

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

Thursday, December 31, 2020

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

## Kirby Smart

## Luke Fickell

### Press Conference



**MATT GARVEY:** Welcome, everyone, to the joint head coach press conference for the 2021 Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl. We'll have a short presentation to announce the winner of the Dodd Trophy Coach of the Year award, which is managed by Peach Bowl, Inc. To make that announcement we are going to welcome Gary Stokan, president and CEO of Peach Bowl, Inc.

**GARY STOKAN:** Welcome, everybody. We appreciate your support, your interest in the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl. We welcome you to this year's game.

I want to take special admiration to the A.D.s, all the team people, the trainers, coaches, staffs, more importantly the players, give our admiration for what they've had to sacrifice this year, so we extend our gratitude to them.

In 2014 Peach Bowl, Inc., officially assumed the management of what has been recognized at college football's most coveted coaching award, the Dodd Trophy.

The Dodd Trophy is named for legendary Georgia Tech coach Bobby Dodd, was established in 1976 to honor the FBS football coach whose program represents three pillars of success: scholarship, leadership and integrity.

The award honors the coach of a team with a successful season on the field, but equally as important stresses the importance of academic excellence and a desire to give back to their community.

This year's recipient had 69 players earn academic all-conference honors in 2020, a record for the program. Under his leadership, his program has ranked in the top three among all FBS programs in the multi-year academic progress rating for 10 consecutive years.

The team has also earned the highest graduation success rate among all FBS programs for four straight years and became the first Power 5 team ever to post a perfect score

in 2019.

In the community he was named honorary coach of the 2017 Allstate AFCA Good Works Team for demonstrating a unique dedication to community service and desire to make a positive impact on the lives of others.

On the field this year's winner is now the second longest tenured coach in the Big Ten and surpassed 100 career victories at his school earlier this year. He is the all-time winningest coach at his university and has secured four of the five bowl wins in program history.

Under his leadership this year, he guided his team to a program second Big Ten West Division title and a berth in the Big Ten championship game.

On behalf of the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl, and the Bobby Dodd Coach of the Year Foundation, we are proud to honor Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald as the recipient of the 2020 Dodd Trophy.

Before I return it back to Matt, I would like to mention we're blessed to have negotiated and signed with our partner Chick-fil-A a new contract going forward with both the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl and the Chick-fil-A Kickoff games.

Lastly, in this day and time of giving up things, we take great pride in being the number one bowl organization in charitable contribution. We will donate over \$5 million this year to various scholarships and charities from Peach Bowl, Inc.

With that I'll turn it back over to Matt and we'll welcome the two head coaches. Thank you.

**MATT GARVEY:** Thank you, Gary.

We are now joined by our two head coaches. We'll start opening remarks from each of you. Coach Smart, we will start with you. Georgia head coach Kirby Smart, head coach of the ninth ranked Georgia Bulldogs.

**KIRBY SMART:** Just want to say thanks again to Gary and his staff. Known these guys so long. They've always done



such a tremendous job with the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl. Been part of my entire career, which we've mentioned a lot during the week, having played in it, coached in it, been a part of it.

Still disappointed that both teams don't get to enjoy the city of Atlanta because they do the finest job of anybody in the country of entertaining players during this week. That's always kind of the culmination of a season, in which you bring all those players together, they get to enjoy the sights, sounds, venues and food all over Atlanta. I hate that.

Seems like it's been a different bowl week, a lot of bowl practice before Christmas. But since the break, it's been unique that you're practicing kind of at your own location the entire time. Makes it more like a road game because your prep is all at home, then you get ready to go to the bowl site.

Got a lot of respect for Luke, the Cincinnati football team. What a tremendous job they've done there. The more and more you watch these guys, you understand why they win. Sound fundamentally, do good things on offense, defense, special teams.

Like I've said over and over, balanced across the three main phases, are as good as we've played. They don't have holes or weaknesses. Any time you have the number of seniors they've got speaks volumes to their ability to retain players but also keep those guys engaged and have them develop and become good football players in their program.

We're excited. We know we'll have a great turnout, ready to get to Mercedes-Benz.

