

# Louisiana State University Football Media Conference

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## Coach Brian Kelly

### Weekday Press Conference



BRIAN KELLY: There is my \$10. So let's get that out of the way right away. I paid. I'll take a money order from the advocate. I don't take a check. It might bounce. Oh, yours, it's personal? I thought it was a business expense.

Good afternoon. Just recap the past weekend. Certainly great to get back home in Tiger Stadium for me for the first time and for our team. Obviously getting off to a fast start was absolutely crucial given the way that we kind of were sluggish. I love the way our guys responded on the first play, getting the ball loose on special teams, and then continuing with one of the best, if not the best, first quarter outputs in Tiger Stadium.

Daniels has been really efficient. I think he's led scoring drives in eight consecutive possessions. Defensively played really well through three quarters. Thought maybe our attention to detail lapsed a little bit late.

And then special teams was outstanding with a blocked punt. Certainly did the things necessary in that area that we needed to tighten up as well.

So a good victory, but now we get into SEC competition and everything is heightened. All the things that I just mentioned still have to occur, but our preparation has to be even better, more detailed.

Playing Mississippi State, I have such great respect for Coach Leach, and obviously it starts with the offense. It is a precision offense. It is extremely well coached. And, you know, there is a level of I would say patience and persistence that you need on defense, because if you're trying to disrupt it in one fashion, there are answers that they have.

The answers are tried and true and tested. So, look, this is going to come down to our guys' attention to detail. They're going to have to tackle very, very well. This really puts the tenets of really good defensive football on display.

You've got to be able to not only tackle, but be in really good positional awareness all day. Because, again, this is

a scheme that in some instances -- and I'm not here to compare across the board -- but this is like triple option, right?

The precision of this scheme, the way it is set up, if you are not taking care of your assignment and doing your job, you're going to get exposed.

They've had two quality wins against quality opponents, and, again, it's SEC competition against an outstanding offensive scheme, and defensively, this is a veteran defense. They've got a lot of juniors and seniors playing a 3-3-5 defense. They're salty. They've got some really good players. They play hard. They're well coached. Well coordinated. They've got answers as well.

Again, in terms of superlatives, going back to the offense, Will Rodgers leads the SEC in passing yards, but it's a high-percentage offense, and he can make all the throws.

I think from a defensive standpoint, the guy that stands out is Tyrus Wheat, obviously from right here in Louisiana. He's all over the field. He's from Amite. We'll say this: You're going to see him in a number of different positions, whether it's linebacker, he can play a stand-up, he is going to be moved around, and obviously he's coming back home and he is a guy that can wreck your day if you don't know where he is.

So great challenge for our football team, one where we have to step up our play. It's exciting now that we get into SEC competition in terms of we have to challenge ourselves and our preparation and get ready for a really quality opponent.

With that, open up to questions.

**Q. How much does it mean for the offense getting John Emery back this week, not only for the rushing game, but also for the passing game and helping out Jayden with pass blocking?**

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, we're excited about getting John back certainly. I'm excited for him. It's been a long run for John in terms of getting a chance to get out and play for LSU.

He's worked hard to get back into this position, and now he



gets an opportunity. Let's be careful now. He's been off for a while. To put a lot of expectations on him in the first game, we certainly can't do that. We've got other backs that have done really well, but he will be part of the mix.

And make no mistake about it, we've seen his capabilities in camp. We've kept him active within our rotations, so he's ready to play. We did that with obviously our mind's eye toward the SEC competition coming up.

Excited to get him back.

**Q. When you're going up against their offense, how much does conditioning and substitutions play a role when they can throw it 50, 60 times?**

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, certainly that's part of it. The tempo will be part of what we have to consider. But you're in a situation where you're in nickel and dime a lot as well, so -- and it is a hurry-up offense, but it's not something that we can't situational substitute out.

Again, I think we're kind of used to it a little bit in terms of these guys are in pretty good shape. So we feel confident there. This is really going to be about getting the right players on the field. We may look a little bit different from that perspective in terms of getting guys that can play in space.

**Q. Just wanted to check, is BJ Ojulari going to be available this week?**

BRIAN KELLY: We expect him to be available based upon my conversations with our doctors yesterday.

