

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Georgia vs Cincinnati

Friday, January 1, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Jack Podlesny

Chris Smith

Nakobe Dean

Georgia Bulldogs

Georgia 24, Cincinnati 21

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by our student-athletes, kicker and Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl MVP Jack Podlesny, defensive back Chris Smith, and linebacker Nakobe Dean.

We'll open it up for questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Jack, I guess obviously as a young kid when you're practicing in the backyard, which is one of those situations, cliché, that you dream about, think about. Is that how it always went down in your dreams?

JACK PODLESNY: Yes, sir.

Q. Take me through it.

JACK PODLESNY: I just had faith in our defense and offense that they would stop the other team. I told coach before the game, I was good inside 55, 54 yards. Our offense drove. Once we kind of got there, I tried to slow my breathing because I didn't want to rush anything, I didn't want to overcompensate for anything.

Snap from Payne Walker and hold from Jake, unbelievable. I tried to follow through with the kick and it went in.

Q. Jack, how important was today's game for you guys? What did you do differently in the second half? Was it communication?

JACK PODLESNY: I just think our team, we came back at halftime, we knew that we hadn't given enough effort, that we needed to give more.

It was honestly, like, we wanted to just send the seniors out



with one more win. As Coach Smart said, they're the most winning senior team there's been in the program. So I'm happy to help with that in any way.

Q. What was the significance in honoring James Cook's father today? Did you feel like you kind of won this for him? Have y'all talked to him since the game ended?

NAKOBÉ DEAN: I haven't talked to him. We definitely played the game for all the seniors, definitely him and Travon, he wasn't able to make the trip because of COVID reasons. All them together, we played the game for all them.

CHRIS SMITH: I agree with Nakobe. We had a lot of guys couldn't be here, guys that went through trials and tribulations. It was great for us to be able to get the win for them and Azeez.

Q. Chris, one of the seniors, Richard LeCounte, got to play on the last play. What kind of impact did he have with him around have with you guys? How cool was it to see him get out there one last time?

CHRIS SMITH: He had a huge impact. Like I say, he always gave me tips when I was on the field, helped me out a lot. Very special to see him get out on the field on the last play and go out on top.

Q. Jack, you said you were good from 54 or 55. Would you have liked to have seen one more four- or five-yard completion to get it into a more comfortable range?

JACK PODLESNY: I mean, any day I'd like a few more yards just to feel a little bit more comfortable. Whenever they ask me to go out there and perform, I try to do my best. Whatever yard line I'm at, I try to take it the same way.

Q. Jack, Kirby said, I don't mess with Jack. He doesn't come over and say anything to you. Is that something that you've asked for, Give me my space? Is that just the way it works out?

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JACK PODLESNY: I've been here for three years now. I think he's kind of started to learn how I react to things, whether it's negative or positive. Just not to kind of come in my bubble.

Q. Chris and Nakobe, was there anything said at halftime about the way the defense played? Obviously they spit that long run out. After that, I think they had 22 yards in the fourth quarter.

CHRIS SMITH: The message was to keep chopping and not give up. There was a lot of opportunities we missed in the first half that we capitalized on in the second half. Obviously they got that long run. After that we looked at each other and told each other we got to buckle it down if we're going to win this game. That's what we did.

Q. Nakobe, would you care to comment on that as well?

NAKOBE DEAN: At halftime we came in, we looked at what we had to fix and everything, basically all our mistakes and everything. Basically we had to buckle down, fight through adversity. It's something we've been doing this whole pandemic, doing that the past four or five months. It wasn't much, just keep fighting and persevere.

Q. Jack, are you watching the team on the last drive or are you doing what you have to do on the sideline to get ready? If you are not watching, what are you doing?

JACK PODLESNY: At the beginning of the drive I'm over in the kicking net, I'm starting to warm up, just kind of get my leg loose again, kind of keeping an eye on the clock especially just so I know where we're at, whether we're going to have to call a rushed field goal.

As they drove down the field, I felt comfortable that I was warmed up. I went further down, just stayed there and made sure that I was there ready to go if I needed to be called.

Q. Jack, Kirby said he thinks it helped you that Cincinnati didn't have any timeouts, didn't have to think about the kick too long. How much did that help you going out there? The TV cameras looked like they caught you after the kick kneeling down in a moment of reflection or prayer. What was that moment? What did it mean to you?

JACK PODLESNY: So first part of the question, yes, I would say it was helpful they didn't try to ice me. I think it would go both ways, though. Going back to the Arkansas

game, first game of the season, they tried to ice me. I hit the goalpost.

So that actually helped in my favor. I think it goes either way.

Second part of the question, just trying to remember why I'm here, God put me here, God is good, because it's just amazing to be here.

Q. Chris and Nakobe, with the defense putting up eight sacks on the day, continuous pressure on Ridder, if you both could discuss how these moments and Azeez's performance in particular provided that much needed momentum?

NAKOBE DEAN: The person they put in at quarterback definitely in the second half was big. Coming into halftime, that's one of the main things we said, we had to contain the quarterback because he was running around making plays. We knew he was a good player coming in.

Second half we got on him. I basically told them that, we basically discussed that we need to do better containing him. I feel like in the second half we did.

CHRIS SMITH: That was the focal point at halftime, getting pressure on the quarterback and things like that. We have full belief in our D-line they could do it. We just didn't capitalize in the first half like we did in the second half.

Azeez's performance, he puts in the work every day. It was expected. It was great to see him go out there and make a lot of plays for us.

Q. Jack, when is the last time you made a game-winning field goal in your life?

JACK PODLESNY: That was my first one ever.

Q. Didn't have one in high school either?

JACK PODLESNY: No, sir.

Q. They said on the radio broadcast, that is the longest game-winning kick at Georgia since Kevin Butler's 60-yarder in 1984. How do you feel when you hear that?

JACK PODLESNY: It's pretty cool.

Q. Jack, was there anything said to you after the game in the locker room that kind of stands out to you by anybody?

JACK PODLESNY: I mean, just the endless support from everyone coming up, giving me hugs, high fives, everything. But one thing I think just standing out the most was people coming up and telling me the glory goes to God, that God had my back there.

Q. Christopher, overall rough day for the secondary, but you settled in in the second half. Only 32 yards on 27 plays. What happened to come together in the secondary? You were missing some parts. In the end you guys on the back end got it done.

CHRIS SMITH: A lot of it in the first half was just communication and anticipation. In the second half we came out, we made sure we was talking to each other, calling plays out early, just taking stuff that we learned from the film room to the field.

We got a lot of adjustments from the sideline, everybody comes up the sideline, get right on the bench, take the adjusting from the coaches. They helped us out a lot. A lot of other players on the team helped us out a lot. That brotherhood came through today for us.

Q. Nakobe, George Pickens last couple games, what he's meant for the team. Obviously you and him are sophomores. Are you curious to see how Azeez and Jordan Davis are going to be back with you?

NAKOBE DEAN: It's great to have George on the team. He's definitely a big part of our offense and everything like that.

Azeez, it would be great to have him back, to come play with me again. If they do choose to go onto the draft and everything, they do have my full support. They're my brothers for life.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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