MATT GARVEY: We'll now welcome head coach Luke Fickell of the eighth ranked Cincinnati Bearcats.

Opening remarks on the state of your team, getting ready to face Georgia.

LUKE FICKELL: Thanks, Matt and Gary.

As Kirby says, I have never been here. I have not had the luxury of being in the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl as a player or coach. Been fortunate to coach a lot of bowl games, but have not been here.

It's kind of tough to say. We're really excited about it. Even coming down last night, having a great dinner, having our guys together. It's obviously different for our guys. What they know is the Birmingham Bowl, maybe the Military Bowl. Even though we were there for a little bit

longer in different venues and practice, they definitely know there's a difference. I think that's what they're excited about.

I said it earlier, obviously Coach Smart and them have done an unbelievable job. I think this is the best football team we've played since I've been at Cincinnati. I might catch a little bit. We played Ohio State last year, but it was the second game of the season. I didn't think they were where they were by the end of the year.

But this is a really good football team. Again, the same thing, all three phases with incredible players and athletes. It's going to be a great challenge.

I think for us and our program, for me as a coach, our guys as players, the only way you can measure yourself, what you've grown to be, what you've done, is to play against the best. So it's a unique opportunity for us to enjoy what we've had the opportunity to make it to.

As I keep trying to remind those guys, to not be satisfied for where we are right now, but it's a great way for us to measure ourselves as individuals, but really to measure us as a program to see where we are, where we've come, how we match up against some of the very best.

We're excited. Can't get here soon enough. I think everything from about noon on today will go pretty quick. The last game we played was an 8:30 or 8:20 game. Our guys are excited about getting up and getting rolling on New Year's Day.

MATT GARVEY: Thank you, Coach Fickell.

We will now open to questions for the media.

**Q. You've talked about the goal for your team being to play and win conference championships. You've done that this year. You referenced how this bowl game is different than what you've played in the past couple years. How has that impacted your approach in talking with the team?**

LUKE FICKELL: I don't think it's changed the approach. Obviously this year is a unique year in how you prepare for a bowl. I still think it's the same whether you're playing in the Birmingham Bowl or the Military Bowl, still you have the same things in mind that you got to be able to do. That's to be able to prep and prepare different this year, the development of young guys you usually get in bowl practice.

But it doesn't change how we go about things. I think it's a greater opportunity for our program and our young men to

really measure themselves and measure where we've come as individuals and as a group against the very best.

In some ways what you do, what you prepare for is no different. I think your ability to kind of step back and really kind of analyze what it is you've done, where you're headed, you get a lot greater feel playing against a team like Georgia.

**Q. How is James Cook doing under these horrible circumstances? How has the team rallied around him?**

KIRBY SMART: He's not with us, really unfortunate. He got the news, I forget what day of the week it is now, I'm lost, but two days ago he woke up to the news his father had passed. He immediately talked to Dell, Coach McGee, reached out. He actually already had a flight. He got a flight home. He wanted to go home and be with his family. We certainly understand that and support him.

Everybody handles these kind of things differently. James was close to his dad. Tough, tough environment for him. I know all the runningbacks have reached out to him, spoke with him. I've spoke with him a couple times. He's dealing with it the best he can. Appreciates all the support of Dawg Nation, all our fan base. Your heart goes out for him.

You remember last year in the bowl game he got hurt early in the game against Baylor, didn't get to finish out the game. I know he knows he's got a lot of football ahead of him. Football is going to be there for a long time. This is a time for him to be with his family. We certainly understand that as coaches and appreciate that.

**Q. Kirby, you expressed a lot of concern at the beginning of the week about COVID. At this point you've about exhausted all those tests. Are you guys going to lose anybody as a result of it? Coach Fickell, you, too, any players out as a result of this virus?**

KIRBY SMART: I haven't really addressed that all year. It's not something that I'm going to start addressing now.

The important thing is the health and safety of our players. The protocols we have in place are there not to only protect our players but Cincinnati's players. I respect both conferences' policies. They've got their testing policies they follow, we have our testing policies we follow. We followed those to this point.

The guys who are able to play will be out there to play. The ones who won't unfortunately won't be out there to play. We have dealt with this all year and haven't disclosed that.