**Q. Thank you. You talked Jayden Daniels working on evaluating fronts, things like that. What challenge does the 3-3-5 present for him?**

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, it's really good how -- and, again I'm just using words here, so don't take it too literal. How the birds line up, right? It's a 3-3-5 defense, but they can move people around.

So it's recognition of where those overloads come from and where those pressures -- how you slide the front, how do we recognize who are the five to block in the run game?

In the 3-3-5 presents some of those problems, and we'll have to do a great job making it a little bit simpler. You know, we think that a tight end helps in this situation where you can pick up an extra blocker in those situations to clean some things up.

I've gone against a 3-3-5 on many occasions and it does

present some unique challenges. It's very good against a spread offense. Sometimes you look to do some other things against it as well.

**Q. Two questions about the quarterbacks. What did Jayden Daniels do so well after looking at the tape, moving the offense, command, whatever? And then just with Garrett Nussmeier, what are your thoughts and wants moving forward with him?**

BRIAN KELLY: I think you start with efficiency with Daniels. His ability to keep eight drives alive consecutively and turn them into touchdowns. I think that's a great place to start.

So you know, I think there is still growth there, and he would tell you that if he was standing here. There is still growth and recognition.

But he's so coachable. I think I mentioned this the last time we talked about him, is his demeanor when he comes to the sideline. He is extremely coachable, taking in information, talking to the box, talking to me on the sideline where you can get him information and he can pick that up and move on to the next series.

So I like that about him. Look, here's a guy with three years of starting experience, and you can sense and feel that when he comes to the sideline, that you can have that kind of dialog.

Look, I think we've all seen his ability to throw it and run, and he was confronted with opportunities on Saturday where he could have taken off. For example, the touchdown to Bech, right, where he gets to the line of scrimmage and finds on open receiver and let's the ball go.

If we can continue to see that, he becomes very difficult to contain.

So, look, you never want to have a moment where you turn the ball over. Obviously we had a conversation about that. He's got to take care of the football and he knows that. I mean, that's not anything that's something that he feels good about.

But he did some really good things and we have to build off that. I think he is somebody that when you're in that number two position, I'm not here to make excuses for him, but you press a little bit, right? You have another quarterback that's led eight consecutive touchdown drives. You're trying to press, you want to get on the field.

He doesn't need to do that. We have great confidence in him. He just needs to let the game come to him.

**Q. You mentioned great respect for Mike Leach. As best I can tell, I don't think you've ever coached against him as a head coach.**

BRIAN KELLY: I have not.

**Q. Do you have a personal relationship?**

BRIAN KELLY: I've known him for quite sometime. Obviously the tree that he's in we have many, many acquaintances. I know him since the days that I was at Grand Valley State and I was at Iowa Wesleyan. We shared a lot of common acquaintances in the business itself. So we've gotten a chance to know quite a bit about the offensive structures.

Look, there is a lot of concepts that he's run that I was running about 25 years ago as well. So we have obviously run into each other many times along our careers.

**Q. This is kind of your first time through the league.**

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah.

**Q. So what's it like for you trying to prep for maybe coaches and players and philosophies that you're learning for the first time?**

BRIAN KELLY: You know, the previous job I had it was an independent schedule. It was somebody new each week in a sense. We had nine conference games every week. It just feels normal. Like all right, this is a new opponent, but I was so used to having new opponents on the schedule.

It doesn't feel that much different for me in terms of preparation. We have advanced scouting. They do a really good job coming up with their personnel and tendencies.

And it's just a matter of how we're going to attack offensively and defensively. It doesn't feel foreign to me from that perspective.

**Q. As you try to build a program here, if you're able to win against a really good team on Saturday, does it send the confidence and believability meter up? Does that kind of accelerate the process if you're able to get something like that done on Saturday?**

BRIAN KELLY: You know, every game that they play, our guys, is going to be an opportunity for growth. You want that growth to happen through success. Success obviously breeds confidence, and confidence then is an accelerator in what you're doing, right? Everybody can

move forward. Everybody tends to question themselves if the outcomes aren't right.

So, yes to your question, but we're not going into the game looking at it from that perspective. I'm going into this game with the challenge of how we prepare differently this week with such a -- we have to have a better week of preparation than we did last week, because the competition is keener and better.

We have to get our guys to elevate that preparation. That's what I'll be looking for. If we get that, we'll play much better and the outcome will probably be where we need it to be.

