I think this fall, the spring we just had gives us a great boost going into the season.

Q. With NIL now available to you guys, how do you approach like working with management or finding ways to navigate that through a season and building relationships to work through that and have good opportunities but not take too much of your time, you know?

AARON BRULE: First off, you obviously want to keep the main thing the main thing, which is football. I think we've been in this thing 20, 21 days or something like that, and everyone is still learning the ins and outs of it. I think finding the best opportunities for you, not just any opportunity, is a big thing that you should look for when you're doing these deals and things of that sort.

THE MODERATOR: Last year was kind of an unusual year with the pandemic and new coaching staff. What does it feel like going into year two knowing the system, knowing what coaches expect, and having a more regular buildup to the season?

AARON BRULE: It gives us a full running. We



immediately get to work. We had a great spring, looking forward to having a great fall, and continue building chemistry with our teammates.

Q. I had a question for you about Will at quarterback. You obviously go up against him in the spring and everything. What signs of progress did you see from him? What do you think he wanted to work on going into 2021?

AARON BRULE: He's an extremely confident young quarterback. He was obviously a true freshman last year when he came into play, and he did some really, really wild things. For Will Rogers, I think for him he wants to improve on everything. First and foremost, he always is a great teammate, and just doing that first is his main goal for all of us.

Q. Mike was just telling us earlier about his idea to pay players \$100,000 or \$150,000 for graduating. Has he ever talked about something like that with the team? What do you guys think about when he comes out with these ideas that most coaches probably wouldn't bring up?

AARON BRULE: No, he hadn't mentioned anything like that to us just yet. I'm sure, if he really wanted to, he would mention that to us, but he's got a lot of great things that he talks about, and just look forward to having another great season with him.

Q. Coach Leach talked a little bit earlier today about the time it takes to build culture and tradition within a program when you're coming in early in your coaching tenure there. What are some things you see him trying to instill, and what do you tell some of the younger players about keeping that whenever you're done at Mississippi State?

AARON BRULE: The culture they bring in for us is extremely hard working. No matter the circumstances, which is more of a no excuses policy that we have going on. Coach Leach has definitely instilled that, along with his staff, along with the strength staff, and things of that nature, instilling that sort of culture into us.

Q. I asked you about the defensive mentality, but in terms of the scheme, what do you like about playing in this system? Then also, a second question, you guys are pretty good on defense last year, but you don't hear so much chatter about that. There's more talk about Mike's air raid offense. Why do you think there hasn't been as much discussion about you guys' defense, and does that motivate you or no?

AARON BRULE: If you look around the NFL and things of that sort, you'll see we have many guys in the league doing great, great things. When I signed to Mississippi State out of high school I knew what I was coming into. I knew we had to be a blue collar, hard working mentality group of players. I always look forward when going into games, keeping that chip on our shoulder when we're practicing. It just proves people wrong, like Mississippi State has always done.

THE MODERATOR: When they talk a lot about the offense, what does it mean to the defense? Does that bother you when they focus on the seemingly high octane offense?

AARON BRULE: No, truly they deserve the attention they get being with the air raid. I'd say the most successful offense of all time. You don't mind being a back burner to that.

Q. Obviously, Mike Leach is known for offense. How much time does he spend with you guys on defense? Being on a plane with him, was that kind of a rare opportunity -- I guess it's not very far over here, but was that kind of a rare opportunity? Did you enjoy hanging out with him in that setting?

AARON BRULE: I've spent good time with Coach Leach in our prospect camps and things of that sort. During the season when he gets a break, like during practice and stuff like that, he'll talk to you and come see what the defense is up to. If he's not trying to figure out his next strategy on the season, find a new plays to run and things of that sort. He's talking to everybody. He's not just a straight by himself person.

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