LUKE FICKELL: Same thing. I think the misconception sometimes is obviously we all have issues with COVID, we're all battling through the tough times, but the things that happen because of COVID, as well, that really add up.

I don't know that everybody kind of understands that. It's like the only thing you think about is COVID, and there are a lot of things that happen on the back end, whether you've missed practices, had time off, guys aren't as healthy. It's not just their lungs, the virus, it's the things that happen from guys being off.

We're in the same boat. Leave that to the medical staff. I think that our travel has been really good. We've been really smart. They've done a great job here at the hotel. Hopefully as of now we won't have much of any other issues, us as coaches can kind of maybe take a couple deep breaths and know who we got.

**Q. Kirby, you mentioned the elasticity of 2020 wearing thin. When we talked with your players and assistants, most of them were saying we wish we could play more games this season. Can you speak to that resiliency, what's happened for your program? End of the year you caught some momentum. And the black jersey decision, was that you or your leadership group?**

KIRBY SMART: You'll have to ask Gary Stokan about that decision. That came from the higher powers that be.

As far as the elasticity, I think all our players would rather have played a complete season. We got one game kind of taken from us that we weren't able to play. Certainly would have liked to have played that.

If you asked the players, they would have liked to have played the non-conference opponents in terms of starting out with UVA. They're always going to say they want to play. We have to play by the standards, rules, safety precautions we have in place. Rightfully so.

I know each and every guy, including myself, would have loved to be able to compete and played every game we possibly could. I'm sure Coach Fickell would have loved to play some out-of-conference games as well. That gives you a chance to go out and represent your conference, play others. You really find out a lot more about where you are when you get a chance to do that. Unfortunately we haven't been able to do that.

In regards to the black jerseys, that was probably more so Gary's request. We're obliged. Those kids like wearing those. I don't know exactly the whole deal, but I think it has something to do with both teams wearing their home

jerseys.

**Q. Are you in favor of moving to an eight-game Playoff? A question you'll probably answer, is there one aspect of who you'll be playing tomorrow that worries you the most?**

LUKE FICKELL: Yeah, I think all of us want to continue to play. You could talk for hours and hours and days and days about the Playoff system, what's going to happen. I think I heard Mack Brown or somebody told me Mack Brown said something last night that really made sense to me. When you start to have more guys that maybe don't play in the bowl games, so to speak, opt out, whatever it is, I think the way to continue to keep the stakes high and keep those guys involved might be some way, somehow expanding the Playoff.

I think that's a better idea than just the, We need to give a team like Cincinnati an opportunity to be in the Playoffs, the only way we're going to do that. Everybody earns an opportunity to be in the Playoffs. Sometimes the chips don't fall where they fall. You get your non-conference games canceled, you aren't probably going to have an opportunity.

I don't think we expand just to try to include everybody, but maybe to expand because it's going to keep the kids and the players more involved, which gives our programs a better opportunity to have the success and at least finish off the season the way you'd want to as a whole.

I think there's a lot of things to be said about that.

KIRBY SMART: I would concur with Luke. I've always been of the opinion the decisions and the outcomes and the championships and the trophies should be decided on the field. It's harder and harder every year to agree it's decided on the field because there's somebody arguably that's left out.

Always go back to the year that we were in it, Alabama sits at home, doesn't play in an SEC championship game. They're the four seed. You could argue that, in fact, may have helped them with one less game. They won a national championship from a four seed.

What's to say the fifth seed, sixth seed or seventh seed doesn't get hot, doesn't play well, doesn't have an opportunity to win?

The problem I have is where that clear line leads to what number that is. To say that it's just eight, because that's double four, I think you're going to have major issues at nine and 10. If you'd done that this year you would argue

Luke and I would be sitting here saying we should be in. You're going to have to pick a number.

If we were going to do it, I would be in favor of saying let's go to 12, have eight teams play out, maybe the first four get a bonus or a bye or something like that. I would just rather go further than eight if we're going to do it.

If they did that, somebody within that back five, six, seven, eight is going to win a national championship at some point. That's giving everybody a realistic shot.

