

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

Wednesday, July 21, 2021

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Mississippi State Bulldogs Austin Williams

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by senior wide receiver Austin Williams. I'm going to ask Austin to make a brief opening comment.

Austin, as you head into the 2021 season, just talk about what you're looking forward to as we approach the upcoming season.

AUSTIN WILLIAMS: I just can't wait to finally have our fans in the stadium, hear Davis Wade rocking and hear the cow bells. I'm just pumped for that honestly.

Q. What did you think of how Will Rogers played last season, especially for a young guy? What do you think are his strengths? What kind of spring, and I'm sure you've been working out with him this summer, how's he doing with that? What do you think about all the quarterbacks that you guys are going to be sorting it out in fall camp?

AUSTIN WILLIAMS: First of all, for Will coming in as a true freshman, kind of a tough situation to get thrown in and I think he did a great job. I'm ready to see him continue to grow.

Obviously, his strengths, he's a leader in the locker room. Coming in as a freshman and he's taken it over. He's got the guys bought in. He's a guy that's first there, last to leave. He's always watching film. He's just a grinder. Everybody loves that and respects that about him.

On the field, we've been getting after it. I think having spring ball has been awesome for us to get more reps and get guys involved. To see him kind of continue to grow. I had a really good summer with him.

As you mentioned, the quarterback room is full, but that's good. We love a little competition, a little adversity. I think it makes guys continue to be better and push him every single day. Whoever -- like Coach Leach says, everything is open. Nothing's set in stone. It allows the guys to



continue to push each other.

Q. When you have a quarterback competition like that, what are some things you could kind of try to do, whether it be off the field, on the field, to build chemistry with a variety of guys not knowing who's going to be the one going week 1?

AUSTIN WILLIAMS: Try to get as much work with all of them. On the off-season, running routes, seven-on-seven, kind of picking their brain, what they think, what are their calls? Just try to be around them as much as possible, just try to build that relationship and that chemistry.

Q. One of your teammates in JaVonta Payton, wide receiver, transferred to Tennessee. What is Tennessee getting in him as a player and then a person?

AUSTIN WILLIAMS: First off, I wish the best for JaVonta. Me and him had a great relationship. We worked together all the time. He got after it. He's a great player. He's explosive. I think he's going to do a really good job. I know you're going to get a great player, and he's going to contribute for you all in the long term.

THE MODERATOR: We hear a lot about the offense. As a wide receiver, what are some of the things that you have to do and adjust to in this offense? What's it like to play in such a prolific offense that likes to throw the ball around the field?

AUSTIN WILLIAMS: Having Mike Leach as your tutor, it's awesome. He knows the ins and outs of it. He's been doing the air raid forever. We have tons of film to watch, things to help you grow and learn. Our whole coaching staff, they've been around it a while.

As a receiver, just being around that knowledge and experience definitely helps to you grow and to learn. It's kind of a reps based offense. Definitely having spring has been huge for us, just getting more and more, and fall camp will be big for us too.

Q. You guys blew up in the season opener against LSU, broke records and everything. The next week,



you got kind of held down. What happened in week two, and then bouncing back from that, what did you guys do in response to the loss to Arkansas?

AUSTIN WILLIAMS: Like I said, we started off hot. We had a great start to the season against LSU. We didn't follow up against Arkansas. We've got to continue to execute the offense. We didn't have enough consistency as we wanted. Just little details. It wasn't major catastrophic issues. We have to execute at a highest level and we got to do that more consistently.

Like how we finished at the end of the season, last two games finishing with a bowl win. I know we did a lot more consistent, we just did our job better. It wasn't like we did anything crazy individually, just every player doing our job at a higher level.

Q. You just alluded to finishing pretty strong. What kind of momentum -- I know it's obviously a long time between games, but what kind of momentum can you take in? That was a pretty wild finish in the bowl game. Were you involved in that at all? Just what did you think about that, how crazy that was?

AUSTIN WILLIAMS: First off, yeah, momentum is huge. I love finishing with a win, two wins in a row, just kind of see our offense and defense rolling, playing more of a complete game, not just one side. I thought it was a big step for us. We definitely took that in stride, finished with a bowl win.

Speaking of the incident, obviously, that's not reflective of who we are as a team and as a program, but I know our university has definitely handled that, and things have been handled, and that's been discussed. It's not reflective of us. We're going to continue and grow and move from that.

Q. I'm curious about what has been your favorite Mike Leach out-of-the-box reference that you got a big kick out of or you and your teammates went back and tried to dissect. The most talked about reference you've gotten from him.

AUSTIN WILLIAMS: Coach Leach, he's extremely smart. He can make a ton of different references, whether you're middle of film, talking, talk about George Patton or World War II or some other type of history reference. There's a lot. There's not one particular one that people keep going back to. He's a character. He's relatable. He's funny. He can definitely keep the guys rolling.

Q. Actually, I had two questions. One, with this offense, what's maybe the most challenging part to learn or adjust to? And then two, I was wondering if

you could describe quarterbacks Will Rogers and Jack Abraham, kind of what it's like playing for each of them and what each brings to the table.

AUSTIN WILLIAMS: For the offense, it's a reps-based offense. Obviously, no excuses, but not having spring last year, definitely would have been helpful. This year having it has been a great opportunity for us. A lot of young guys, a lot of them working, a lot of reps. That's the huge thing for us. Get used to it. Run it over and over and over, run it until you can't mess up.

Speaking of the quarterback competition, Will and Jack, they're both great players, great guys. On and off the field they're leaders. Jack has had a ton of experience playing at Southern Miss. He definitely brings that to the table. He's got a good arm.

Will, young guy; he's got some experience too. He's a leader, works hard, like I said earlier. I think they're both going to compete and make each other better. Like I said, it's good to have a little competition. It brings out the best in everybody.

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