

# Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

Thursday, July 18, 2024

Dallas, Texas, USA

**Auburn Tigers**

**Eugene Asante**

Press Conference



EUGENE ASANTE: I just thank God for the opportunity to be up on this stage. My story has been so unique. It's been a roller coaster to this point. I've been through hills and valleys, but I'm so grateful to God that he has kept me steadfast, and I'm here on stage, and I'm so grateful to Coach Freeze and his staff for selecting me to be a player to be up on this stage. I wanted to start out by giving God the glory, but we can get into questions.

**Q. You mentioned you were near the bottom of the depth chart about a year and a half ago. You've worked your way into being one of the team's leaders. What was that like? What was the process like of working your way into the starting line-up and becoming the player you were last year?**

EUGENE ASANTE: Yeah, it was just a process where I wanted to prove to my coaches that they can trust me to be out on the field. That really started with my day-to-day process and how I carried myself in my life.

The coaches have to trust that you're going to make the right decision off the field in order to trust you on the field. I wanted to be a person that is a reliable person in terms of preparation, in terms of everything I do through my day-to-day life, and then that football piece came in in terms of understanding what I had to do on the field and going full force on the field, being somebody that was relentless in terms of his effort and the way he played the game.

I'm so grateful to Coach Freeze and the staff for giving me that opportunity when they did, and I'm going to continue to try to make them proud in all my endeavors.

**Q. Coach Freeze mentioned earlier that Jerrin Thompson has kind of stepped into a leadership role within the defense. Could you talk about his impact since his arrival?**

EUGENE ASANTE: Jerrin Thompson has been a great

addition from Texas. He's certainly somebody that's an elite communicator in the back end. He gets the guys prepared in terms of what they have to do in communicating on different facets and plays.

So he's somebody that the guys lean on in terms of veteran leadership. He's done it at Texas, and he's bringing it to Auburn here. He's certainly been a great guy in terms of just having somebody in a leadership role in that room.

Losing Jaylin Simpson, losing Zion Puckett, losing all the guys we did in the back end, he is somebody that can step into that role and be a leader in that room.

**Q. Everyone is talking this week about your stadium Jordan-Hare and how electric it is and how tough it is to play in. What makes it so special? You have five home games to start. That's got to be a positive and negative.**

EUGENE ASANTE: I think it's such a great thing because the electric environment is created by our fan base. Our fans truly do pour into the athletes and overall want our athletes to go out there and be successful on the field and in their daily endeavors.

So having that fan base, having the fans that truly love Auburn, so going out there, it's such an easy thing playing in front of 88,000 because they truly believe and care about you as an individual. That culture, that rich fan base, that rich culture that is here at Auburn, certainly it's something we take pride in. I'm going to continue to try to make our fans proud in everything we do.

**Q. One of our favorite parts of SEC Media Days is seeing you guys in your outfits dripped out to the 9s, just perfect. Talk to me about your outfit, and do you think you're the best dressed Auburn Tiger here today?**

EUGENE ASANTE: My outfit is hailing from Ghana, West Africa where my parents are from. I wanted to bring my culture into SEC Media Day and let people know a little bit about me and just see that side of me.



I think your other question was was I the best -- I think I'm the best dressed in general. You got to have that confidence being up here, but it's certainly a great thing to see different guys wearing different outfits and bringing it all together for SEC Media Day.

**Q. I'm just curious, four-star recruit coming out of high school, play a lot before you transfer from North Carolina and come to Auburn with expectations and then you have a hard conversation with the coach about moving to the practice squad. I was wondering, at that point in your career what was going through your mind.**

EUGENE ASANTE: Yeah, it was so many things, and that's why I kind of wanted to start out by thanking God. There were so many things that were going through my mind. As a player, my confidence was shot. Just not being able to get onto the field and going to have a conversation with my coach at the time about me playing on scout team, and it was just so much.

I remember wanting to call my coach. I actually called a coach on my previous staff at North Carolina. I was, like, hey, man, Coach, can I become a GA for you? Can I do something in terms of football because I don't know if this playing thing is going to work out for me.

But I'm just so grateful to Coach Freeze and his staff for coming in and giving me confidence. They don't know that they changed my life truly in giving me that chance. I'm forever indebted to them, and I'm going to continue to try to make them so proud in whatever I do.

**Q. Eugene, you lead the team in tackles one year ago. You kind of have and fit the same mold as someone from Mobile in Deshaun Davis. Have you talked to him, and does he give you any motivation in playing the position you do?**

EUGENE ASANTE: Yeah. Deshaun Davis is someone that's one of my mentors. Certainly somebody that is an elite player at linebacker and certainly someone I emulate and want to be like. Deshaun did it on the biggest stage, and he's actually on our wall in our linebacker room. It's four individuals that are our greatest linebackers. Him, Takeo Spikes, and we have two other individuals on there.

It's certainly somebody that I lean on in terms of getting feedback, getting knowledge in terms of the game and what I need to do to be an elite linebacker at Auburn.

I'm so grateful to have him in my corner, as well as Takeo. Somebody that I lean on in terms of leadership and

allowing me to -- teaching me how to lead this team in the right direction.

**Q. You mentioned Coach Freeze and the staff instilled confidence in you. When do you remember that confidence starting to rush back? What do you think that sparked that for you?**

EUGENE ASANTE: I think the confidence really came back in week two against Cal. I was playing week one against UMass last season, and they gave me an opportunity to start in that night game at Cal we had, and just coming into halftime at that game and to just seeing them say, Eugene, you guys are doing well, continue to do what you are doing, and just having them in my corner just breathing life into us and telling us that we're doing a good job allowed me and propelled me to play that game the way I did.

I'm forever indebted to Coach Freeze. I'm forever indebted to Coach Aldridge for helping me and getting me to this point.

**Q. Cam Coleman is a guy that people have been very excited to see. Talk to me about what he brings to this team and to this offense.**

EUGENE ASANTE: Cam Coleman is a dynamic player. He's so dynamic in the way he plays the game in terms of high-pointing the football. He is somebody that's fast in terms of taking off the top of the defense.

The biggest thing I want to emphasize about Cam Coleman, he's somebody that is a freshman that really cares about this game and really wants to be one of the best to ever play this game at this university.

I spent a lot of hours in the film room. I spent a lot of hours preparing my body. Cam Coleman is one of the last guys to always leave the facility. You don't really see that from a young guy, so I'm so excited to see him progress. I know a lot of fans are excited to see what he does out there. I know he's going to make us proud in everything he does this season.

**Q. What can you say about "let's work" and the way that's taken hold as a rallying cry? Not just with you and your teammates, but --**

EUGENE ASANTE: Let's work!

**Q. -- but around the whole program.**

EUGENE ASANTE: I'm sorry. I had to get that in (laughing). To be honest, I think really the guys have

rallied around that saying. That's kind of how I've been my whole life, energetic, outgoing, souped up, energy type guy.

I just implemented that, and I brought that to the team last year. I'm just going to continue to try to embody it. I always say, being an undersized linebacker people try to put stipulations on you or try to put narratives on you, but I feel like the "let's work" saying is, like, just embodies everything I believe in. Just relentless effort. Yet, if you believe I'm undersized, that's fine, but I'm going to show you the way I work, the way I play the game of football, and the way my passion and the love I have for this sport.

Let's work!

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