

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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LSU Tigers Mekhi Wingo

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We have Mekhi Wingo from LSU, and he wants to say some words first.

MEKHI WINGO: I want to say how are you all doing? That's good. How are you all doing?

THE MODERATOR: We would like to open it up for questions.

Q. Mekhi, you used to play in Missouri, St. Louis, right?

MEKHI WINGO: Yes.

Q. You've been at LSU now. You transferred from Missouri. What went into that decision for you, and now that you have been on hand and made an impact and looking at another big season -- and you play the Tigers next year -- so what's the transition been like from Missouri to LSU for you?

MEKHI WINGO: The transition has been smooth, and the guys back in Missouri, we still have that loving bond. I just ran into them upstairs. You know, it was all love, man.

So I really enjoy seeing them. I'm happy to be at LSU. The transition has been smooth, and I'm loving Baton Rouge. Can't complain.

Q. As you mentioned, you will be coming back to Mizzou this fall to play the Tigers for the first time as a member of LSU. I just want to ask, does that game against your former team -- and right where you grew up -- does that game have any extra meaning to you this fall?

MEKHI WINGO: Definitely. You know, I love to come back and play in front of my home crowd, just giving those family members an opportunity to come to a game where they might not be able to make it down to Baton Rouge. I'm definitely going to need a lot of tickets for that game,



and it's going to be fun seeing my old teammates and old coaches because I still have that bond and connection with those guys.

Q. What does this team have to do to get better defensively, a couple of areas for you?

MEKHI WINGO: To get better defensively, the team we just have to really focus in on those small details and come together and watch a little more film together and do things of that nature.

Naturally we've gotten better getting guys in at transfer. We have some great players leave, but I have full faith in the guys, because we've brought into the program a guy like Jordan Jefferson and Paris Shand and Omar Speights. I think they'll be phenomenal for us this year.

Q. I was going to ask, along those lines, you lose the two bookends on your defensive line. I was curious how you think those freshmen that you brought in, obviously Womack and Jaxon Howard and, of course, the transfers, how you think defensive ends are coming along and how good you think this defensive line can be next year?

MEKHI WINGO: I think the defensive line can be really good. Getting a guy like Maason Smith back, a guy that can wreck a game, and Sai'vion Jones, this is his year to step up and really put his impact on the LSU program. Da'Shawn Womack and Jaxon Howard, they've come in and put the work in. Those guys are working really hard. They're taking the coaching, and they're going to be really good for us this year.

Q. Last year you played both Alabama and Georgia. Was there a distinction between the two teams? Do you feel that Georgia has surpassed Alabama in terms of being the pinnacle of college football?

MEKHI WINGO: I wouldn't say there's a distinction between the two teams. There are two great offensive lines, two great quarterbacks, and two great coaches on both.

Georgia, obviously the defending national champs, so they have the trophy right now. But both programs are phenomenal, and we'll be looking forward to playing them this year.

Q. When you make the transition from Missouri to LSU, a lot of people talk about the food being one of the big differences. Are you a gumbo guy? Do you have a place in Baton Rouge that you prefer? What's the food been like for you?

MEKHI WINGO: The food has been phenomenal. This is definitely a place I haven't had a problem keeping my weight on.

At first I didn't really vibe with the crawfish, but I grew into it. It's really good now. I'm not too much of a gumbo person, but a few spots I like to eat like a spot called Roul's, a spot called Gino's. They have some really good food down in Baton Rouge.

Q. Last year the team ended the regular season on a sour note with that loss to A&M. How much are you looking forward to playing them this year and kind of making righting that ship?

MEKHI WINGO: I'm looking forward to playing every game this year, but we're focusing on week one, which is Florida State right now, because if we want to get to the end goal, which is winning a national championship, we have to focus on week by week. We have to keep all our focus on week one right now.

Q. What's the excitement level around Baton Rouge, and how might it differ from last year?

MEKHI WINGO: You know, it's going to be very exciting this year. We have some of the best fans in the country. You know, they're going to come out, support, and we got some great players back. So it's going to be a phenomenal feeling in Baton Rouge.

Q. Just being at LSU down there in Baton Rouge, what sets that apart in the SEC, Saturday Night, Death Valley, there's nothing like it.

MEKHI WINGO: When you walk out the tunnel and there's 100,000 fans screaming, that's a different atmosphere. A lot of stadiums don't necessarily get to experience that week in, week out. There's just an expectation and an aura when you are an LSU football player and you are stepping on that field that you have to give it all you've got week in, week out.

Q. Mekhi, what do you think the difference will be with

Harold moving inside, Harold Perkins?

MEKHI WINGO: Harold Perkins is a great player, and he is going to be able to wreck a game no matter where he lines up on the field.

He is great off the edge, but I've also watched him throughout the spring get better and better at playing more in the box. So I think he is going to be very effective for us no matter what spot he ends up playing in.

Q. As you mentioned, Harold Perkins had a great freshman year last year. One of the best freshmen in all of America. I was going to ask you, was there a moment in a game or in practice where you saw him and you realized that even with all the great athletes you have there that he is really a special one-of-a-kind player?

MEKHI WINGO: Yes. It was actually the practice before the Mississippi State game. The game where he really exploded onto the scene.

We were doing some pass-rush drills, and he came down with the defensive line that day and just -- like, he lined up, and we had never seen nobody on the defensive line just come around the corner and been like that.

When it happened, we were all surprised, but little did we know, he had it the whole time, and he showed it that week.

Q. Just around campus having women's basketball and baseball and the National Championship you guys have brought this year, how exciting is that as a student-athlete, and then obviously you guys want to finish this year like that as well in football.

MEKHI WINGO: It's been very exciting with the other teams winning national championships. You know, the women's basketball and the baseball, you know, a guy like me, I'm not even a baseball fan, but I was tuned into every single LSU baseball game.

We definitely want the experience and get that feeling that those guys are getting on campus and really bring more hype to LSU's campus.

Q. Then how close do you realistically feel like you guys are? Do you feel like that year one with Brian Kelly really kind of laid a National Championship trajectory for this squad?

MEKHI WINGO: Definitely. The standard we talk about week in, week out is to win a National Championship.



That's the standard.

Everyone has to understand that it's not just going to take guys ranking us here or us believing in the hype. We're going to have to take it week by week, practice by practice, and truly put in the work to become a National Championship team.

Q. I have to keep my questions Bama-related, so here comes another Alabama question. You guys were able to beat Alabama last year in overtime. What do you remember about the emotions following that overtime victory?

MEKHI WINGO: It was very exciting to see the crowd rush the field. They had done it the previous week before, but it was nothing like that game.

Just to see the excitement on our quarterback's face and just on the team and the coach's face to get that win. It was a great bonding moment for us, and we're hoping to build on it this year.

THE MODERATOR: Mekhi, thank you very much.

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