

# Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

**Florida Gators**

**Jake Slaughter**

Press Conference



**Q. Just tell me about late last season, going from all the noise to now people saying you're a top-10 team or something like that?**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: It's one of those things, we had a huge mindset shift in the locker room. A lot of guys stepped up into a leadership role that maybe they weren't in before.

We called it a one-day-contract type of mentality. Guys really shifted the way they thought and approached practice and the weights and the training room. It was a tremendous change and a big mindset shift.

**Q. DJ was just in here talking about how the teammates joke with him about his different personality on game day. Can you delve into that? What is he talking about when you see the off-the-field versus when he steps on the green?**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: DJ, he's awesome. He's just a hanging-out type of guy. He goes in about his business. He works his tail off. He treats everything like it's the last thing he's ever going to do.

But then on game day, he's got a different type of swag to him. He's getting everybody fired up. You don't see that from Sunday through Friday, just Saturday.

**Q. (Question off microphone)?**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: I think it was the first game he was going to start, and he gave us a little pregame talk that I don't think we can put on camera, but he got us all pretty fired up.

**Q. LSU got Jack Pyburn. You being an offensive lineman, going head to head. Who is he and who is the athlete that LSU is getting? And also DJ Lagway basically helped propel y'all to beat LSU in a big momentum shift for you guys. What do you remember**

**from that game?**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: Starting off, talking about Jack Pyburn, he's a tremendous competitor. He works his tail off in the weight room. He works his tail off in practice. Everything is a game rep for him. He was a very good teammate to me. But he made a decision for himself and his family.

**Q. T.J. Lagway came in basically on one leg to help beat LSU. What do you remember from that game, and what do you take away from just what he did for you guys as a team?**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: We all have a ton of respect for the way DJ put himself out there even when he was banged up. The type of leader that he is, the type of teammate he is, that's the thing. It's inspiring. It inspires a group of men. We all took a lot from that game and the way he carries himself in general.

**Q. There was talk that Coach Napier was on the hot seat at some point last year. How did that affect the locker room? And just in general what's it like to play for Coach Napier?**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: I'm going to answer the back part of that question first. We all love to play for Coach Napier. I was so fortunate. I didn't get recruit by him. I didn't commit to him. I committed to the University of Florida. I was just lucky that a man of his character and integrity became the coach.

**Q. The first part of the question was about did it impact the locker room at all, rumors about his status as the coach? Did it influence how you guys played?**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: So everybody tries to block out the noise. We're worried about what's going on. But everybody's well aware. Everybody's on social media. You see it and you hear it.

But I think we did a great job this past season of blocking out the noise -- go play for each other, go play for Coach. Let's prove each other right.

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**Q. Do you have a specific game day routine, does someone in the locker room have a specific game-day routine they go through every single game day, like a ritual?**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: I try to be pretty flexible because you'll play a noon kick or 7:30 kick. You won't have a carbon-copy game day.

But one thing I try to do before I run out of the tunnel every week is I try to get a good thump in the head from Tyreek Sapp. He's got a hard head and a thick skull, and I like a shot in the dome to get my mind right.

**Q. Growth in DJ Lagway that you've seen since he got to campus and since he took over the starting role.**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: He's made tremendous strides. It feels like every day he's just a little bit better and he's seeing it better. It's big-picture-playing quarterback. You've got to know everything that's going on.

It's really special to be around a guy like him who works the way he does, who's committed to being the best version of himself.

**Q. You mentioned blocking out the noise, the hot-seat discussion, but how much was it, the actual conversation among the players that we need to do this, whether it's for ourselves or for coach, to keep him on?**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: In our experience, I don't know if we were looking at each other, like, hey, it's on us to keep Coach around. But I think everybody was aware there was a lot of noise about it. I think everybody felt a sense of urgency, like, man, we've got to go out there and perform.

**Q. You guys kind of knocked Ole Miss out of the College Football Playoff conversations for good after you guys beat them. Now you guys go to play in Oxford. Are you expecting maybe a little more fire to that game than usual?**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: We expect all of our opponents to be fired up to play. Anytime we get to go put the ball down and compete, we're excited to go do it.

**Q. You didn't grow up far from Gainesville. Did you make it to the campus for games growing up?**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: We got to go to one game usually every year because my old man would put on the Sherwin Williams tailgate for the store and we would get

complimentary tickets. It was always special.

**Q. Just an early-season trip to LSU and Tiger Stadium, what do you know about that. I know all the games are important but a big match-up in September early?**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: No doubt. We're all super excited. Everybody knows playing at LSU at night is the real deal. That's about as electric as it gets in college football. We're all looking forward to competing in that environment.

**Q. What do you remember about the Texas A&M game last year and going up against that team?**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: They were a really talented team. Across the board, there were a lot of guys, big, strong, fast, real good football players. I remember it felt like we could never get our feet underneath us. It was a tough game for us, but I think there was a lot of growth we got from that game.

**Q. How does it feel at the end of the third quarter when they start that song?**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: Oh, it's electric. You hear that, Tom Petty Won't Back Down, there's nothing like it. You get chills every time it comes on.

**Q. Talked a lot about DJ. He's getting a lot of preseason hype, a lot of attention and odds and such as that. What's it like seeing him in comparison to some of the other names you're seeing out there? Obviously, Arch, Garrett, other guys have done a lot as well.**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: I think that it's a great honor for him to be recognized that way, but he knows just as good as anybody that that doesn't mean anything. We've got to go put that on tape.

**Q. I mean this as a compliment. Do you often get struck for being older than what you are? You don't seem like the average 22-year-old.**

JAKE SLAUGHTER: No, sir, I do get the "you ought to be 30" type.

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