**Q. Have you played at any of the other stops against an offense like this, so predicated on throwing almost every down and the way they spread the field and the backs, throw to everybody?**

BRIAN KELLY: Yes. I've had offenses that were quite similar. I would say Syracuse is very similar and runs almost the same offensive structure.

Dino Babers is the head coach who's part of that tree, and have had to defend it on a couple occasions. It's a difficult system.

Look, this requires your offense to be really good as well. Your offense and defense have to be linked together in games like that. Your offense can't be just chucking it down field and three and out. You have to maximize your possessions. You have to be able to make sure you're not giving them extra possessions.

So the linkage between you offense and defense is absolutely paramount when you're playing teams like this.

**Q. You talked recently about really focusing on success rate in the run game. Is that kind of where you want it, or what sort of things do you all need to do to get to the place where you want to be, sort of checking out the right things in terms of success rate in the run game?**

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, we still are focused much more on success rate than anything else. You know, the picture is not really clear yet in terms of where we are at. We need SEC competition to really get into what our success rate is in terms of the competition.

So I think that's TBD for us right now. Our focus will be on success rate, third down percentages, and picking up them as well as yards per carry, per attempt.



So that's kind of where we are right now. I think it's probably too early to make those decisions. Getting Emery back, a back of his caliber, I think helps in that assessment as well.

So I want to answer your question, but I think it's a little early for us to really feel like where are we and how far do we need to go.

**Q. You spoke at length about this after the game with Charles Turner starting at center and then you had Miles Frazier over to right tackle. Is that the same lineup that you'll come out with this week on the offensive line? Is it early enough in the season that you feel comfortable to change things up a little bit?**

BRIAN KELLY: We are pleased with that starting five. I think you can expect to see that moving forward. I think there are some guys that I think distinguish themselves. The true freshman, Emery Jones, played well. I think you'll see more of him in the rotation.

But I feel pretty confident to tell you here today that the way it graded out was what we were hoping for. They're still going to be a need to rotate guys in. Waters is still going to have to play for us. Tre'mond Shorts still going to have to play for us. There's still going to have to be rotations within this group. It's not five for the whole game.

I think you add Emery now, he did some really good things on Saturday.

**Q. A little bit of a two-parter for you. Just you guys expect to have Sevy Banks available this weekend? What do you hope to see from that group this weekend?**

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, good question on Sevy. Sevy is close to being ready. We wanted to make sure that -- look, I mean, he wanted to play in the opener, but our medical team wanted to make sure that he was 100%.

He was probably 90%, and there was really no need. We feel like we're in pretty good shape. This is a game where all hands-on deck at that position.

So the expectation is right now that he's going to be dressed out, and we're going to know here Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday how that eventually puts him in the rotation.

So you're right on. He's at the cusp of playing, and we'll see how he practices this week.

**Q. When you face a team like Mississippi State and**

**they have so many curve balls, does that make you have to adjust the way you practice this week? Are there any sort of adjustments made on that end, or is it just practice -- try to practice more normally and make the adjustments more schematically instead of actual game day practice?**

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah. That's a good question. I think perceptually that people think there is a lot of curve balls. This is dive, quarterback keep, or pitch. There is maybe four or five, six concepts what are run so well and so efficiently, that if you get too cute on defense, that's where you get exposed. Or you try to do one thing to take it away. If you play too much man. If you play too much three-man rush. If you try to be one dimensional defensively, that's where you get in trouble.

This is really about trying to change up your looks, try to make it so they don't see the same thing every time. But they're going to run what they run. They just run it better than you can defend it in three days of preparation.

Again, I go back to that -- I know you are going to get sick of the option triple option analogy, but it's so true in that this is the air raid concept. They run it better than you can defend it in three days.

So you better tackle. You better have a really good plan on some of the things that they really like to do, or you're going to get exposed.

**Q. What is your assessment of how the coaches and players communicated with each other after their first game to make the corrections and adjustments and the personnel changes that went into this second game plan? Where are you seeing that?**

BRIAN KELLY: That's a really good question. You know, game like Southern where it's 51 to nothing at half, those are nightmares for me because you're down to -- you're playing as many guys as possible and you're always looking out on the field doing this, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. All right we got eleven.

Because you got new guys going in and out of the game. We did not have any substitutions errors, and I was really happy with the discipline that our guys showed.

