

# CFP Semifinal

## Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl:

### Georgia vs Ohio State

Monday, December 26, 2022

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

### Ohio State Buckeyes

### Ryan Day

#### Press Conference



**PLAYOFF  
SEMIFINAL**



**MATT GARVEY:** We'll start first with Coach Day. Coach Day, if you would, maybe just start off with a short opening statement on how preparations and travel to Atlanta and preparations for the game have been going so far.

**RYAN DAY:** Sure. Got here last night. Had a really good practice today over at the stadium. Everybody here has been great. Gary and his staff have been excellent. Everything was really well done.

We got here and just got off the field a little while ago, meetings, and looking forward to a great week here.

**Q. I know that you wanted to be playing on conference championship weekend as Georgia was, but getting that week and focusing on Georgia that week, any ways that you think that you're seeing that pay dividends in the weeks since then, the practices you've had, either tactically or just in terms of attitude, focus, that sort of thing?**

**RYAN DAY:** Well, I think the whole month has been a really good month for us. As a team, really have gotten a lot of good work done.

It started off -- we always do this when we're preparing for a bowl game. We kind of break it up into fundamentals, game plan, and then the game week as we're here in Atlanta now.

But I think that there's been a focus on really high levels of execution. I think there's been a focus on just overall physicality at practice. I think, as we finished our work in Columbus, you could see there was just an energy as we headed off down here to Atlanta and then that continued today.

So we'll see as we get towards Saturday, but I can say that our guys have been working hard, the staff's been working hard. There's a level of urgency that we know we have to play our best football here in this game, so we're going to continue to prepare as hard as we possibly can, on the field, off the field, and make sure we have a great week here in Atlanta.

**Q. Just to build off a couple things there, Georgia is obviously a very physical team. How important is it for you to match their physicality? And as you said, I don't know that Ohio State has played an entire 60 minutes of top of their game football. Do you agree with that? And how important is it that that happen?**

**RYAN DAY:** Well, the good news is we have great experience being in this style of a game. This is our third time playing in the CFP in the last four years. But we have some really good examples to draw upon of what is going to transpire in this game.

So we've been talking to our guys about how -- first off, just how much excitement there's going to be at the stadium, the atmosphere, the electricity, and how when you're in games like this, every yard is a fight. Every first down, every point is going to be that way.

So we've been preparing that way. We've been practicing that way, and we'll continue to do that throughout the week because we know what a challenge we have here.

But when you get into the CFP, certainly there's just a certain level that we have to make sure we're preparing for. I think our guys have been doing that, and they're working hard, and the leadership is going to have to play really well in this game. Our older guys, our veteran guys are going to have to lead the way because we know in big games like this veterans have to play veterans.

So certainly have a great challenge and a great opponent in Georgia, we know that. They have a lot of great

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weapons. Certainly they play a high level of football. They're defending national champs and certainly undefeated this year. So we know what we're up against, and we'll continue to prepare for that.

Certainly looking forward to this week as we head to Saturday.

**Q. Ryan, this is going to be one of those games where Georgia has guys you recruited, you guys have players that Georgia's recruited. What's it like as a head coach when somebody on the other side of the field that you recruited is having a day against you?**

RYAN DAY: Well, it's a small world. Football is a small world, now even more than ever. You end up recruiting guys, and then you end up having played against them or even have them come back in the transfer portal. There's only so many players out there.

There's only so many people typically that fit your profile too. So we run in small circles, and we know a lot of the people who play at Georgia. We know their families. But that's similar to a lot of the teams we play.

Now with training and the way that recruiting goes, you're in touch with a lot of people, you recruit a lot of people, and they've done an excellent job of recruiting. They have a lot of really good players on both sides of the ball in all three phases with Georgia, and Kirby's done a good job of recruiting.

So we know those guys. We know how talented they are and obviously how well they're coached. We have a challenge ahead of us. To your question, we're kind of used to playing against guys that we know about and that we've recruited against.

**Q. Ryan, if you would go over the logistics just a little bit of you guys deciding to get in on Christmas night. Did you guys Christmas together, for lack of a better word, and then just wondering what your practice regimen is like? Are you guys still hitting and stuff, or is this install? What's the week ahead look like from a preparation standpoint with all this bowl stuff going on in between?**

RYAN DAY: Sure, sure. Yeah, we did. We got in last night and had a little dinner for everybody last night, which was great. Appreciate Gary and everybody at the Peach Bowl doing a great job for the families and have a lot of family and children here in the travel party. So there was a Santa Claus here handing out gifts for the family, so that was great.

It was a quick flight down for those who were on the charter. There was a good portion of our team that wasn't on the charter. They were flying in from different parts of the country as we gave them a couple days off before we headed to the bowl site.

Got here, and then it's going to be a typical week. Went over there and practiced today, and we'll keep our routine our routine. We're going to try to do the best we can to make the hotel here our Woody Hayes Athletic Center and make Mercedes-Benz our Woody Hayes Practice Facility, and I think that's part of the process of being at the bowl site. So try to keep things as normal as possible.

**Q. Ryan, when you guys get to the bowl site and you start these practices, how much different are they than the days before Christmas? Is it just like a normal week? And how hard is it to keep a normal week when you've got all of the bowl activities that come with being in Atlanta for a week that surround everything that goes on with the semifinal?**

RYAN DAY: I think that's why you have to keep as many things routine as possible because it is a little bit different. There are some things that are not normal, like you said. So how many things can we possibly just keep the routine so that when guys are here at the hotel or over at the stadium, they can kind of visualize where things are and keep the routine the routine so they don't have to really process too much there and they can focus on getting on the field and doing a great job in their preparation and practicing.

