

College Football Playoff Media Conference

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Alabama Crimson Tide Alex Leatherwood

CFP Media Conference



COLLEGE FOOTBALL
PLAYOFF

Q. Alex, just talk about Ohio State's front seven, what type of problems they might cause for your offensive line after watching that Clemson game.

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: Their front seven, just like most good teams, they're strong, physical, they're stout in the interior, and they've got really good edge rushers on the edge, and their linebackers are super athletic, can go sideline to sideline. They can hit you downhill. They're a good group.

Q. You mentioned before the Notre Dame game that you guys wanted to prove yourself as the best offensive line. Well, you won the Joe Moore Award. What does that mean to you guys as a unit?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: That means the world to us because that's one of our goals as a group that we've always had, like going into every season I know for me here at Alabama, and it's just a testament to the work we put in to get it. You know what I mean? And just how hard we worked for it, and we're extremely grateful.

Q. I know you were asked a little bit about Ohio State's front seven, but specifically their linebackers, it's a pretty veteran group and they seem like they're both able to rush the passer but also play well in coverage. What are the challenges of playing against a group of veteran linebackers that maybe are hard to deceive?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: I mean, it's going to be challenging because just like you said, their seniors, they're smart. They've played a lot of football, so they know what they're doing, and they're great at what they do. It's not going to be a lot of, like, trick them and stuff like that. We've just got to play football.

I mean, I don't really know how to explain it. We've just got to attack them directly, know what I mean, because they are smart and they are good. So it's just going to be like mano-a-mano.

Q. Similarly to these questions about Ohio State's defense, when you get in a match-up like this where you know it's going to be good-on-good at this level, how much is the excitement level wrapped up for this offensive line for that challenge?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: It goes way through the roof. Like not saying we aren't excited for any game or any opponent we're playing, but we're just competitors. We love to compete, and we're going to step up to the challenge and we're going to see if they want to play football.

Q. I know you've talked a lot about your decision to come back this season. How soon is it to be able to end this season back in your home state of Florida playing for a National Championship.

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: I mean, it's great, me being a Floridian. To be honest, I love Florida. I think it's the best state ever. I'm extremely grateful and happy to have the opportunity to play in the National Championship, of course, but it also being at home in the crib is a great feeling. I'm super excited for it.

Q. Sark was bragging on the leadership of the team earlier, and what makes the leadership of this team so good in your opinion?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: I think it's so good because like the leaders of this team, they like do what they preach, know what I mean? It's not just a bunch of guys just saying one thing and doing another. It's like a collective group of leaders that actually believe in what we're saying, know what I mean, and actually want to accomplish the goals that we're saying and stuff like that.

We just try to like positively affect as many people as we can around us to like get us all on the same page, know what I mean, so I feel like that's the most effective part of it.

Q. What did you think of Najee hurdling the Notre Dame guy, and was that especially exhilarating for the huddle for the offensive players?

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ALEX LEATHERWOOD: Yes, of course. It always is. But to be honest, I wasn't surprised. He's done it so many times over his career here. He's going to do what he does.

Q. A lot was made about heading into that semifinal game without Landon Dickerson and Chris Owen taking his place. Tell me about that experience for your group collectively along the offensive line without Landon in the semifinal.

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: That experience was fun because, I mean, we all had like all the belief that Chris would get the job done, and we feel like he did. And although Landon, he wasn't there playing, he still played like a huge part in the leadership of the O-line, know what I mean? Like being on the sidelines, just communicating with us and telling us the things he saw and things that we could do better and stuff like that.

It was like he was still there, to be honest, because the job was still executed and we still had his presence as a leader there for us, so it was fun.

Q. I just want to ask you, you being a leader on the team, how are you able to get the guys to let them know that we still have unfinished business and we're high off the Rose Bowl and of course you have a teammate that won the Heisman? How do you as a leader tell your guys, look, we've still got business to take care of?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: Exactly what you just said, just tell them directly. We've still got business to take care of. I'm a senior and I've played a lot of football here over the past four years, and they respect what I say because they're going to take it like as-is, face value.

This whole week I've just been telling guys to just seize every opportunity this week to get better, know what I mean? Like sacrifice and invest all your time into this one game for one week, know what I mean? Just buy into all the things we're doing, trust the process, and we're going to get the result we want.

Q. DeVonta is kind of a humble guy, doesn't bring much attention to himself. He's very humble when talking about the Heisman Trophy. Do you guys celebrate that with him? What's he like behind the scenes when he's not at the podium? Is he excited about this thing that happened last night?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: Yeah, of course he is. He's uber excited about it. He's grateful. But one thing about Smitty, he's a great player, but he's an even better teammate and person. I mean, you couldn't ask for a better friend, to be

honest. I've known him since before we even got here, and he's always been just like a great dude, know what I mean?

Of course he's excited about his Heisman or whatever, but I'm pretty sure his focus is still on this National Championship.

Q. What's the best -- what impresses you the most about Najee? He put up great numbers, and yet he kind of goes under the radar with the years DeVonta had and Mac. What's stood out most to you about Najee?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: What impresses me most about Najee is by far his work ethic. We all see what he does on the field and on game day and stuff like that, but what a lot of people don't see is the work he puts in behind the scenes.

He's definitely one of the hardest workers I've ever met, and I'm glad to have him as a teammate because his work ethic, it like rubs off on people, know what I mean? He just attacks every day with a purpose and intent to be the best that he can be, and it's great to see. It's very inspiring, to be honest.

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