At the end of the day how are all college sports decisions made? They're done on the field, in a championship environment. We're one of the few that's not done that way. It makes it different.

I'm sure people can argue just the opposite of that, as well.

**Q. Kirby, the fans when it comes to players that haven't played a lot, that get more exposure in this bowl, will see the game itself. Is there as much if not more value in these guys getting more practice reps leading up to the game?**

KIRBY SMART: I'm not understanding your question. You're saying an example of last year...

**Q. In general we're going to see guys playing a little bit more than they did during the season. Is there as much value in practice reps as there is in what we see on the field in the actual game?**

KIRBY SMART: I don't think so. Those guys, like last year, you take Lewis and Samari, they got a ton of practice reps in bowl practice last year. We don't just practice the ones, we practice everybody. They would have been with the twos, they would have got a lot of reps. Same amount of work.

Sometimes in bowl prep before we get ready for the game, we actually do more reps with the twos because the ones have had the body of work, played the most snaps. In a traditional year we would double up on the twos and threes, they would get more work. In the games, the ones would end up playing more.

I also think you can't value that practice experience they get over that game experience they get. I would argue the game experience is what is so valuable because they get tons of practice experience. What they don't get is that game experience, the nerves of I've got to go out there and be the guy.

Obviously every team in bowl season because of injuries,

COVID, opt-outs, there's probably going to be guys that play more at one position than they have all year. You find out more about them when they go out there and play.

**Q. Another year where your offensive line is going to feature a different look with Ben not there. Can you speak how that's going to look Friday afternoon?**

KIRBY SMART: Yeah, we've practiced a lot of combinations there. Trey was out. Trey was already out the last game. That's not something new. We feel like Van Pran has grown up a lot over this time, be able to play some at center, get some work. He's also worked at guard.

Warren played last year in this game at guard, played last game at center. Jamari has played a lot at guard last year and also played tackle. Xavier Truss, Broderick Jones, I'm excited to see all those guys go out and play.

I completely answered your question (smiling).

**Q. Coach Fickell, you're going to be excited to answer this question. Gerrid Doaks and James Wiggins were a little bit banged up in the title game a couple weeks ago. Do you have any updates on their status?**

LUKE FICKELL: We have another practice today, so we usually don't make those decisions till after the practice today to see how they are.

But that's kind of some of those things that I was talking about earlier about everybody just talks about COVID. There's a lot of other factors that even come along with maybe some of the COVID. James Wiggins coming back from COVID and being off for 14, 15 days, what we saw happen with him in the last game.

We don't know. We still got some time left. We'll go out and practice today, see who we've got.

**Q. Just with 2020, how the season has played out, pandemic, having to adjust, what lessons will both of your teams take from this season moving forward, whether you win or lose? The uniforms are nice, fans really like it. Can your fan bases expect a little bit more moving forward?**

KIRBY SMART: The thing I would take from 2020 is mental agility. You just better be able to change. Walking on the practice field, when you find out so-and-so is out, next guy has to bump up. He had all the reps. The other guys have to take it.

You found out at flex because it took them 27 hours to get

the test results back. You better be able to adapt and change rapidly. Never ever, ever, ever give up. Don't quit on it. Keep fighting, pushing through. We're teaching our kids some valuable lessons.

There's a lot of people in the world today, in America today, I'm not going to say use COVID, use the pandemic maybe to do less. These kids have actually done more, okay? They've done more through the pandemic because they had to work twice as hard to stay available.

They had to practice twice some weeks, meaning practice for Missouri once, practice for Missouri again, practice for Vandy once, practice for Vandy again, practice longer.

I'm proud of the fact I had to work twice as hard, and I did. I didn't take the easy road. It would be easy to say let me stay home and avoid some of these things. I'm proud of that.

As far as the uniforms, I don't really get into the uniforms. The players do, the recruits do. I like listening to my players when it comes to that. A lot of our design came from Nike. They come up with the ideas, then we say whether or not we're going to jump onboard with it.

I don't like distractions and things like that. If it's important for the players, I like for them to know beforehand. I'm not big into surprises for the locker room.

