

College Football Playoff

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CFP Media Conference



COLLEGE FOOTBALL
PLAYOFF

outstanding player, can hurt you with legs and arm. They're a balanced team. They run the ball extremely well. So whatever personnel grouping you're looking at, it's really 50/50 run/pass when it all boils down to it. I think they do a really good job of staying balanced, which I think helps them create explosive plays down the field.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Well, he did a phenomenal job at Oregon, you know, obviously playing with tempo, which, you know, fatigue makes cowards of us all. And, certainly, when they play fast, you lose eye control defensively, you don't get your cleats in the dirt, you don't get ready to play, you get out-leveraged on formations. And that's what tempo creates. And that's something that Chip's brought to college football, along with a lot of other offensive coaches. But Chip's done an outstanding job.

Q. (Inaudible question regarding tempo.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Really good players keep me up late at night. And then we prepare our players -- our offense plays with tempo, plays fast at times, but you become good at what you see a lot defensively in my experience. And Coach Smart does a great job as far as practice schedules of making our guys practice against tempo whether we're getting ready to play against a team with tempo or not because you never know when you're going to get it, so you've got to be prepared for it so -- with some teams. And so I think it's really important that you prepare for those looks. And that's something we spend a lot of time on as far as the tempo is concerned.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Well, very explosive offense. I think they lead the country in explosive plays at 50 yards or more. I think they're second in 40 yard plays or more. Very experienced team. You've got close to 200 snaps on their offensive line. Depending on what personnel grouping you're looking at, you know, nine starters that are seniors. So very talented out wide obviously with Johnson and Williams. But Barber and Davis are really good slot receivers. Davis has got six touchdowns as a returner, five as a punt returner, one as a kick returner. Duggan's an

Q. (Inaudible question regarding Ohio State game and scramble.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: We work on scramble drill a lot. Obviously not enough. We gave up 14 points in the Ohio State game on scramble pass. And we had -- initially, you have the receiver covered and then you've got to win in space versus a very skilled player. And they've got a bunch of skilled players as well as far as TCU is concerned. So something you continue to work on, finish on the quarterback better and finish down the field on receivers better, which, obviously, we have not done a great job of that. And we spent more time working on it.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: As many as you can have. The most exerting thing you do as a football is rush the passer. It's the most exerting thing you do. And when a guy -- when big guys, in my experience, have run out of gas, they're done. There's nothing left. When they're done, they can't help you anymore. So you have to have as many as you can that can go rush the edges, that can go push the pocket in the middle. You can never have enough. I can assure you of that.

Any time we have an opportunity to go a one for one, which means they have subbed or the ball's gone out of bounds and we have a chance to sub, we're going to sub. We don't ever want our big guys playing more than six snaps. We want to be able to rotate. We need to have different combinations of guys probably in there together. And some guys can sustain and play longer than others. But we're going to rotate our big guys.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Very difficult. There's not a lot of men walking around this earth that can do what he can do.



Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: I think it's very difficult to put yourself in a position to be here. You know, I credit Coach Smart a lot for that. I credit this staff a lot for that and these players to be able to stay humble, to stay in the moment, to be where your feet are. And those are things that we constantly are talking to our players about. But the leadership and Coach's Smart's been outstanding as far as managing the moment we're in but also from a staff standpoint spearheaded by him is looking forward to the things that can take us down.

Where do the mighty fall. And those are things we address with our team a lot. And our players certainly understand that. But I credit our players a lot too. They have to have a certain level of buy-in in order to not just practice what you preach. And our players have done that.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Staying there. A lot harder. A lot harder. The pitfalls of the world we're in right now especially. The NIL and who's getting what and why isn't this happening for me and the transfer portal. To lose only one football player going into this game says a lot about our program.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Depends on who it is, but -- and some guys can play longer than others. Some guys, you know, after three -- (indicating).

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Until Jalen gets tired.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Well, there's multiple guys that -- considering the amount of extremely talented players we lost off last year's defense. And to see Pop, Jamon, how he's come along, Smael Mondon. You know, those guys have played really good football for us. Zion Logue, Nazir Stackhouse inside, fantastic job for us. Bobby Beal's had a really good year Malaki Starks as a true freshman. Chris Smith has been a guy that we knew was going to play well and has had a fantastic year for us. The list goes on and on when you've played good football of guys that you are counting on stepping up, needed to step up and certainly a lot of those guys have.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Drew I think is outstanding over the last two years, listening to him message our team, message our staff, I think does a fantastic job of pulling everyone together, understanding the concept of the team and how important that part of it is. And I've been really, really impressed with Drew in his messaging for our football team and for our staff.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Well, a bunch of them last year was burn the boats. He talked about that to our football team, which was an awesome story. Obviously, my dad was a history teacher. So I heard a lot of these stories at home. My dad was a great story teller.

