

CFP Semifinal at the Rose Bowl Game presented by Capital One: Alabama vs Notre Dame

Monday, December 28, 2020
Arlington, Texas, USA

Phidarian Mathis

Alabama Crimson Tide

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Phidarian Mathis.

Q. What's it like going against Chris Owens what does he offer at the center position?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: Chris Owens, he's a great guy, happy to see him step up after Landon being down. And can't wait to see what he goes out and do this week. He does a lot for the D linemen, gives us a great look in the run game, also in the passing game. And he just been great all around, and I'm glad to see him step up and take on this big challenge.

Q. When you look back at your recruiting class, that class of 2017, when you signed, did you realize how much talent was in that class?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: No, sir. No, sir, not until of course after we won the National Championship my freshman year. When I looked around, we did have a lot of great guys in that class. And it's starting to see -- it's starting to show a lot right now.

Q. Wanted to get your thoughts on what it means to be back playing the College Football Playoff as far as the school and the program and playing in the Rose Bowl game itself?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: I feel it's a great opportunity for our team. We came a long way. It's been a long -- not been a long time, but it's been a minute for us, and I'm happy to see us in this position to play for a national title. I just hope we can keep grinding it out, keep playing together as a team and making something big happen.

Q. Away from the field, with all the restrictions and protocols in place, what did you miss? Was it stressful at all? Were there things in particular that you really had to change your life that were difficult or



maybe more difficult than others?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: I mean, I looked at it like it was a challenge for our team. And I feel like as a team we took on the challenge -- we handled it well with the Zoom calls all over the summer. Everybody working out on their own, sending their videos in, sending weight in, just taking on the challenge.

I think we did that very well throughout the summer, throughout the spring. And not only is it showing that we didn't play around, we didn't play around. We really worked our butts off and we didn't back down from the challenge.

Q. You were one of the last to commit as part of that 2017 class. When you kind of signed on the dotted line on signing day, what do you kind of remember thinking about that 2017 class that you were signing with as a whole at that point in time?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: When I signed, I didn't really think -- I really didn't envision the big class that we have. But, like I say, after winning the National Championship my freshman year, I was, like, wow, man you got Jeudy, Tua, Smitty, all those guys. We did have a big class. I'm just proud to say that I'm a part of that.

Q. Can you tell me how important is it for you guys to match Notre Dame's physicality on the frontline?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: It's very important, because the game starts up front with the D line and we've got to be aggressive. We've got to be tough, physical, dominant. We've got to match the intensity up front and just get a defensive spark, also the whole team. So it starts up front with us and just matching their intensity.

Those guys are very good. They run -- recruited really well, got a good quarterback. We've got to get after them.

Q. Want to ask about Will Anderson and how you've seen him progressing over the course of the season and the way he's played these last few games racking up a bunch of sacks?



PHIDARIAN MATHIS: Will has been great for us. He's stepped up and accepted the challenge as a young guy pretty early. I'm proud to see how far he's come. We knew when he came in, he was going to be something special. And I'm just proud to say that he's shown everybody that he's old enough to be mature and he can roll with the big dogs now.

Q. Want to ask about the Notre Dame offensive line, what do you see on tape that makes them so good? Obviously a lot of their players have won awards from the ACC and the AP and stuff like that. What about them specifically stands out?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: They're physical. And, I mean, they're physical up front. There's nothing too bad I can say about those guys. We just gotta come out and do what we do best and play physical.

Q. Looking back now, you have the time to look back on the Ole Miss game, how much did that mean to the season and how much did it change the way this defense played, the way it looked at things?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: I feel like the Ole Miss game, it really gave us a spark. We didn't play as well as we wanted to play. And we just took that game for motivation to get us where we're at now. And we try not to think about that. That's in the past. But it is what it is and we just gotta keep rolling.

Q. Dylan Moses in particular, I'm wondering how big a leader he is on defense and really what he's contributed this year in particular?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: Dylan Moses is a great leader for the defense. He does a lot to get us going on the defense as an all. And we just need him to keep leading us throughout this season, this two-game season, him just stepping up and giving it all he got.

Q. Did you get a chance to watch the Notre Dame offensive line in the first Clemson game and then evaluate the second Clemson game, and what did you see happened between those two games? And also what makes Najee Harris so difficult to tackle?

PHIDARIAN MATHIS: Well, first of all, I think Najee, he runs really hard. He runs low. He's got great balance. He's a tough guy to tackle. That's it.

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