

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Tennessee Volunteers

Jacob Warren

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have Jacob here. He is ready for questions.

Q. The last two years, two defensive coordinators for Missouri. What has it been the past two years that's allowed you guys to have such success offensively against Missouri?

JACOB WARREN: Man, approaching every single day the same way, right? I think that's truly our mission, is just to go into every week and treat it just how it is, right? It's a game week, it's time to go perform.

Nothing specific I guess against Missouri. We scored a lot of points. We go out there and have success. Just better than them on that day, so...

Q. You've been at Tennessee year two now. You were able to see Joe Milton come in, starting role, now on the bench. How has his maturity through that process? How confident are you in him?

JACOB WARREN: The one thing that built my respect for Joe the most was the fact that he stayed, man. He had every -- maybe not every right, but everyone could understand why he would leave, want to go play, because he's obviously a great talent, a really big weapon for us.

But the fact that he stayed, he just learned from Hendon and also helped Hendon out in a lot of different areas of the game, has truly showed me he's committed to this place, he's committed to being great here. He really likes being here. He loves all the guys on the team. He'll tell you that, too. He gets along super well with pretty much everybody on the team.

Definitely super excited to see him take that leadership into this season and perform the way we all know he can.

Q. You're seen as one of the leaders here in the community and on this football team. What does that

mean for you? Also, how has that been for you with a lot of these young people coming in now, stepping into that role?

JACOB WARREN: Yeah, so whether it was just kind of because I've been here the longest or whether I actually deserve it, I did step into that leadership role a couple years ago.

I am looked at as kind of big bro to a lot of these younger guys. It's helped me grope up a lot. I think where I'm at now and where I was just one, two years ago, personally just the way I carry myself, the way I communicate with people, the way that I handle conflict, different things like that, I've truly seen a lot of development in myself.

I kind of just owe that to the coaches at Tennessee. We do this thing called the program, it's leadership development. Man, just kind of committing to that. It's been a blessing, man. I'm truly happy that I'm able to be here obviously representing not just my team, not just the state, but our fans and myself and my family. Truly been a blessing.

Q. Coach Heupel said upstairs that as good as last year was, you didn't accomplish your goal. How much do you feel there is unfinished business? What is the goal moving forward?

JACOB WARREN: The goal will always be the same. The goal will be to win the SEC East. If you do that, that sets you up to go do everything you want. Opportunity to play in the SEC championship, get the opportunity if you win that to go play in the national championship. Obviously the College Football Playoff is going to look different here the next few years.

If we win those games, you set yourself up for everything you want. That's what he means when he says we didn't get the job done. We had a great season. A lot of people outside the program wouldn't have expected us to have won 11 games last year, go to New Year's Six bowl, win the Orange Bowl.

Maybe not nobody, but a lot of people weren't expecting that, right? A lot of people from the outside would say,



That's a good job, you probably reached all your goals, did everything you were looking out to do. It's not the case.

Of course, that's last year. We've done a good job of resetting. But now the focus is on winning the SEC East and doing everything we can to get ourselves in that position.

Q. What was the feeling leading into the Alabama game, long drought in that series? Is there any reason to believe there's an expanded role for the tight end in Josh Heupel's system?

JACOB WARREN: Man, like I said to him earlier, it's the same thought every single game. We go into the game expecting to win, be able to operate, do everything we plan to do, whether that's execute our run game, pass game, stop them on defense, third-and-short.

There's a game plan every single week. It's about sticking to the game plan, playing your best, your hardest. That week we were able to do it, and we were able to come out victorious. That does do us a lot of good now, thinking about that game, going back to that.

You definitely look back and learn lessons from that. Being a tight end in this offense, it takes a special mind, special person physically and mentally to be able to play tight end in this offense, not because it's super hard, but just because we're asked a lot, we're asked to do things that are kind of the central points of a lot of different plays, whether it's run blocks or a pass concept or something that we're relied on a lot to do things for other people within this offense.

That's something that myself and all my other tight ends in that group truly embrace. We enjoy the fact that we're looked at as the smart guys, right? You couldn't see it because it was under the table, I used quotations. We're kind of that missing piece, kind of what we like to say. We take a lot of pride in being able to do that. Obviously love to get rewarded with some third down catches or some red zone touches and things like that.

Q. You've been at Tennessee for several years now. Going back when Heupel took over, how did he turn this program around way quicker than many people expected? Your decision to stay with Tennessee through the transition...

JACOB WARREN: I think the answer to both of the questions is just the culture. I think it's the culture. That's kind of a buzzword; I don't like using that word.

My friendships on the team, right? How close we are with

each other. Just the fact that, man, we love competing with each other. I think when you love that guy next to you, you love the people that are leading you, we love Coach Heup, all of our position coordinators, you'll go the extra mile to make sure you'll go out and execute your assignment, right?

I think it kind of starts with that. That's how we've had so much success. He came in, changed the culture. He made it known that we are loved, expected, valued, and we are really good football players at the same time.

You add all those things, and you have a lot of success.

My decision to stay, my decision to be here, is the same answer. I truly enjoy being around all my friends, all my teammates. This university has given me a lot. I have two degrees from the university now. Just that alone, having education, being able to set myself up for my future, is super big.

It's also allowed me to make connections, build up my self-confidence. I talked about earlier, the leader and man I've become has definitely been maybe not just because, but this coaching staff and Coach Heup has had a lot to do with that.

Q. We're talking about Coach Heupel and all the success he's had in the last two seasons. Amazing victory over Alabama last season. Then Georgia happened. Georgia seems to be just as strong as they were last year. What is the feeling right now in that locker room in terms of what you need to be able to do in order to overcome that last step and get to the Playoffs, compete for a championship?

JACOB WARREN: Man, it sounds crazy, but the same thing we've been doing, man. You got to go hard every day. You got to put in the extra work. You got to make sure that you're physically prepared and mentally prepared, right? This is a game that is very taxing and very demanding, asks a lot of you in every area of your life.

I think that going into this season, understanding that we should expect to win, we should expect to win every single week. I think everyone around the country would say that, right? That's not just because of last year or where we're at right now.

I think everyone has a competitor goes into the game expecting to win the game. I think taking that mentality and adding it with just the preparation and everything that we're looking forward to do should lead us kind of where we want to be come season time, when we have to play those big games.

Q. The tight end position added a newcomer from London, Emmanuel Okoye. What have you seen and learned about him so far?

JACOB WARREN: Yeah, Emmanuel is one of the most pure athletes I've ever seen in my life. Being completely real, the way he runs, the way he jumps, cuts and move. Everything about him is super athletic, super twitchy. A guy that hasn't been playing football for a long time so needs to kind of develop in the way of -- in football there's kind of a different language you talk.

He doesn't quite understand maybe yet, but we're trying to bring him along, teach him that this is exactly what this means. When he does this, you do this. Different things like that that he needs to develop a little bit more for him to be right before you want him.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

JACOB WARREN: Thank you. Appreciate it.

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