But he talked in terms of that mentality going into a game. But he's had a lot of really good stories. Probably too many to tell and how well he relates with our football team and our staff. And I think that's the biggest -- it's not just a great story, it's relating to the situation at hand and understanding where we are as a team. And I think, obviously, he has a lot of communication with Coach Smart. And their communication and messaging has been really good.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: I think that it's really important because in our society right now, you don't know what messages our guys are hearing. Social media. Negativity. Everyone has a platform. No matter how ill informed and ignorant the platform may be, everyone has a platform. So I think it's really important for our guys to understand the messaging from our organization.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: I don't know. I've never done it before.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: You know, I don't know that it would be one moment. I think it would be his -- to capture his career and tell that story is pretty amazing. To see a guy that dreamed of coming to the University of Georgia be the quarterback at Georgia, which is what he always wanted to do, to walk on, have it not going the right way or see it the way he saw it. To go to Jones Junior College in Ellisville, Mississippi. To come back to Georgia. And when I stepped on campus, I guess a spring ago, he was third string.

And I think Todd Monken said it best. We kept telling him he wasn't good enough and he kept proving us wrong. So Todd said that last -- I saw a quote -- for the Peach Bowl, I think it was. But he kept proving us wrong. And it's a great story about resiliency, persistence, which we don't have a lot of that in our society right now. And a guy that continued to stay at what he wanted and was unwilling to compromise. So I don't think you can put one moment into it. I think you've got to look at the whole story.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: In a month, you can screw a lot of things up.

Q. So this is better?

WILL MUSCHAMP: I like having the time frame we have. You never have enough time. But you can start creating a lot of issues for yourself when you've got a month of what -- the what-if game I call it. What if they do this or what if they do that. Well, they haven't done that, so let's make an adjustment in the game. But that time you have sometimes is too much time.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Well, I thought we interviewed him. And right after the interview, we all knew as a staff that's the guy we needed to hire. Extremely bright. Great personality. Been great with our players. He's brought some good ideas to doing some things a different way, which is always good. You need to have different ideas that inject into your staff. But I think Chidera's got a huge future in this profession.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: You know, Dale's really a guy -- a very physical corner, a guy that's willing to tackle. That's not always the case with some corners but extremely bright, intelligent. I think he's got a great future at Georgia. Really has learned a lot of the stuff, the techniques and the fundamentals of what we work on extremely well. And I think he's got a really bright future at Georgia.

JaCorey really has never played defensive back before. He was more of a receiver, kind of played like an outside backer in high school. So there's a lot of firsts for him. And when you're playing in a complex system that depends on the safety to make all the calls, that's been -- there's been a learning curve. JaCorey is extremely bright. But he's doing a lot of things for the first time he's ever done them. So you have to account for that. And he's, again, got a very bright future at Georgia. He's going to be a

really good football player. He's got ball skills. He can run. He's got girth in his body. He can tackle. He's a willing tackler. He's a grout young man and somebody that I enjoy coaching.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Well, you know, again, a guy that's great resiliency and some tough setbacks with his foot and his knee last year. And then coming back off it -- I don't know that Tykee was probably full speed until about mid season. And he's worked himself into that role. And it's been tough and frustrating for him probably at times with playing time. But a guy that's a really good football player, done a great job when he's had his opportunities in the defensive backfield for us but also done a really nice job on special teams.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Really impressed. Dean Mercardo and Miller are both talented guys. They have a good stable of backs. They do some two back at times. But that's the thing about this football team. Don't get confused. They're a very physical team. They run the ball extremely well. They're very balanced in what they do by personnel grouping. They're about 50/50 across the board run and pass. And that's -- sometimes you get -- you hear air raid, you get a little confused on that. This is a very physical team that runs the ball extremely well.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: I like winning so -- winning games is a lot of fun. So -- but I don't know that it would be one thing for me. I enjoyed -- this is a very enjoyable group of players to be around. It's a great staff to work with. Coach Smart and I, we go way back and we're very close. But just -- I think the day-to-day operation with the staff and the players has been a lot of fun.

Q. (Inaudible question regarding favorite memory.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Well, he caught a touchdown pass against Ohio State that was pretty important. But Quan was a great player for us. My youngest son Whit who is now a junior in high school, he could not pronounce his Qs and Cs when he was little. And when he caught the touchdown pass against -- in the Fiesta Bowl against Ohio State, I remember, Whit came to me and said "Ton Tosby" is a great player, Dad. Well, it's not really how you pronounce his name but it's close. But he was a great player, great young guy, and I hope he's doing well.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Well, again, I think that you -- as a defensive or offensive player, you get used to what you see. So as an offensive line, you get four down, you get three four structure, two overhang backers, you know, most everybody in college football runs some form of that. And now when you go face something that you've never faced before, it creates a little angst, a little uncertainty, how are we going to block this, how are we going to protect this because it's not a normal structure that you've faced.