LUKE FICKELL: I would go right along with Coach Smart. For us as a coaching staff, for me as a coach, the availability to improvise, adapt, continue to overcome, never too high, too low. With all the interruptions you've had to deal with this year, starting all the way back from last March of time off, the balance between your players as you come back, your ability to kind of understand the situations.

We were in camp when the Big Ten and the Pac-12 canceled. Your ability to manage, our ability to manage, the emotions of our kids, the ups and downs, I think was something that I don't think any of us as coaches will ever forget. Hopefully we all learn from it.

I think for our kids in general, as well as the coaches, you find out a lot more about yourself in these kinds of times. The high, high end people, high end kids, obviously deal with these things a lot better because they're more disciplined in what they do.

I think it has kind of exposed or helped in a lot of ways. I told our guys, this year, six, seven months, can be a real benefit for all of us, for you guys in particular, 18- to 22-year-olds for the rest of your life, if you can handle and



manage all the things we're going to go through.

You don't really know what you're made of until you're thrown into some of those situations. That's what I'm so excited about for our guys, see them make a decision in camp to continue to push forward, not knowing what is at the other end, whether it's going to be a bowl game or even a season, a good season or a bad season, to continue to keep their heads on straight, keep pushing, grinding.

We went through camp at a normal time, came back, had three and a half weeks till our first game. The decisions they made, the ability to kind of handle it, has told me a lot about them. I know it will benefit them in the long run to whatever it is that they do.

**Q. Kirby, how many early enrollees have practiced with you on campus already? Your impressions getting to see them up close for the first time?**

KIRBY SMART: I wouldn't single anybody out of that group. I called them up yesterday, their last practice, I talked to them. I don't even know exactly. I would guess and say nine maybe, eight or nine. I think we had three DBs, a linebacker, two linemen, a receiver and runningback. Whatever number that is maybe.

They all did a tremendous job. I mean, you talk about an intimidating environment. I'm walking in, most of these kids, they usually come where they've been on official visits, know guys, hung out with guys. Literally it will be the first time I've seen some of them face-to-face other than maybe ninth or 10th grade in camp. I'm worried about recognizing them.

They were out at practice, did a tremendous job jumping in. They were able to help us with our numbers being down. We were able to help ourselves. I left out the D-line, had a couple of them there, too. They were able to help us out in terms of practice and depth and give us a good look.

It's always exciting to get those guys out there.

**Q. After Friday's game, you'll be looking towards the 2021 roster. The transfer portal is new to a lot of people. We don't quite understand how you handle it. Can you give us some insight into how each staff monitors the transfer portal, who is watching it, how you reach out to the kids, how many kids have already reached out to you?**

LUKE FICKELL: That's a bomb right there to be honest with you. I mean, when it first started, I think we were monitoring it every day with our recruiting people. It's overwhelming, to be honest with you.

We're in the fourth year of our program. It's not a big way we want to build our program. I'm not saying we still don't monitor and look at it. We use it in a way that obviously can better our program. A lot of those guys that we have taken via the transfer portal in the last couple years are guys that are coming back home, somebody that we've known for quite a while, we recruited coming out of high school, we have a relationship with at one point in time.

Like anything, you think it might look better, but in reality it's not always the case. Then you always got to worry about your guys, too. I'm not a big fan of it, to be honest with you. I've said it from the get-go. I don't think you want to give kids easier ways to take the easy route where they could throw their name in something, think it's going to be easier if they go from Georgia to Cincinnati or whatever.

I think it's a balance in a lot of ways. I know we don't want to build our program that way. All of us are going to use it maybe specifically on something they might need.

KIRBY SMART: I would just say ditto because, I'll be honest, he said everything that I would want to say.

The only thing I would say is we don't have to monitor it because you guys do so hard. Every time somebody goes in it, you write an article. We don't have to monitor it, you guys do it for us (laughter). As soon as somebody is in it, we know.

I think people think we have people sitting down there checking on the ticker every three minutes. Since y'all are checking the ticker every three minutes, I don't have to. It will be a story on the front lines that so-and-so jumped in the portal.

