

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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Ole Miss Rebels

Cayden Lee

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Cayden Lee. Last year you always have coaches tell you that you never know when a single play can determine a game. And there were a couple of games, Kentucky maybe, LSU, where if you made one key play, you might have played for everything. So is that just a great example of you never know the key situation?

CAYDEN LEE: Yeah, it's definitely a good example of you never know which play is going to matter. It could be the first play, could be the last play, could be the 59th play. So just treating every play like it's the best play of the game is very important.

Q. What do you tell people about Coach Kiffin, playing for him and maybe things about him that folks wouldn't -- because they don't get to see him the way you do?

CAYDEN LEE: If you want to see Coach Kiffin in his natural form, you'll come to practice, you'll be listening to Taylor Swift mid-practice and he'll be having coaches doing receiver drills, falling down and all type of stuff. It's just a really good environment.

Q. Lane's known for his personality on social media and jokes. He was talking today about some of the back and forth with Hugh Freeze and some of the other coaches. As a player, what are some of your reactions when you see that? And what kind of interactions do you have at practice with him along those same lines?

CAYDEN LEE: You know, if you're in Oxford, Mississippi, and we're over summer and it's raining outside and you just need something to laugh at, you go to Coach Kiffin's page, and you'll see him on a boat fishing, tagging Coach Freeze and it just gives you a laugh, like, why is he doing that. So, to be able to ask him about it later and go, hey, Coach, why did you do this? And he explains it to you, and it's awesome.

Q. We were talking with some people here at the Hall of Fame earlier today, and they said he's pretty much on the same path as others that would be enshrined in the hall of fame, not just walking around for the SEC media days. In your interactions with him, both the fun ones and for playing, why do you think he's the right guy for Ole Miss and he's a coach that does the right kind of job that could maybe wind up in that future position here in the hall of fame?

CAYDEN LEE: If you look at Ole Miss before he got here versus after he got here, I feel like it's a total change. I remember turning the TV on and looking at old clips of Ole Miss playing and the stadium wasn't packed.

Now we're sold out almost every game. Just being able to see the type -- I'll use this word to make him happy -- the type of aura he has bringing fans to the stadium and everything is really big.

Q. What can you say about the growth and development out of Austin this offseason as he gets ready to step into the starting job?

CAYDEN LEE: We've just seen Austin just take a tremendous jump from being a, quote/unquote, backup, just being able to be that lead starting quarterback in the SEC is awesome. We've seen him just learn after Dart.

We saw him when he went into the Georgia game, and we really trusted what he was going to do. We knew he was going to be the player that he is today. And we really look for big things out of him this year.

Q. What grabs the attention of Lane Kiffin as a wide receiver besides the obvious catching the ball?

CAYDEN LEE: I feel like to be able to just grab his attention, it's just being -- the route detail. He's very big on knowing what to do, knowing the playbook inside and out. Not just knowing one specific spot. So just being able to be a smart player is very big for him.

Q. When you're thinking about playing this season, expanded College Football Playoff, Ole Miss right on

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the brink last year, what's the mindset of the team entering into this season for what you guys are thinking, feeling and talking about as you get ready to make a run?

CAYDEN LEE: We lost a lot of people after last season. Just being able to bring a lot of new faces in and being able to just preach that model. Going 1-0 is all that matters, because everybody wants to talk about the national championship, the SEC Championship, but nothing else matters but just going 1-0 every day and winning the first game, winning the second game. That's the message we have for our team.

Q. You mentioned earlier the idea of changing the culture at Ole Miss from a place that wasn't seen as a football powerhouse to one of the top programs in the SEC. What would it mean to be part of one of the great runs in the history of the program?

CAYDEN LEE: I feel like it would mean everything, just to be a part of that as a player, just being able to carry that with you for almost ever is just awesome. I feel it would do a lot for the community, Oxford, and then the fans as well. They deserve it. We're going to try to do our best to go 1-0.

Q. I wanted to ask you about last year against Kentucky. What do you think the reason that game that y'all had a letdown? Have you reflected on that game specifically? Because that to me is a game that really kept you out of the playoffs.

CAYDEN LEE: Kentucky was definitely one of the bigger ones we want to have back. They just came out and they played one of the best games they played all year last year, I feel like.

I feel like we didn't execute from the first quarter to the fourth quarter. I feel like we might have played a first quarter but slacked off in the third quarter and that caught us.

Just being able to go and play a full four-quarter game will be important to us moving to this next season.

Q. What is the way that you find when working with Austin, and like you said a lot of pieces changed this year -- how do you adjust to maybe the same game plan, of course, is what I'm hearing, but new people bring different skills and you want to play to those skills, how do you adjust to that and learn that after, of course, having successful seasons the past few years with Jaxson Dart and Tre Harris, who really had a consistency that could be expected, and this year's a

little bit different, if you see where I'm getting at, the same success but a different way?

CAYDEN LEE: I feel with Austin Simmons, with him being a lefty quarterback is a total 180 where it used to be. If Dart was going to roll out to the right, now he might roll out to the left.

So you just flip the entire playbook almost. Now speaking more to the receiver position, from De'Zhaun Stribling, to Trey Wallace, Deuce Alexander, from everybody we brought in, I feel -- we kind of revamped. I feel like we're almost better as a receiver room than we were last year. I feel there's almost no drop-off at all.

Q. Do you like the way, going back to the Kentucky question, do you like how the schedule's formatted this year where you're not playing four straight non-conference games; you guys kind of get right into SEC play? I think Kentucky actually week two.

CAYDEN LEE: I feel like it creates a different mindset just being able to know that you have to win earlier. You have to win sooner. You have to win more often. Then just having to play four non-conference games at the beginning, it's kind of tough. I would rather kind of get into it a little bit earlier.

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