

# Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

Thursday, July 18, 2024

Dallas, Texas, USA

**Kentucky Wildcats**

**Deone Walker**

Press Conference



**Q. Individual goals for the season, things you've really been working on this past offseason?**

DEONE WALKER: Really just being more of a leader, being more outspoken, outgoing. I'm more of an introverted person, so really just being more outspoken, making sure people are where they need to be, making sure people are doing everything that they need to do in the classroom because I feel like if we got everything else squared to the T, then on the field that's going to come no matter what.

**Q. Deone, how do you become a better pass rusher, and who do you watch? Do you watch film of certain players?**

DEONE WALKER: To be a better pass rusher I feel like just working on my footwork, working on my hand-eye coordination, just getting reps in, working on my pad level, just working on my get-off.

I really watch a mix of Calais Campbell, Myles Garrett, Maxx Crosby. I just like to study those guys.

**Q. Two-parter. First, what has Jamon Dumas-Johnson brought to the defense behind you? Second, have you always had such a quick first step for someone your size?**

DEONE WALKER: Pop, he is a guy. He is coming from Georgia. He knows what it takes to get there. He is bringing a bunch of that national level of experience that I feel like our defense needs.

I feel like I always had a good first step, just with my get-off. Still have to work at my pad level, stay low, but yeah.

**Q. What can you say about the impact that Brock has made immediately, and how has he won over the team?**

DEONE WALKER: I would say Brock, he really -- he wants to get to know everyone no matter what. No matter if you are a walk-on, a scholarship guy, offense, defense. No matter what position you play, we're all in the cafeteria, he is sitting next to anybody that he can striking up a conversation, no matter if it's hunting, fishing, anything. He got a bunch of hobbies.

I, myself, never have been hunting. I only fished, like, twice. That's all new to me, but he is just a great guy. Very uptempo, very high-spirited.

**Q. What's it like playing under Mark Stoops?**

DEONE WALKER: He is like the uncle you always wished for. He is a great coach and a great person. He is a big loyalty guy. I'm a big loyalty guy. He is not going to lie to you. He is going to tell you the truth no matter if it's happy, sad, going to make you mad, if it's mean because he knows -- everybody knows that he is saying it from a point of I want you to be the best version of yourself.

**Q. Does any part of last season feel like unfinished business this year?**

DEONE WALKER: It was really more so just having a bad taste in my -- our mouths, leaving our seniors off with an L last year. We're just worried about week one. We're worried about getting everything squared away and keep the main thing the main thing.

**Q. How did somebody let you get out of Detroit in Big Ten country?**

DEONE WALKER: Michigan was a close second option for me. They're a great program, don't get me wrong, but I just feel like it wasn't the right fit for me.

**Q. What about Kentucky made it the right fit?**

DEONE WALKER: I just trusted Coach Stoops more. He is big on loyalty, how I am. That's one thing that I was looking for because out of anywhere in my top five, top ten schools, you could go and get developed. You know, you



can go get bigger, faster, stronger. Everybody is going to get your technique right. Everyone is going to get you enough reps so you can be ready in game. I didn't just want to be a number. I wanted to be somebody who I know the head coach cares for, you know? He cares for everyone no matter if you are a walk-on, a scholarship guy.

If you need something, his door is always open. That's one thing that I was looking for in a school.

**Q. What do you feel like is a strength of this defense this year?**

DEONE WALKER: We got a bunch of strengths. I say that we play together. We're a bunch of experienced guys. We got years together, but on our defensive line we got me, Octavious Oxendine, Tre Rybka, Kahlil Saunders, Keeshawn Silver, Josaih Hayes. We got a bunch of guys. We got our secondary with three, four years of experience with Maxwell Hairston, who just had a break-out last year, Zion Childress, who has been a consistent player all year, Ty Bryant. He's going to be a sophomore this year. Jordan Lovett. We got Pop and D-Jack in the middle.

We're a complete defense right now, but we just have to work on staying together and never waivering.

**Q. (Off microphone.)**

DEONE WALKER: I don't really know, but I hope it's a good thing.

**Q. A lot of schools in this conference are notorious for home playing environments. You guys have really built something. Are you proud of that?**

DEONE WALKER: Yeah. The BBN, the atmosphere is crazy. One of the best stadiums that I've played in, and I can't -- I'm so excited to call it my home stadium.

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