

# Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Georgia vs Cincinnati

Tuesday, December 29, 2020

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

## Coby Bryant Elijah Ponder Cincinnati Bearcats



THE MODERATOR: We've got cornerback Coby Bryant and defensive end Elijah Ponder.

We'll take questions.

**Q. Elijah, why have you been able to execute this scheme so well all season?**

ELIJAH PONDER: My teammates and the coaches, we've been practicing real hard throughout this year. We just kept a great routine, was able to be consistent as best as possible.

**Q. Coby, James and Ahmad got some All-American recognition, you and Darrick also got some all-conference recognition as well. How did it feel to be part of a secondary that had a lot of hype coming in, seems to be rewarded for it?**

COBY BRYANT: It's been fun. We put in the work. We know what we can get if we put in the work. So it's been fun putting in the work together. It's definitely been a ball.

**Q. Elijah, take me through when coach came to you last year about the switch to the 3-3-5, moving out to the edge. How have you been able to take advantage of that, jump-start what's been a great year and a half you've had?**

ELIJAH PONDER: Actually I played on the edge in high school. I made that transition when I came to college. It was a good transition, just going back out there on the edge, showing I could be a versatile player, play from the inside to the outside.

I really believe that it helped show the versatility and all the things that I can do on the D-line within this football program.

**Q. Did you see some of the stuff throughout the**

**season, Pro Football Focus had you ranked as the number one defender in the country. How much of a motivation was that for you?**

ELIJAH PONDER: It was a motivation. I try not to stay focused on the media things, tried to stay focused on winning the championship, doing what I have to do with my teammates. It was definitely a good feeling, a good motivation. I made sure I kept the same grind, same mentality and focus throughout this season, so...

**Q. Elijah, during this time a lot of us aren't getting the chance to go home. You get that fortunate opportunity. It's a business trip, at the same time you're going home. What does that mean to you? What kind of family is showing up?**

ELIJAH PONDER: It's a great experience. This is the first time my family was really able to come to a game throughout what's going on, travel, things of that nature.

It's a great feeling, especially to end off my last one at home. It's definitely a different feeling. Kind of unexplainable. It's a blessing. I'm grateful to be able to do it back at home.

**Q. Coach Freeman said he wants you guys to use whatever it takes to win this game, but he doesn't want you being overly emotional, you guys from Georgia. Do you take any extra into this game? Did Georgia recruit you at all?**

ELIJAH PONDER: I necessarily wasn't recruited from Georgia or anything like that. I was getting recruited by Virginia Tech a little bit, but not Georgia.

I don't necessarily look at it as emotional or anything like that. It's definitely a good feeling. I just come in, I got the same focus and same mentality as it was if it wasn't in Georgia. I'm going there with the right mindset, ready to win.

**Q. Coby, can you talk about the pride factor both with your unit's national ranking, interceptions, the streak your team has in forcing turnovers.**

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COBY BRYANT: Yeah, we just come out and play. We have that mentality, like Elijah said, to take what's ours. We wouldn't get the turnovers without the D-linemen. They help us a lot with the pressure, us doing what we're supposed to do. It just falls in our place.

**Q. Coby, how are there so many guys on your team, specifically the defense, getting NFL looks now?**

COBY BRYANT: It's amazing. We all bonded together on the defense. We're all one. We're all brothers. We're all there for each other. We all put in the work. When you put in the work, it doesn't get unnoticed. We're just forever grateful.

**Q. What do you see from Georgia on film so far, what you guys have studied in practice in terms of what they do well?**

COBY BRYANT: They're pretty good. Their offense is strong. They're pretty fast. We know who we're going up against. It's going to be fun. We just have to play our ball, do what we supposed to do, we should come out successful.

**Q. Coby, like Darrick, you committed to this program on a pitch of blind faith. Played a lot of special teams as a freshman, didn't really crack the regular two-deep rotation. How much does it mean to you to see where this program has gone?**

COBY BRYANT: It's amazing. We just trusted in Coach Fickell's process, just believed in him, put in the work like I've been saying. All of us just coming together as one, just playing football. Like I said, just trusting in the process.

We believed in Coach Fickell from day one. We knew what this program could be if we just followed behind him. So we're grateful for that.

**Q. Elijah, Coach Freeman said when he first got here he wasn't sure if you would play much for this new coaching staff. I'm sure he's told you that. That obviously changed quite a bit. How have you been able to do that? How have you gone from a guy they weren't totally sure about at first glance to being a huge piece of this defense?**

ELIJAH PONDER: The way I did that was just battle through adversity, kept the same mentality, and didn't let things bring me down. I just kept working. I just kept working. Basically I was just grinding, doing what I had to do. Eventually I came out on top, overcame whatever it was that was holding me back. That's what I had to do.

**Q. Elijah, four years later when you say 'attention training', what reaction do you have to that phrase?**

ELIJAH PONDER: Man, attention training, it was definitely a crazy moment (smiling). It was a lot of adversity. At the end of the day I feel like looking back on it now, it brought us to where we are now. It started with coaches, started a mindset.

I look back now and say I appreciate it. At the time it was hectic.

**Q. How close did it come to breaking you? I heard there were a lot of guys that broke.**

ELIJAH PONDER: I definitely was waking up every day just looking up like, Man, do I really want to do this? I kept going with it. Eventually I got through it. I just kept pushing. It taught me something about myself, so... It was a good thing.

**Q. Coby, your brother played for Coach Fickell, played in a couple big bowl games. Have you been keeping track of what you've been able to accomplish?**

COBY BRYANT: My big brother has been a huge help. He's taught me the way, he's taught me a lot, everything I know pretty much. We talk almost every day. He just told me, Don't worry about the atmosphere, just play my game, do what I do. I know he's supporting me. I know I'm going to be good either way, so...

**Q. Elijah, do you know guys on Georgia's roster being that you're from the state? The amount of four- and five-star recruits they've stockpiled, is all that stuff thrown out the window given how you guys have obviously shown recruiting rankings aren't all about wins and losses?**

ELIJAH PONDER: Yes, sir. I know a few of them. I know one that's still on the roster, Julian Rochester.

With the four- or five-star things, at the end of the day we all playing football. We all got to put the ball down to line up, in college. That's pretty much the mindset of how I look at it. High school, I feel like the stars, none of that might matter. Once you get to college, the stars, everybody got to put the ball down. That's just what it is at that point.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thank you.

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