It's a need base for us. If I had my preference, I would rather not use the portal because schools like Cincinnati and Georgia shouldn't have to, you should be able to go out and recruit the right kind of guys.

**Q. This will go down as the year of the virtual meeting and Zoom. Can you talk about both the advantages of what Zoom and virtual has brought you and also the disadvantages.**

KIRBY SMART: I guess the advantages for us is you might save a little time gathering together, staff meetings. We still do most of our meetings by Zoom. We have one or two staff meetings a week where we're all together. But to cut down risk, people being in closed spaces for a long amount of time, we do a lot of stuff by Zoom that we never would have done before.

As a coach being in an academic meeting, he's working on a script that they're not talking about his players, now he's sitting on Zoom, he's able to do what he's got to do, not sit in a meeting away from his office. He can be at his desk multi-tasking. That can be a advantage. It also could be a disadvantage if it's a distraction for you.

In recruiting it's very different. I never probably would have gone face-to-face with as many prospects via Zoom if they were coming to our campus. Now I get to see them face-to-face any time I want by FaceTime or by Zoom. You start to use those things more often, but that's the biggest difference for us.

LUKE FICKELL: I would say no benefit other than I've become a little bit more tech savvy. I don't know if that's a benefit. I got young kids at home, if I need something done, they can teach me how to do it.

I don't like it. It's a means for what we have to do this year. It's made us improvise. If anything it's made us learn how to adapt. But we love to be face-to-face. To have a meeting where you can't look a guy in the eye, get a response, is very, very difficult. We've had to do it. We've had to manage it.

We've done a better job at finding ways to still keep us together whether they're in big, big spaces, which isn't as good either, but I've found those ways to create other ways to communicate.

Big group meetings are just so tough on Zoom because you can't get the responses, you can't tell who's not sure what's going on based on a look. Same thing in recruiting. We have to do it, but I don't enjoy it.

Whether it can help you with efficiency and maybe in time, to really build relationships and get to know people, for me, it's difficult. I know the newer age kids are much more adept at it. They find dates on Zoom and social media. I don't think it's a good thing for us in our program how we like to do things.

**Q. Coach Fickell, on the transfer question, you don't like the term 'Power 5'?**

LUKE FICKELL: Then why do you keep saying it?

**Q. Just to bother you, apparently (laughter). I know you have played some Power 5 non-conference games. In a game like this, specifically on offense, is there any impact or benefit from guys like James Hudson, Michael Young being in this game coming from some top tier programs?**

LUKE FICKELL: I think they got a better grasp of what they're going to see. Anybody that says there isn't a bit of a difference probably doesn't know college football as well.

There is still a difference in what I call the bluebloods on the top, top end and all the others, whatever conference they're in.

I think in some ways, yeah, it does. James Hudson obviously at Michigan, Michael Young at Notre Dame, I think they have a good grasp of playing against those guys. I think maybe they can give some insight.

I don't know that it's going to be that much different. We played Ohio State, a great opportunity for us, last year which I think gives us a little bit better indication of the type of players we're going to see, whether it's the transfer guys or the guys within our program.

It's not hard to turn on the film, have an idea of what it is you're looking at that might be a lot different than what you've seen most of the year. But that's what you love. If you're a competitor, what more could you ask for than to be able to measure yourself against the best. That's what you're challenging for.

**Q. This has been such an exhausting year. Do you know what you're doing after this game? Are you sending your players home for a while or do you not want to risk that? Do you have any feel for what the next few months is going to look like in terms of an attempt to get back to normalcy? Is it too hard to predict?**

KIRBY SMART: I've got plans to go see juniors, seniors. I'm going to visit with guys on our roster. It never stops. You know that as well as anybody. It's just the beginning of the next.

There won't be any time off in terms of that for us as a staff because our 2021 team will be shaped from the minute that game ends, this game ends. It starts taking shape probably the second it ends. It begins to take shape.

We'll be visiting with guys, sharing time with their family, sharing information, making sure they can make good decisions in what they do.

As far as for our players, school starts back January 13th, which is very unique because we've always had 3rd or 4th start dates. They went from the game back to school, which I never think is really fair for guys not to get a true break. It's been part of the burden of bowl game when you have a guy and he has to practice the whole time, doesn't get to go home. All of a sudden he comes right back to

school.

