

College Football Playoff Media Conference

Monday, January 4, 2021
Grapevine, Texas, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide

Patrick Surtain, II

CFP Media Conference



COLLEGE FOOTBALL
PLAYOFF

Q. When you watched Ohio State's offensive performance on Friday, whether it was live or on video, what were your impressions, and how much of a challenge is that going to be for you guys?

PATRICK SURTAIN II: They were very dominant in the passing game, in the run game, very balanced, very efficient. We know it's going to be a challenge. We're just going to have to go in the film room and prepare like we need to.

Q. I just wanted to ask you about Mac and Smitty. How happy are you guys for them to be Heisman finalists, and what's it been like for you as a defensive player to go up against those two this year?

PATRICK SURTAIN II: They're probably not as excited as we are, but as a team we're very excited for them. They deserve it. A very prestigious award. They worked hard for it. We're just excited for it tomorrow. Whoever wins it, we're going to be happy for him.

But just going against them guys every day, it makes me better as a football player, but it also taught me going against guys like that when you go on the field, it makes you 100 times better on game day.

It was a great opportunity for me, and with that individual success comes team success, as well. Without the team we never would have known about those awards like that.

Q. How does it help you as a defensive player to play for a team with an offense that can put up 50 or more against anybody?

PATRICK SURTAIN II: It's very helpful. I'd say our offense helps us sometimes. You know, we just go in and prepare like we need to, but knowing the type of offense we have, we're not anxious or very upright at all, knowing what they can do and what they're capable of.

Q. Patrick, where is this team at if Najee turns pro last year instead of coming back?

PATRICK SURTAIN II: You know, when he came back we were all very excited. He's a very good player. But if he wasn't here we'd have had to look to the drawing board, and I'm sure whoever steps in would do great, as well.

Q. I'm curious how much you've watched of Ohio State's receiving corps, specifically Chris Olave who had the big game against Clemson and what you've seen out of that group.

PATRICK SURTAIN II: They're very finesse type of receivers. They've got speed, vertical threats, but they also run great routes. It's going to be a challenge for us as a secondary and as a unit, so we go and watch film on them and prepare like we need to to focus on their concepts and what they like to do.

Q. I was wondering as you watched Justin Fields, I would think you watched a little bit of that game the other night, maybe you didn't, but he got hit in the back, came back in that game, and threw for over 300 yards for those guys. What's your impression of Justin Fields both from what you've heard of him over the years and then coming out of that game on Friday night?

PATRICK SURTAIN II: He's a high competitor. He leads the team the right way. They go off of him, and for him to come back in the game, like I said, that just shows what type of competitor he is and what type of toughness he has.

That team success builds around him. He's a great player all in all.

Q. Pre-injury, how did going against Jaylen Waddle and Devonta Smith in practice every day, that combination of a slot receiver and outside receiver, prepare you for what you're going to see against Ohio State with Garrett Wilson and Chris Olave?

PATRICK SURTAIN II: You know, going against those guys every day in practice is like a game-day type of



... when all is said, we're done.®

situation. So every time I go against them I treat it like a game situation, like I said.

It helps me prepare for the game because you're going to see talent like that in the game. But it just doesn't get any better than that, what you go against in practice, so it helps me get better and see what I can improve on and stuff like that.

Q. I know you probably are thinking about this, but playing at home, how much does that mean to you, and where does it fall in your mind? Does it stay in the back of your mind, or where does that fall in importance?

PATRICK SURTAIN II: It's pretty exciting, you know, to play back at home. But it doesn't matter where we play at. We've still got to play 60 minutes of the football game and focus on what we need to do and control what we need to control.

I'd say it's another game, and just no matter the setting or no matter where it's at, we've still got to play.

Q. You guys have had a couple games against Ole Miss and Florida where your defense gave up a lot of points. What do you think went wrong for your defense in those games, and does that concern you going to play against an offense like Ohio State?

PATRICK SURTAIN II: Going into those games I felt like we wasn't as communicative as we needed to be, wasn't flying around. We gave up big plays due to like mental errors and stuff like that, things that we can improve on in the film room and in practice.

And, you know, we just focus on and control on what we need to do to improve each week. Looking forward to this game. Nothing has changed. We've just got to focus and prepare the right way.

Q. What stands out to you the most about Justin Fields?

PATRICK SURTAIN II: His arm. He's got a tremendous arm. He's very accurate, as well. He can put the ball wherever he needs to, and he's very mobile in the pocket. He's a virtual threat. He can beat teams in multiple ways with his arm and his legs, so he's a good player.

Q. Talk about coming back home; what's the feeling of knowing that family and friends are going to be there to watch you play at Hard Rock?

PATRICK SURTAIN II: It's going to be a tremendous

feeling having them come and support me back at home. It will be a great feeling. I've just got to show out and make them happy, make them proud, you know.

Q. How does it feel to give any advice to anybody from South Florida to be in the position that you are today?

PATRICK SURTAIN II: I'd just say work hard. South Florida, there's talent everywhere. Your name will get called and you will be on a bright stage like this, so just keep working and keep striving to perfection.

Q. A lot of questions about the secondary heading into the season, and certainly you've elevated your game, there's no doubt about that. I'm curious to get your thoughts on Brian Branch and really what you've seen development-wise out of him.

PATRICK SURTAIN II: Brian, you know, he grew each week and he's gotten better. He's more confident out there. He's not a freshman anymore. Like going into the season like this, he's a sophomore, a vet, and he's playing like it, too. The more and more you see each week of him he gains more confidence, and you can see it in his play.

The sky's the limit for him, and he's a hard worker, so you can't take that away from him. So he's going to keep on striving for greatness, you know.

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