

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Georgia vs Cincinnati

Friday, January 1, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Coach Luke Fickell

Desmond Ridder

Coby Bryant

Cincinnati Bearcats



Georgia Bulldogs 24, Cincinnati Bearcats 21

LUKE FICKELL: Obviously like I told our guys, very disappointing when you come out so close, but it's not -- we're not disappointed. I can't tell you how proud I am of -- I say the seniors all the time, but how proud I am of all these guys and all the different circumstances and all the things that have gone on not just this year but especially in the last probably month and a half, and how these guys have handled it and continued to move forward and take care of one another is what this game is really all about.

It hurts. Every one of those guys in there hurts because they care so much and they have worked so hard and sacrificed, and it is what it is. We'll be better because of it.

Q. The game came down to the last offensive drive. Why were you snapping the ball with so much time on the clock, and what went into the decision to throw on the third down?

LUKE FICKELL: What was the first question?

Q. Why were you snapping the ball with so much time on the clock?

LUKE FICKELL: I didn't hear what you said.

Q. Snapping the ball with so much time on the clock gave Georgia about 20 seconds, and to throw on third down, giving Georgia 40 more seconds.

LUKE FICKELL: Is that, really, are you serious? Because we're going to play to win. We play to win. And you know, we do what we do. It wasn't like we wanted to throw the thing. It was an opportunity. It was three different options to it. You know, we're not going to go back wondering and trying to play the wishing and wanting game. We're going

to be aggressive. We are going to go and give our guys an opportunity. There's a lot of different things we do different when you go by hindsight, but we are going to play to win.

Q. What a great game. Crazy that you have to be on the losing end of it. What is the most important thing you'll take away from this team this season, even though you guys were able to come up short on an undefeated season, and what was Georgia doing differently in the second half, or was it something more on you guys' end?

LUKE FICKELL: I think we'll always take away the commitment that these kids have had this year for this. Nobody that has -- it's not a coach, it's not a part of your training or doctor staff knows what everybody in this program and all the programs around the country have gone through this year. It's easy to sit back and watch and wish there were more people in the stands and things like that, but what these kids and guys have gone through, these young men and what the coaches and doctors and everybody has gone through, I don't think you'll ever forget the sacrifices and the commitment from a lot of people. I hope every one of our kids remembers that because this is what life is really about, and you've got to make sacrifices, you got to grow up no matter what the situation is.

Q. Coach mentioned the options on that last third and two play. Can you go through the call on what those options were and how you saw it unfold?

DESMOND RIDDER: It was a smash concept with Josh Whyle coming into the flat. We were expecting to get it to him quick. It was only one, two yards we had to gain, and then their corner had jumped outside of it, all the defensive push to our spot route at five yards, and then they cut Mike loose. The ball just didn't get -- the ball hung up in the air what felt like for an eternity. But if that ball would have gotten up and down quicker, it would have been a completion.

Q. I was curious, you had a couple of plays where you were in third and two and had some false starts on offense. Was there anything in particular you were seeing? Was it the shifts from the defensive line that

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was causing issues?

LUKE FICKELL: We've had some issues this year with that and when you're mixing guys around in there, you know, as the season is going to be, whether they are injuries or what's gone on this entire year, these are those little things that more and more you have to clean up.

It's happened to us late in the year because of layoffs and things like that, but that's no excuse. They are shifting their movement, and people are going to do that. We have to be better at those things, that's for sure.

Q. How much of a factor was the DQ of your starting tackle in the first half? How much did that affect the game, do you think?

LUKE FICKELL: I don't know many offensive linemen thrown out of the game this year, but it happens. When one guy goes down, another guy has to be able to step up. We had a couple guys in the last few days, or even the last few hours, who couldn't make it, as well.

Q. We've talked about it and you mentioned it as a measuring stick, and I know you didn't win the game, and you had the lead for all but three seconds of the game, and you went toe-to-toe with a Top-10 team from the SEC. Where do you think you measure up against the best of the best?

LUKE FICKELL: We're not there yet. That's what keeps motivating you, and I think that, you know, there's a lot of things we're going to take from this that we know we can do.

But it also helps us and makes us hungrier to say, hey, we know what we've got to get to, and there's a few other steps that we've still got to be able to take, you know, closing it and sealing it and those kinds of things are one of those steps.

Q. You had a great season overall, but now with this loss, how do you put this in perspective? What do you think about the season overall?

COBY BRYANT: For it to be my last year, I had a ball. I appreciate all my teammates. We were all together as one, my brothers. I just had a ball. I'm disappointed in the loss. Obviously I wanted to win, but I wouldn't go to battle with nobody else besides my brothers, so I'm extremely grateful for them and Coach Fickell.

Q. Can you describe the emotion of playing in this game?

DESMOND RIDDER: It's been a wild week we've had. Not a normal Bowl experience where we come down for a week. Instead we practiced at home till Wednesday and flew out here and had almost like a two-day business trip. We've been ready to play this game for a long time. It's just, you know, disappointing, obviously, the way it ended.

Q. Quite a few guys out today. How proud are you of these guys for stepping up and really not making it -- didn't miss a beat with so many key guys missing.

LUKE FICKELL: Words can't tell you. And it's because of guys like these two right here that are leaders that didn't bat an eye at a -- James Wiggins or Ahmad or Gerrid Doaks. These guys went right to the next guy. And it's hard on some of those guys who just jumped in. Jerome Ford had to be thrown into a lot more action, but when you have a guy like Desmond Ridder that you can look at, making calls and the guy that's kind of the energy to all that they do, it makes it a lot easier. They will never know how proud that we really are about how they have handled a situation the entire year, but that's what sends you away proud.

Q. Can you just tell us what was going through your mind on the 14-yard touchdown to Josh? Can you tell us what was going through your mind?

DESMOND RIDDER: Like you said, it was about time, and then keep my eyes down the field and trust my O-lineman and then let play-makers make plays. Put the ball up and let them go make a play. It wasn't a perfect ball. Josh is one of our play-makers and he made a play.

Q. You mentioned playing to win on that third and two call. We've seen you go for it in some of those fourth down situations. Knowing that was the call, how much consideration was there on fourth down?

LUKE FICKELL: There was. You know, but again, you rely on your defense and -- you know, so there's a lot of things that you go back and try to look at and say, hey, there's things you can do differently, but it was definitely a consideration.

I think that the difficult thing, as big as they are up front, knowing and trying to get some of those short yard situations, I don't know that that was the greatest advantage for us. So we were going to put it in our defense's hands and give them the opportunity to win the game for us.

Q. The fact that you came so close today, do you feel you guys can compete against any Power Five school?

COBY BRYANT: Absolutely. You know, we have the right coaches to prepare us, the right mentality. So absolutely, I have no doubt in that.

LUKE FICKELL: He doesn't know what that means. We don't use that word, that P, whatever that is. They know what the SEC is; it's the really, really good conference with really good teams and great players.

But we don't look at anybody any different. Obviously there's conferences that are, you know, historic and great and teams, Georgia, doesn't matter what conference they were in and what P was in front or after their name. That was a great football team and really loved the challenge.

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