

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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Dallas, Texas, USA

Mississippi State Bulldogs

John Lewis

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: John Lewis is ready for your questions.

JOHN LEWIS: How you doing?

Q. John, what's your favorite part of playing linebacker? I see you have quite a few sacks. Where did y'all get those arm bands?

JOHN LEWIS: That's Adidas. It's great playing linebacker at Mississippi State. I learned a lot from the previous guys from the past years so it's been great.

Q. What have been the biggest challenges of this off-season with a new head coach and holding the team together amid the transition?

JOHN LEWIS: I mean, it's always a challenge when you come in with different coaches and have to learn new schemes. So I mean, it's been great bonding with the guys and being able to come together and learn everything and being able to, you know, be a family. Everybody is being closer so it's been better.

Q. Going off of that, with this transition, what have been the biggest differences you've seen in Jeff Lebbey and his philosophy with the team?

JOHN LEWIS: Energy. It's been great that he came in, because I feel like we have more energy, and it's more of a family, more than just football. We all are like closer together than we've ever been and our locker room environment is great.

Q. I wanted to ask Coach Drinkwitz yesterday a campaign for Coach Leach to be in the football Hall of Fame. Which I think is a worthwhile cause. Your memories of Coach Leach, when folks ask you about him?

JOHN LEWIS: He was very funny. He was the smartest

guy I ever met, ever. Leach was a great guy, he was very funny. So I mean, he -- he's definitely an offensive guy though, but he was fun to be around but, yea.

Q. Is this your third head coach since you've been there?

JOHN LEWIS: Fourth.

Q. So you're getting kind of --

JOHN LEWIS: It was Knox first, then Arnett. So it was Leach, Knox, Arnett, now Lebbey so yea.

Q. Does that help in any way when you get a new coach? You're used to the routine of turnover and getting things resettled.

JOHN LEWIS: I feel like where I'm at right now is great, because we're not looking forward to another coach right now. So far it's been great with Lebbey coming in and being able to change the environment and being able to bring us in and have a bond with all of our teammates. It's been a challenge, honestly. It's been a big challenge, but everybody likes it and it's very -- it's chill now because once Lebbey came in we all knew he was in it for us.

Q. You said they stress the family idea or the closeness, what is different? It's bringing a team together, I understand that. How do they do that without forcing it on you guys?

JOHN LEWIS: Just being ourselves, having a personality, having fun with the guys. We're not always literally about football. Outside of football we have like a life. So we all have fun outside of football. We all have like get-togethers, we will go to a teammate's house, go out to eat, do little things outside of football, just bond, get to know each other better.

Q. I think back to the LSU game, and if I remember correctly the defense did their part but the offense was off the field wearing you guys out. Do you have a complimentary offense now, maybe helps you guys keep your wind longer in the game?



JOHN LEWIS: Of course I got a lot of faith in this offense. We had faith in them last year, too. It wasn't never a "we don't like the offense". It's just they had their struggles, you know, bits and pieces. So I feel like this year it's going to be way better, way -- it's going to be fun this year.

Q. So you guys aren't going to the state of Alabama this year but in your experience which stadium, Bryant-Denny or Jordan-Hare, has the more difficult atmosphere to play in?

JOHN LEWIS: On our schedule now? Everybody is saying Texas but I don't know because I never been there.

Q. Between Jordan-Hare or Bryant-Denny?

JOHN LEWIS: Auburn most definitely.

Q. Why?

JOHN LEWIS: I haven't been there since my freshman year but it's -- I apologize, we was there last year, right? Last year. It's fun but it's the fans, they're crazy.

Q. Is there a particular game on your schedule that you have circled more than others?

JOHN LEWIS: No, not really because everybody counting us out, so we just play every game like a normal game. Every week we focus on that one opponent. It's going to be great this year. We just worry about the first opponent, our first game coming up.

Q. Do you embrace that? You said everyone is counting you out. Do you embrace that everyone is sleeping on you, the underdog?

JOHN LEWIS: We love it. We can't wait to prove everyone wrong and shock everybody.

Q. I want to ask you, Athletic Directors, I don't know if they have ties to football players but you have a good one in Zac Selmon, are you familiar with him at all?

JOHN LEWIS: Of course. There's probably a picture on Twitter. He was on our shoulder when he first came. Yeah.

Q. (Away from mic.) Football program?

JOHN LEWIS: He brought in a lot of pieces we need that helped us to become a better person off the field and it's like he's done so much that has helped us. I feel like he's done more than enough. We all appreciate him a lot.

Q. Rivalries, OU and Texas bringing a rivalry to the SEC, and I asked another teammate about the Egg Bowl. Tell me about the Egg Bowl, how much it means to the school, the community, the state?

JOHN LEWIS: It means a lot, it's like winning the lottery. Like that goes for both sides, though. That's for Ole Miss, if they win, it's like winning the lottery, but same goes for us, if we win, it's like winning the lottery. So it means a lot, but we're definitely bringing it back to Starkville this year.

Q. What's it been like to practice across from the pace that the offense is using right now? What do you think that tempo is going to look like on Saturdays in the SEC?

JOHN LEWIS: I mean, it helps us a lot, because we have faced a lot of tempo teams with some of the guys that are on defense right now from the previous years. I feel like it helps us so much to a point where I feel like we're going to be -- we're going to be ready for tempo teams this year.

Q. I will pass along your compliments to the Auburn fans with what you had to say about Jordan-Hare, and your former teammate Percy has made a jump to Auburn. What is Auburn getting in Percy Lewis?

JOHN LEWIS: I like Percy, that's my dog. You know his last name is Lewis? Calling each other cousins. That's my guy though I like him a lot. He's a great guy.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Good luck.

JOHN LEWIS: Thank you.

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