

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

Wednesday, July 19, 2023

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Kentucky Wildcats

Octavious Oxendine

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Octavious.

Questions.

Q. What have you seen out of Devin Leary so far?

OCTAVIOUS OXENDINE: Just so far I've definitely seen huge strides in his footwork and his, like, mentality as far as willing to learn the playbook, getting out there and wanting to play the game of football. He's a big football guru, but his passion for technique and playbook has definitely taken huge strides.

Q. Similarities between him and Will Levis?

OCTAVIOUS OXENDINE: For sure, I would definitely say there's a lot of similarities, but they're also definitely different. Like I said before, his footwork, and I like the whip he has on the ball, and just his mentality as far as learning the playbook and those strides that he wants to take, I see the Will Levis side in him.

Q. What do you say to those who say that you guys have one of the hardest schedules out this upcoming season?

JASON MARSHALL JR.: Honestly, I feel like it's the only way to do it in the SEC. You're going to play the best all the time, so you might as well just set up a schedule like that just to get your feet wet and see what the road is going to feel like, to see what the path is going to feel like.

We'll have a couple good games before we head into SEC play, so we'll definitely see how we're going to play during the SEC-type games. Any game we go into is week by week. We'll see how it goes.

Q. Justin Rogers, transferring from Auburn, what can you tell us about the player Auburn is getting?

OCTAVIOUS OXENDINE: You're definitely getting a

play-maker on and off the football field. Film room you're getting a play-maker. On the field, you're definitely getting a play-maker.

He made huge strides last year. Just his technique-wise, took very huge strides. We're all in to play under the big triangle Coach Pete. He coaches a lot of defensive line things that we all learned. Auburn runs the same as us. I feel like he'll play good in that defense. So you guys got a good athlete.

Q. When you reflect on last year's defense, what would you like to see done a little bit better for you individually and your unit, the entire defense?

OCTAVIOUS OXENDINE: One of the big things we're big on is just consistency. That's something that we need to get back, to just being consistent with everything we do.

One thing we were definitely consistent in the past years was pass-rushing. We had good guys, Josh Allen, Boogie Watson, J.J. Weaver came back for another year. Something we've always been good at but we need to get back to. I feel one thing we've been focused on is our pass-rush.

Q. We saw a tweet from Stoops about the plane ride.

OCTAVIOUS OXENDINE: It was definitely bumpy. When we first got into the air, it was okay. We started getting closer to Nashville a little bit and it definitely got bumpy, a couple of jumps, stuff like that. We definitely got to looking at each other and talking about the flight (smiling).

Q. What is it like playing for Mark Stoops?

OCTAVIOUS OXENDINE: I feel like it's a blessing just 'cause you don't get that many coaches that's actually player led, like he says he is. In and out of everything we do is definitely player led, from the workouts to the play calling to what we just feel comfortable in what we want to do.

He just lets it come down to us. It trickles right down the tree. Goes to our position coaches to the DCs, OCs, then



honestly just us. Whatever we want to do is definitely a lot player led.

Q. What is the relationship like between the football team and the basketball team at Kentucky? There was talk last year of public comments with both coaches about the importance of their sports in the program. Is it a friendly rivalry? Camaraderie?

OCTAVIOUS OXENDINE: I feel there's no type of rivalry there at all just because we always keep with the basketball guys. I was telling a reporter earlier today, those are my guys. Shout-out to my guys. Canada earlier at Jake's house. They had fantastic time playing basketball up there. And our recruiting class we just got in basketball, like they're the guys.

We're doing good on both sides right now. I feel like we're an all-around good sports school. We've always been top 20 all around. Tennis, volleyball. Anything we do in sports at Kentucky, I feel like we're the top of the line.

Q. Do you consider Kentucky a football school?

OCTAVIOUS OXENDINE: I feel like all-around school, like I just said. We're top 20. You guys can probably pull it up somewhere. Our soccer team is always good. Volleyball just won the national championship a couple years ago. Basketball team just did the same, as well, the women's.

I mean, we're all-around. We're all-around kicking butt at UK.

Q. I know you play defense, but Liam Coen comes back at the offensive coordinator. What do you expect to see differently?

OCTAVIOUS OXENDINE: Honestly just bringing back that monster mind that we all know he has. When Liam left, you probably could say a lot of guys probably didn't like the new offense, things like that, just because they were trying to pick up new things so fast. We run NFL-type offense. It's kind of hard for some of the guys, new faces. Coach always tells us nine days is like the NFL, with free agency you get new faces all the time.

Honestly, just learning the offense. Liam, something that he always does, something that he does best is just simplifying it down for those guys. I feel like that's when they play their best, when they can just go out there and fly around. We got all those good athletes like Robert Seaver. We got Devin now. We got Ray Davis at running back. Jutahn McClain. Just letting those guys go out there and really play ball.

Q. I know you're from Kentucky, but were you a Kentucky fan before you committed to the school?

OCTAVIOUS OXENDINE: Honestly, I didn't really -- I wasn't really a big fan of, like, any college team. I was really open in the whole entire process. It just made it a pleasant one coming to my home state school. It's a blessing, too. We don't have an NFL team. When you get to Big Blue Nation, the fan base is Big Blue Nation, they're all around.

Q. What is your surreal moment your freshman year?

OCTAVIOUS OXENDINE: Honestly, I'd probably say that first night on campus. When my mom left me and I went to sleep, it wasn't even that I missed her so much, I probably say I woke up 3:00 in the morning. I walked outside, and I was like, Man, my mama just let me walk outside, but she wasn't there to tell me to come back inside, so I was like, I'm really grown now.

Q. We have a lot of athletes here this week representing their schools and their programs and teams. As someone who is representing UK, what do you hope for your teammates to learn from you this season and take with them in the future?

OCTAVIOUS OXENDINE: Punch the clock every morning you wake up. That's something Coach Stoops is always big on us: every morning, just punch the clock. There's nothing else for you to do. We're there to play football and academics.

Every morning you shouldn't have no excuse, anything like that. If you wake up ready to go, you should be okay. I feel that's something my teammates should take from me. Just the mentality, whenever you wake up in the morning, always get better. Just get 1% better, that's all you have to do, 1% better than the next man.

Q. How do you describe the Kentucky-Louisville rivalry to people who aren't familiar with the state or the history?

OCTAVIOUS OXENDINE: I definitely say it's one of the best rivalries in college football just because red, blue, right down the street from each other. No NFL team, like I said. When you come to Kentucky, that's one thing about my family, we're military, so moved from Fort Polk, Louisiana, to Radcliff, Kentucky, right outside Fort Knox. When we first moved, it was a big thing for us to pick Louisville or Kentucky. We actually picked Louisville, which is crazy I'm at Kentucky.

It's just a big rivalry. I feel like everybody in the States

knows about it. It's a game everybody always wants to be at, and there's a lot of energy behind it.

THE MODERATOR: Great job. Thank you.

OCTAVIOUS OXENDINE: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

