

College Football Playoff

Media Conference

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Grapevine, Texas, USA

Ohio State Buckeyes

Jonathon Cooper

CFP Media Conference



COLLEGE FOOTBALL
PLAYOFF

Q. You guys have been pretty open just about how much of a grind this season has been, how much stress it's been. Now that you guys are nearing the end, how are you guys doing from a mental standpoint after going through everything you've gone through as a team to get to where you wanted to go all along, which was this game on Monday?

JONATHON COOPER: Yeah, obviously we haven't been silent about how hard it's been. You know, it's still tough, even though you've got to finish strong, and the message that we've kind of been saying as a team is we've got one more. There's nothing else after this. This is why you play football. This is why you come to Ohio State.

I feel like if you can't do it for one more, then what was the point of going through all that work in the beginning.

Q. Can you evaluate the way you played in the Sugar Bowl? Is that sort of what the whole point was for coming back, that we know how well you were playing in August before that high ankle sprain a year ago? Was that the level of play that you had been building towards all along?

JONATHON COOPER: Yeah, I would say in some way, yeah. You know, I honestly came back for my teammates and I wanted to show the world the type of football player that I am. I feel like I played pretty well against Clemson. I definitely went back and watched the film, there's definitely some things I could get better at, but for the most part we got the job done and we won the game, and that's the whole entire goal.

I really came back to make it this far, to win a National Championship. Just got to finish the job.

Q. I'm interested if you can define for us how you would define success. Obviously success is winning a National Championship this week, but you look at the Sugar Bowl, and by all accounts a really successful

game. You gave up 400 passing yards, but it almost didn't really matter. What are the things that you guys look at to be able to say, yeah, we played really well, this was a successful day, and how are you applying that to your game plan this weekend?

JONATHON COOPER: I feel like when it comes to football terms, success is win. Winning that game, that's what it all comes down to.

At the end of the day it doesn't matter how it gets done. Doesn't matter what goes on throughout the game, plays missed, calls missed, penalties, tackles for loss, sacks, all those things. I feel like success is just when you win.

By all means, looking back at that Clemson game, a lot of the things that happened, they're a really good team, but we won that game, and that's what I would consider being a success or having some success in college football at least. So, yeah.

Q. Clemson's offensive line came into the game, they had a lot of new players and you guys dominated them. That still may have been the best offensive line you've played, but this is going to be a whole different level. Can you kind of describe the challenge that you guys are going to face going against a line that won the Moore Award and obviously is a different level?

JONATHON COOPER: Yeah, first of all, Clemson's O-line is a very good offensive line, the same way Alabama -- Alabama has a very good offensive line.

You know, we just have to come out and attack them the same way we do against every other opponent. Obviously it's a big challenge for us, our defensive line here at Ohio State. They've got some great guys, big guys across the offensive line.

You know, but when you come to play football, that's why you come to Ohio State, to play in these type of situations and to play against these type of opponents. You know, it's no different from I feel like going against our guys every day in practice. We compete against the best here at Ohio State, and obviously Alabama and Clemson both have amazing offensive lines.

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

I feel like we go against an amazing offensive line every day in practice, so I feel like it just makes us even more prepared.

Q. As a local guy growing up in Columbus, just the thought of being on a team that wins a National Championship, what that would mean as a guy who grew up watching Ohio State, and how do you balance that with the football aspect of it, that you have a job to do and that's probably the first thing on your mind? What are your collective thoughts, I guess, this week?

JONATHON COOPER: Yeah, it's special being from here, growing up here, being an Ohio State fan, watching Troy Smith and all those guys and James Laurinaitis and all those guys do what they do.

But you know, the job is not finished here. I feel like I'll reflect on all that stuff later on, but right now my whole entire focus is on beating Alabama and playing our best game as a defense and being that leader for my defense and the team.

That's where all my focus and all my energy is towards. I feel like after everything is said and done, I'll reflect on actually playing in a game like that or being a Columbus kid and having this opportunity.

But for right now, our whole entire main focus and goal is on Alabama.

Q. Obviously a good performance from the defensive line against Clemson. It seemed to be kind of clustered around a handful of guys. If you have to go deeper against Alabama, what is it you've seen from the depth of this defensive line that you feel like holds up well against what might be the best offensive line in the country?

JONATHON COOPER: Yeah, I feel like with this defensive line, we have a lot of -- I don't feel like it's just one guy. I feel like across the board we have great guys, great players, from first, second to third string.

We're all great players that we rely on, that we can put in the game, and I feel like that's what makes us different, is that you can sub guys in and you expect the same thing that you would out of a starter.

And going against an offensive line like Alabama's, I feel like that's key. They're big, strong, physical guys, and throughout the game you're going to have to keep rotating and getting guys in and play faster at the end of the game.

Q. Obviously there's more to being a defensive lineman than just getting sacks, but when you're rushing the passer and you're dealing with a guy who kind of gets the ball out more quickly than most guys, what are some of the difficulties dealing with that?

JONATHON COOPER: I feel like the biggest thing is just -- Trevor got the ball out fast, and I feel like we kind of have to attack this game the same way. Just put pressure on him in any way that you can, whether that's getting hands up, batting balls down, making him feel your presence, collapsing the pocket, really doing anything that you can to make sure the quarterback isn't very comfortable back there and just sitting there taking a lot of time away and finding an open man.

And that helps out our secondary, as well.

Q. I just wanted to talk about you guys have a big game this week. Also, one of your former teammates, Chase Young, also having a big game this week, you know, him playing your position. What can you say about Chase Young that has maybe helped you get to where you are at this position, playing for a national title?

JONATHON COOPER: Well, first, Chase is an amazing player. Obviously you guys have seen him -- everything that he's been doing in the league, and that's to be expected. He was doing that here for us at Ohio State.

I feel like I've learned a lot from a lot of defensive ends along the way, guys like Tyquan, Sam Hubbard who's doing really well, Jalyn Holmes, Nick Bosa, and Chase. Those are all amazing players that have played here, and I've had the opportunity to be teammates with and I've seen how they all play and rush, and I feel like I've just kind of watched and learned from a lot of them and tried to apply it to my own game and tried to be the best defensive end that I can be.

But I feel like at the end of the day just kind of go out there and play my game and just take what I've learned throughout the years with those guys that I've played with and be the best that I can.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.