In Florida State we had a couple guys tap out of special teams without communicating, which is totally unacceptable. We had to address that in week one, and it carried over.

So communication is much better. We got to clean up a couple things on the sideline in terms of guys getting down





and sitting down. They were watching the game a little bit too much.

But I think we're getting better to where I want to be, a little bit more disciplined on the sideline. But it was really good for where we were in that game.

**Q. Gregory Clayton got a shot at punt returner.**

BRIAN KELLY: Yep.

**Q. Share a little bit of his story, how he came here, the relationship, and is that the plan moving forward with him, returning punts?**

BRIAN KELLY: Obviously Frank Wilson had a lot to do with that. UTSA transfer. You know, from Louisiana obviously. Here is a young man that obviously we had a sense that he's a guy that could really come in here and have a chance to earn a scholarship.

And he finds himself in week two returning punts. He's a pretty good receiver as well. So we knew we had a really good player coming in, but he's entering into a field of wide receivers where there is great depth. We saw that, right, the other night.

Again, I think another young man from the state of Louisiana that we've seen a lot of this. We're going to play against one. There are so many really good players in this state. I'm just glad we're aware of him as a transfer and he's able to help our program.

**Q. I know Ali Gaye BJ Ojulari were absent in last week's game, but allows you to see Sai'vion Jones, Desmond Little, and you can put Harold Perkins a lot in that role. What is your evaluation on how those guys played?**

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, Sai'vion was what he's been. I think I talked about this after the game: consistent. He is really from a job assignment as good as we have doing his job play in and play out.

Des hadn't played a lot, so it was good to get him out there. There are things he has to clean up in his game, but he's active, he's athletic, and gives us that piece.

Look, you're looking to develop guys that haven't played a lot of football. He hasn't played a lot of football, so it was good to get him out there.

Perkins was playing in our nickel package, and quite frankly, didn't have much time to get ready for that role. But he's such a great kid, accepted it, and used his athleticism to really help us when we were pinched for

personnel at that position.

**Q. If you found something with tempo at the end the Florida State, and then Mississippi State is obviously challenging because they're making you play complementary football in the second half. One, is that just a second half call as far as slowing things down? Two, from experience, how do you balance that?**

BRIAN KELLY: Yeah, good question. I think tactically you have to look at efficiency over anything else.

So if we're efficient on offense, we're fine playing with tempo. If we're not, it's really immaterial. If you're not efficient in what you do, you're giving them easy possessions. We have to look at our efficiency on offense. Not just tempo. It's everything we do.

And you'll see it blend again. You're not just going to see a hurry-up offense go out. You're going to see tempo, see us move the tight end around, change formations, do some things like that.

But it'll be a blend with an eye towards being efficient offensively. When I say efficient, obviously holding on to the football and cashing those in.

We talked about the eight drives that Daniels has had. If we can get near that, we'll be in pretty good shape.

**Q. After the game he was going to have to miss the first two games. Now he got cleared the Thursday before Florida State. How did that affect the way you were all preparing for the season, and now that you're past that two-game mark, what's his role going to look like moving forward?**

BRIAN KELLY: Well, we appealed that suspension. As you know, he was cleared to play, so we got him actively involved right away.

And he was a guy also that, like John, we kept with us hoping that we would get good news and that we would be able to play him. So we kept him active with us and he's got a unique skillset. He's really good in pass coverage. Really smart. Doesn't mean he can't stop the run.

He's not built to be a big-time plugger, but he'll stick his nose in there. He's not afraid. We saw that.

His blocked punt was like teach tape. I mean, it was awesome. He bent, put the low hand out, took the ball off the foot of the punter. Some younger players would've run into the punter in that situation.

So he's a smart, savvy football player, and makes us better when he's on the field.

**Q. I know Saturday night was a small sample size, but how has your secondary, assessment of your secondary gone into this big challenge Saturday night?**

BRIAN KELLY: I think the corners have held up pretty well. Their play has been consistent. It's been on-body. They've played the ball well in the air.

You know, I thought our tackling got better. Greg Brooks playing back at the safety position has enhanced our communication to the level that we felt really good about it.

Putting Ward down in a natural nickel position fits his game as well. I just think the pieces were moved in the right place after that evaluation of Florida State and where we felt like we needed to get better.

So communication on the back end was much better. The corner play continues to be solid. But they will be challenged at a higher level certainly this Saturday.

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