It's kind of like when you're a defensive coach and you face the option. It's not really something we see a lot, and you've got to be able to adjust and adapt to it. Be no different than you play somebody that's got a two back system now. That's not really something you see a lot. When I first got into coaching, that's what everybody did. So I think you get good and you get more familiar with the things you see. It's just not something you see a lot of. And I think that's what I would equate it to.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Both backs are big, strong, physical guys, run behind their pads. They get north and south. I think a lot of their run game is downhill running game. That's what they want to do. Again, as I said before, they're a very balanced football team. They run the ball extremely well. They have an offensive line that has about 180 starts. They have a very experienced offensive line. They have a quarterback that can hurt you running the ball and throwing it. So that helps everybody within the running game system right there.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Had a bunch against Michigan, and I think Michigan's pretty good on defense. So ran the ball extremely well.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: You got to be able to account for his legs. That's what's very difficult to defend is the off-rhythm plays with a quarterback like him, and he creates a bunch. He creates a bunch of them at creating explosive plays. So you got designed running game, which he obviously does extremely well, and then you have the off-rhythm plays, which he creates a lot of issues for us. So, absolutely, we've got to be dialed in as far as rushing the passer, as far as keeping our rush lanes, staying disciplined in our rush lanes to be able to be able to limit him.

Q. (Inaudible question regarding Jalen.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Well, he's extremely talented. He's a 300-pound plus guy that has fast twitch, has really good block recognition. As far as run-pass pullers. Some guys have innate ability to see and recognize those things. And Jalen has that ability.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Well, we try and create as many one-on-ones as we can. It's hard to chip a guy inside, so that's one thing. But we know people are going to turn the protection to him. We've got to do a good job of trying to create as many one on ones as we can.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: He's a four down player. The most exerting thing you can do as a football player is rush the passer. That's what we've got to do a good job -- we do a good job of managing snap counts in the game and making sure the -- because once a big guy runs out of gas, they're done. I mean, they're not going to regain. It's not like a skill player. So we've got to make sure that we manage those snaps the best we can.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Extremely bright, extremely intelligent, very coachable.

Q. How does that express itself in terms of his growing?

WILL MUSCHAMP: You've got to have guys that are willing to listen, that are willing to be coached. And Jalen certainly is.

Q. (Inaudible question regarding Hamlin injury.) I'm just curious what's the process in preparation like for those rare but extreme medical --

WILL MUSCHAMP: Ron Courson, our head of sports medicine, does a phenomenal job and Coach Smart met with our entire team the next morning explained the injury, the unfortunate situation and made sure our players understood what happened and the circumstances within it and how it happened.

Q. (Inaudible question regarding Chris Smith.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Well, he's been able to accomplish as a safety at Georgia a lot more than the rest of us. I can tell you that right now. And what he's -- you know, the leadership he provides, the work ethic, the practice habits,

you know, he's what you want in a player. I'm a huge Chris Smith fan. Love the guy, how he goes about his business.

And I would say this -- he'll get mad when I say it, but the intangible quality he has supersedes his ability. And that's a compliment for how he goes about his business.

Q. (Inaudible question.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: You've got to ask somebody else. I don't know about that. There's only one Stetson Bennett.

Q. (Inaudible question regarding off season.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: As far as the football team? The entire team?

Q. Yeah. The team, coaches, everyone.

WILL MUSCHAMP: You know, we're very young. And you never really know when you're young what you're going to get, how you're going to respond in front of 80,000 people. And I think that this -- I've said this before, I think our offense kind of let a very young, youthful defense kind of get its footing as the season went. I mean, first ball game of the year, it's 28 nothing and you ain't sat down yet. And so they enabled us to get our grounding a little bit to get some younger guys that maybe have not been in this position before a little bit more grounded.

So I think we've played really good complementary good football, starting out with that, which I think that was critical to let our guys get -- not have to play a tight game early and be able to grow a little bit as a defense. And then as we've continued to grow and progress, you know, they've done everything that I know Coach Smart's asked as a head football coach, that we've asked assistants. I think we've grown in some maturity roles that we needed to grow in. And you credit the players on that. And you credit the structure of our program.

Q. (Inaudible question regarding structure.)

WILL MUSCHAMP: Absolutely. I think that the messaging from coach and from Drew have been outstanding. And our players bought in because they see the success that we've had. And it's easy to sell it when we have success.

So our players understand that there's something we're doing right as far as those things are concerned. But I love those settings, those skull sessions that are really intimate as far as your team is concerned and your players are concerned. And you've got guys that are speaking and telling their story. And you learn so much more about somebody rather than just the football side of things. And I

think those have been really, really beneficial for our team.

Q. What is it about Drew?

WILL MUSCHAMP: I think Drew does a great job of -- it's one thing to tell a story. It's another thing to tell a story that's meaningful that our players will understand. Burn the boats last year going into the championship game. Great mentality. That's it. This is it. This is all we got. But then changing the narrative a little bit here and there that keeps our players interested, that -- and it relates well with our team. And it's a message that Coach Smart wants delivered. And I think it's been huge for us.

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