I'm very happy that our players get to disconnect a little bit and go be with their families, who they haven't been able to be with. They got a little time for Christmas, two or three days. Now they'll get up until the 13th to be with their families, visit, do what they need to do and come back.

We'll be in protocol when they come back, continue to test, do things like that.

LUKE FICKELL: Very similar. I think for our guys, knowing that have an opportunity to go home, we start back on the 11th. We'll get most all of them back to campus. The idea is the 10th. There still could be some things virtual. We have a guy that is from Germany. We're going to allow him to go home for two weeks.

It is a good opportunity for those guys that have been here, haven't really gone home, haven't really seen their families much at all, to have at least hopefully nine, 10 days to be able to leave.

For us as coaches, obviously you have a list of plans on what you got to do. For the first time maybe we have to do a little bit like what Coach Smart has to do, visit with a few of our juniors just to see where they are, what they want to do.

The unique thing is, I'm going to be visiting and going around with probably a few of our senior families as well. Some of the opportunities that they might have, which is going to keep us probably a bit busy. I'm going to try to do it as much myself to try to give hopefully some of these other guys an opportunity to get reacquainted with their families a little bit, decompress.

We have plans, the same thing. We don't know how it's going to look, how it's going to happen, we have plans to get rolling back on the 11th building this team and program for the following season. I know it will be different. It will look a little different, different protocols.

I think after a year like this, I know we'll do some things a little bit different with the older guys as opposed to the young guys. We got a long way to still go, especially with the young guys in our program. We're going to lose a lot of really good seniors.

**Q. I hope I'm not breaking protocol to ask a question to Gary. The jerseys, I am guessing that had to do with TV. Can you comment on how that worked out?**

GARY STOKAN: Kirby is too kind to me, given me way too much credit. I know the Georgia Bulldogs had the

opportunity to wear the uniforms they wanted. I've always professed to coaches and A.D.s in our Kickoff games and bowl games, I just think the field looks great when you have both teams wearing colored uniforms. Looks great on TV and on the field.

At the end of the day both Coach Fickell and Coach Smart made their decisions on their uniforms.

KIRBY SMART: I guess I should say it was brought to me in a light that it was encouraged to be colored. I'm assuming we both couldn't be in red, therefore somebody couldn't be in red. That was the way it was presented to me. It wasn't a narrative where we died to wear black. It was where we had to wear one of or two dark colors, only two colors.

LUKE FICKELL: I'm a lot like Kirby. I find out what we're wearing usually on Thursday of a normal game Saturday when our social people send out the reveal. We have a little small group of guys, three or four seniors and the strength coach, that kind of decide on what we're wearing. They give me the update on it. I'm similar, I don't want some surprise.

Our kids love and enjoy mixing some things up when we have an opportunity because we have some combinations to be able to do it. It was presented to me the same way probably it was to Kirby.

**Q. Coach, you've mentioned the Ohio State game a couple times. How do you use that with these guys to say maybe it didn't happen the way you wanted it to, but this is just as good a team, allows us a chance to prove ourselves on that type of stage?**

LUKE FICKELL: It's always a measuring stick. I think this year obviously being unique, the bowl game being unique, it's not as much of a bowl game experience. Unfortunate for our guys. The experience is, hey, if you're a competitor, you get an incredible experience. If you were really excited about we're missing out on some things we could have done here in Atlanta, I feel bad for those guys. But ultimately if you are a competitor, you get an incredible experience of playing against the very best.

We had an opportunity last year to measure ourselves against some of the very best, didn't do as well. Hopefully we learned as coaches and players there's some things you got to do a lot better when you're playing against the best.

All those experiences give us an opportunity hopefully to grow. We'll find out if we did.



MATT GARVEY: That will wrap it up. Coaches, we thank you very much for your time. We appreciate it. Well done today. We're certainly excited and looking forward to a great and incredible game tomorrow. We wish you the best in your final day of preparation. We'll see you in the stadium tomorrow.

KIRBY SMART: Thank you, guys.

LUKE FICKELL: Thank you.

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