

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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Dallas, Texas, USA

Tennessee Volunteers

Omari Thomas

Press Conference



Q. What is the next step for the defense to be SEC top echelon?

OMARI THOMAS: For us, I feel like as a defense, in order for us to grow, we have to continue to create turnovers. We need to create way more turnovers than we have been, and I feel like that's really the main step forward is that we need to create turnovers.

Q. What have you seen this offense from your defense that gives you confidence that you guys will take that next step?

OMARI THOMAS: You know, we just come in, we compete every day. We always want the best from each other, and we always push the best, whether that's offense winning some days, defense winning some days. But we know as a team, as a whole, we know what we can do as a team, and we look forward to doing that.

Q. Bill Connor is someone who's come in with a lot of hype, a big time recruit from the area. What have you seen from him that's impressed you the most, and do you feel you can contribute on the field this season?

OMARI THOMAS: I feel like Boo has come in with a mindset as a young guy wanting to learn, wanting to be great, wanting to actually be on that field this year, his freshman year, and you see that in a guy who's putting in the extra work, looking up to older guys and is always hanging out with older guys just trying to learn the way fast so he's able to be on the field and help us. He's a great athlete. He's going to make a bunch of plays for us, so it's great to see a guy like Boo doing that.

Q. Coach Heupel obviously played and won a national title when he was at Oklahoma and Oklahoma is going to be their first SEC game ever. What's the mindset going into Norman and playing that game?

OMARI THOMAS: It's going to be a great game, great

atmosphere. Energy will be high. We just have to go in and know that we need to dominate as a team. We need to play our best football. We have to prepare well. We have to come in, do everything we need to do to in order to go 1-0 that week.

Q. You're obviously a veteran in the sport of college football, going into your senior season. What was your "welcome to the SEC" moment where you were like, man, this is actually different?

OMARI THOMAS: I would say my welcome to the SEC moment was really my freshman year going against like Texas A&M, just noticing, man, those guys are real big. I'm used to being one of the biggest guys on the field. Now there's a bunch of guys that we all look the same. That was just one of my real moments that I'm like, okay, we're here, so I'm going to lock in for sure. But it's all been good so far, so that's good.

Q. You're back for your fifth season. Outstanding year last year. Factors that you considered in the decision to come back and play one more year at Tennessee?

OMARI THOMAS: Yeah, I thought about it a lot. It just really came down to me feeling if I could still grow some more as a player, and I definitely feel like there was room for me to grow and improve as a player just in different aspects of the game. I know that for myself, it was a full decision within me, just praying about it and just knowing I want to put myself in the best situation and I feel like coming back to Tennessee and continuing to be a part of the change and pushing the culture that we've created here is something I wanted to be a part of.

We have a bunch of guys who are veterans on our team and a bunch of older guys. So it's good to know that a lot of guys that I came here with and started this whole career, started this change here at Tennessee, and we all get to go out there and do it all over again for one more year, our last year, and just put everything into it so that way we can get the maximum out of it.

Q. Doneiko Slaughter and Addison Nichols, two guys that transferred from Tennessee to Arkansas. What do



you remember about both guys and what do they bring to the table?

OMARI THOMAS: Both of those guys are just great guys. They both are my guys. I still talk to both of them. Neiko, that's really my guy. He was in my class coming in. Addison, going against him just learning him as a person, it's all good. He was literally right across from me in the locker. Those are both my guys. I look forward to seeing them when we play them and having a good time. I know they will do what they're supposed to do over there and it's good to just know that they're doing good.

Q. Yesterday college football's video game dropped, EA Sports. They have you ranked as 83. Do you expect that ranking to change as the season progresses, and were you happy with your overall ranking?

OMARI THOMAS: Yeah, I definitely expect it to change for sure. I expect it to change for sure. But I'm happy with it. At the end of the day, it's a video game. You can't get too down about it, can't get too up about it. I'm going to still play the game regardless if I was a 60. It's just fun to be able to be a part of something that was once before and now they've brought it back. It's a blessing to be in that position and just to know I was part of the game that came back regardless of the overall, but I do appreciate the 83.

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