

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

Tuesday, July 18, 2023

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Vanderbilt Commodores

Jaylen Mahoney

Press Conference



Q. What was it like leaving workouts this morning and putting on that jacket, and coming down the street to kick off college football season here?

JAYLEN MAHONEY: Yeah, that's a good question. You know, it was a lot trying to get over here but blessed to be in this position. You know, excited to be here in order to represent Vanderbilt Football.

Q. Elijah McAllister is here today with Auburn. What can you tell us about the leader he was for y'all's program for the last few years?

JAYLEN MAHONEY: Yeah, Elijah McAllister, he was a great leader for us. He made a lot of impact to the team. We appreciate that we get to see him today, but we also understand that we love him but he's on the opposition, so we have to, you know, keep it there.

You know, wish him the best luck at Auburn and continue to focus on things we have going on at Vanderbilt.

Q. You mentioned the word "excitement" earlier. When you look at this team and the steps you've taken over the last couple years, especially with Coach Lea, how would you describe the atmosphere, the locker room environment right now with this group of guys?

JAYLEN MAHONEY: Oh, yeah, it's a lot of energy. Coach Lea, he's bringing in like some good recruiting class -- some good recruiting classes, so we are really excited about the young players that's coming here, buying into the program and just taking in Coach Lea's message.

We feel really good about this season, especially coming back with a majority of our returning defense so that's really good, and continue the continuity with the coaches, as well, with the coaching staff, having Nick Howell back, which is will do us pretty well on defense.

Q. How seriously did you consider leaving for the NFL

Draft and I'd love to know your thought process behind why you decided to return and why you decided to return to Vanderbilt?

JAYLEN MAHONEY: Yeah, so my process with the NFL Draft last year, well, it came down to me realizing that last year was my first year playing safety, so I wanted to get another year under my belt playing safety. So get more film.

And secondly, I wanted to come back and play and boost myself to like where I can get drafted.

And then third off, I wanted to come back and win. Our mission this season is postseason play. That's for us to determine that.

But I wanted to go win with Vanderbilt and accomplish things and change the narrative here.

Q. What would it mean to fulfill that goal of postseason play in what will probably be your final year at Vanderbilt?

JAYLEN MAHONEY: Yeah, it means going out and having success. But we understand that that's not going to be easy. Nothing is going to be given to us, and we are going to go out there and have to work hard in order to earn that.

Q. You mentioned so many guys coming back on the defensive side of the ball. What do you have to do there to make the defense better this season than it was a year ago?

JAYLEN MAHONEY: Just continue to lead those guys. You know, just continue to use my voice and be confident in using my voice. I feel like a main role for me this year is, like, of course, playing safety, but being a vocal leader on defense, and I have the opportunity to speak louder and make sure everything on defense is straight, like everything is structured, people are lining up in the right place, people are doing the right jobs because that -- in all, that limits mistakes, and the less mistakes we make as a team, the more we'll win.



Q. Wondering as a DB, with teams that that the wide splits like Tennessee does, what kind of conflict does that put in a saved and a DB to try to cover all that space with those wide splits?

JAYLEN MAHONEY: I feel like their scheme is difficult for a defense to adjust to, but we run a lot of like read verts and stuff like that. So just sticking -- like at Vanderbilt, we stick to our rules and we play.

Q. That's an awesome suit.

JAYLEN MAHONEY: Thank you.

Q. Talk about what goes into the fashion choice and is there a competition between you guys on the team? Do you want to look better than anybody else today or how does that work?

JAYLEN MAHONEY: No, it's nothing like that. I just feel like my mom inspired my fashion skills kind of, like if I have something I want to put on, there's nobody that I'm going to show, like, other than my mom and get her approval.

And I also like have my family's approval, like my sisters. I always listen to my sisters and what they are telling me to wear and stuff like that.

Q. Is there a point of pride being the team that opens up the college football season? It's you guys and Hawaii, Game 1.

JAYLEN MAHONEY: Oh, yeah, it's a lot of confidence and pride that comes out of that, and we know that we have to make a statement.

But we feel like fall camp is where the games this season is going to be won. So just putting in the work; putting in the work during fall camp and see where the season take us from there.

Q. You mentioned the switch to safety. What were the toughest parts of that transition and what sort of came naturally?

JAYLEN MAHONEY: I feel like the tough -- one of the toughest things for me was covering in space. You know, obviously, the difference between safety and corner is the amount of space that you have to cover. You know, that's whether you're covering a pass or coming down and tackling, as well.

So just cleaning up footwork and stuff like that. We have been really harping on that this spring with Coach Lea's methods and stuff like that. So I'm really excited about

that.

Q. You and C.J. Taylor, how do you think you guys sort of create a duo there in the secondary? He's sort of a versatile player. What about him makes him a dynamic presence on defense?

JAYLEN MAHONEY: I love C.J. and how he plays. He plays with total effort. Like that's what he does. He believes in it. I love the way he runs to the ball and tackles. Like, he's just a playmaker. I feel like he's going to make a big impact for our team this year, and I love, like, he literally plays, like, in front of me, so I love playing right behind him.

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