

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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Mississippi State Bulldogs Blake Shapen

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Okay, we have Blake Shapen with us.

Q. When you went into the portal what was it about Mississippi State that made them the right fit?

BLAKE SHAPEN: I think it starts with Coach Lebby, got to watch him coach at OU, got to see that offense in person. It was kind of a no-brainer when he got the job at Mississippi State and he contacted me, obviously I wanted to play in the SEC and I heard Mississippi State is a great place so it was a no-brainer.

Q. How would you describe kind of Jeff Lebby and his coaching style so far, what he adds to your game?

BLAKE SHAPEN: No, he's a great dude, he's energetic. He's got a lot of swagger about him. He's a cool dude but he's very knowledgeable about football and offense and having an explosive offense. A lot of people gravitate toward him just by the way he is, his personality. He's a great guy.

Q. Obviously a lot of veteran experience from you. How do you feel like in these early days you've been able to impart your leadership on this program?

BLAKE SHAPEN: I think at first it was tough because I was at Baylor for four years and it's just a new place, new relationships and being able to build relationships outside of the facility. So when we get inside the facility these guys trust me and they know who I am.

Q. We've seen transfer quarterbacks in the past who have missed spring practice, shown up afterwards and it's a learning process. How beneficial is it that you got to go through spring practice with the team and you got those reps in?

BLAKE SHAPEN: Very beneficial for sure. Knowing that I get a whole spring, a whole, what, five, six weeks of

training and going through the offense, the footwork and everything that goes into it. Reps are everything, and so I got to have a lot of reps in the spring.

Q. Blake, I have two questions. A lot of guys on this team are from Mississippi. You're from Louisiana, the south culture and football here. What is it about high school football in the south that prepares you guys to do so well in the big-time stage at the DI level? And could you tell me about your shoes? I wanted to ask about the creativity there.

BLAKE SHAPEN: Football in the south, I feel like we don't have as much nice stuff as Texas and different areas like that. But there is a lot of good football being played in Louisiana all around. I know in our area there is a lot of good football, a lot of good players and I feel like that goes under the rug a little bit of how many great players have come through my high school, the high schools in my area. There's great coaches in the area, too.

But my shoes, I got, Shreveport, and my number, and Romans 12:12 on the left and then I got a baby picture of myself on the right with all my family members' names on it.

Q. You mentioned seeing that offense in person. Do you remember that 2022 game, Dillon Gabriel winning up in Norman when you were at Baylor, and did you get a chance to talk to former quarterbacks of Coach Lebby when you were making that decision to go to Mississippi State or do you know Dillon at all?

BLAKE SHAPEN: Yeah, seeing that in person was a big deal for me. The offense is so fast, it's explosive and I got to watch that in person. No, I didn't speak to any other quarterbacks that have played under him until recently I met Dillon at the Manning camp and we spent a great deal of time together. He's a great guy, he talked about the offense and Coach Lebby and it's good having somebody like that in your corner, too.

Q. Blake, when you look around the league, how would you rate the level of quarterback play in the SEC right now?

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BLAKE SHAPEN: I mean, obviously there's a lot of great quarterbacks in this league. This is why it's the best conference. I feel like it's led by good quarterback play. There are good quarterbacks everywhere, though, so, but it's a blessing to be a part of the SEC.

Q. What did you learn at the Manning camp? What can you say about the defenses in the SEC as opposed to the league you transferred from, the Big 12?

BLAKE SHAPEN: The Manning camp was a blessing. I actually went to the camp as a kid so being able to be a counselor and get to experience that was a blessing. Obviously listened to Ely, Peyton and Archie and those guys, was awesome.

The difference between defense in the SEC and Big 12, I feel like SEC they're going to test your talent and play a lot more pressman and test your athleticism more than the Big 12. In the Big 12 there are zone coverages. You're going to see the zone coverage in the SEC, too, but in the SEC they will test you a little bit more.

Q. Coach Lebby talked about the closeness and the camaraderie and the importance of having it for this group. How have you and your teammates been able to accomplish that this season?

BLAKE SHAPEN: Like I said earlier, hanging out outside of the facility, it's a big deal. You have to build these relationships before the season. You can't just go on to the field and play with somebody you really don't know. So just hanging out, doing regular things like regular dudes do, I guess, and just building those relationships.

Q. Blake, you were a big-time baseball player coming out of high school. You chose football. Are you finished with baseball and how do you make the decision to focus on football?

BLAKE SHAPEN: I would like to say I am finished. It's hard to be like I'm done with baseball, but, yeah, I'm probably done.

What was the next?

Q. How did you make the decision to focus on football rather than baseball? What factors led to that?

BLAKE SHAPEN: After my first year at Baylor I went over to play baseball after the football season, and the quarterback coaches blew me up every single day, like, come compete for the job, and next thing, you know, I was over baseball for three weeks and then decided to go back

and compete for the job.

Q. Amazed at the weight the Manning name carries in football particularly in Louisiana and Mississippi?

BLAKE SHAPEN: Everybody knows who the Mannings are and like I said, to be able to meet those guys, meet Peyton, Ely and Archie, it was a blessing for me. You get to learn a lot of different things from them. Number of Super Bowls in that room combined through three of them. So it was a lot of good experience I could take in.

Q. One of the things Peyton has always been very proud of, it's a no-nonsense camp, not a lot of falderal. Was it really just football?

BLAKE SHAPEN: Yeah, it was. They told us no autographs when we got there too. And Peyton was my favorite player growing up, so I could have easily been that one that asked, but, yeah, it's strictly football.

Q. Going into the season, your teammates said Mississippi State is kind of overlooked and not a lot of high expectations. Do you embrace that underdog role going into the season?

BLAKE SHAPEN: Yeah, for sure. I think we all use that as fuel. We're looked at -- there is not a lot of expectations at the end of the day for us. So I feel like that fuels us in a way that makes us want to go out there and prove a lot of people wrong, and I'm excited. We're going to use that as fuel for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks very much, Blake.

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