The Peach Bowl and everybody at Chick-Fil-A Peach Bowl does a great job of setting up these events and organizing things, that the guys have things to do, but I think our guys are going to do a good job of staying focused on what's really important here and that's playing the game at 8:00 on Saturday.

**Q. Just had a question about the uniforms you guys are wearing, the playoff threads with the thicker gray stripes on the sleeves. You guys have worn them in all the playoff games since you've been the coach. What do you like about that look that's kind of been your predominant playoff look?**

RYAN DAY: We try to honor the traditions and try to do the best we can in that area and make sure we're doing a great job. That's been something we've done here in the past. Our guys like it, and we've got good feedback on that. So we decided to do that again this year.

**Q. There are a lot of brackets in the skill positions on Georgia's depth chart. I'm wondering, as we prepare**

**for Georgia, how does that affect the difficulty when they're rotating so many running backs, receivers, tight ends, et cetera?**

RYAN DAY: Well, they've done a great job recruiting and have depth at so many positions. So I know one of their -- something they take a lot of pride in is playing a lot of depth in offense and defense.

I think, like you said, there's guys who role in the front, there's guys who role in the back end, multiple running backs, multiple wide receivers. So when you're playing against a really good team who plays with a lot of depth and has recruited really well, that's one of the things you have to prepare for.

What does that mean? Well, you just have to know that you're not going to just hone in on one or two guys. You've got to be aware of more than one of those guys, and that's the sign of a good team.

**Q. Ryan, the last time we saw you guys in a playoff game against Clemson, you guys did a really good job of using tempo to your advantage in that game. I'm wondering if you think a similar approach in this game is necessary against Georgia's defense? Also maybe broader, just how your philosophy on that has developed over the course of your career, whether you've ever wanted to play super fast or if you've always been someone who wants to balance that?**

RYAN DAY: There's times, like you said, we've done that before, and it's been very good for us. As we get closer to the game, we'll kind of figure out how that fits for us. But I think that one of the things we have done over the past five, six years is have the ability to do that when need be, or if we think it gives us an advantage for a myriad of reasons, then we'll do it.

I think it's one of those things where nowadays, if you're just no huddle going really, really fast every single game all the time and that's all you do, teams can get immune to it. But I think, if you have the ability to switch it up from game to game or from series to series or play to play, then it's a little bit more of a weapon.

That's something that we've kind of probably done more here in the last few years. Early on we used to play a lot faster, as you remember, just a lot of snaps, but teams have kind of adapted to that a little bit more. They've become no huddle defenses. So we tried to stay ahead of that and use it as a tool but not something we're doing all the time every game.

**Q. You guys kind of recruit all over the place. When**

**you're kind of strategizing different areas you want to go into, is there an idea or maybe a number? What would make trying to attack a certain area, what would make that worth it in the long run?**

RYAN DAY: Well, there's a lot that goes with it. I think first off there's the location and the proximity to Columbus and Ohio. I think that matters a lot. Certainly the number one focus is the state of Ohio for a lot of reasons.

Once you get outside of that, certainly there's a four to five to six-hour radius that's something that we take a look at.

Then from there, for instance in the state of Georgia, just a tremendous amount of talent, really well coached players, great programs. They play football year round. So they're graduating high school in a position to really compete for spots coming out of high school and into college.

So being down here is great this week. We certainly have recruited this area very hard and know how competitive it is here, but they have great players and great coaches. So this is certainly an area we focus heavy into in the recruiting cycle.

It's less than ten hours of a drive and an easy flight from Atlanta to Columbus. It's easy for folks to get to and from Atlanta and Columbus, and certainly the amount of players here speaks for itself.

**Q. Second game in a row that you guys are going up against a team that's really good at running the ball. When you look back at what happened against Michigan, what are things you look at that you guys have to do better to be able to stop the run without giving up too much in the pass game?**

RYAN DAY: Georgia does a great job, and I think they have a great mix. I think, when you look at what they do on offense, they're going to try to challenge you in a lot of different areas. Certainly it starts with the run game, like you're saying. So we've got to play with great fundamentals. We have to learn how they're trying to attack us within the game and then obviously get our guys into the best position possible schematically.

At the end of the day, it's going to come down to fundamentals, running the football, playing really hard, pad level, tackling. Certainly like you said, you can't overcommit because then you put yourself at risk in the back end.

We have to do a good job of -- again, the coaches' job is to make sure that we put our guys in the situation to be the most successful, and then it's our guys' job to play really,



really hard.

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So we take a hard look at certainly what happened the last game but also the challenge coming into this game, put a good game plan together, and continue to have a good week of practice. Then we let the guys go play. In this environment, they've got to go play fast. Having a couple extra weeks of preparation has helped our guys for sure.

**Q. Ryan, you were asked about physicality earlier. What stands out to you when it comes to Georgia's defensive line and specifically with their physicality?**

RYAN DAY: I think, when you look at their defensive line, first off, you see some really good players with really good size, but you also see multiple people that can play. You see really two, sometimes three deep each of the positions inside.

I think they do a great job with their hands. I think they do a good job with their pad level, and they try to just eat up as many gaps as possible and try to create a mess inside, and they do a good job of that, and they have. They've done that against a lot of great teams and a lot of great offenses.

We know we've got to play our best game up front. We know what the challenge is and certainly some great players over there. That's what working towards this all year is all about. You have to be playing your best football right here in the CFP, and certainly we're going to get challenged here on Saturday.

**Q. Your players told us in mid-December there was a lot of good-on-good practicing. At what point do you taper that off, and when do you know what time to taper that off?**

RYAN DAY: We did a lot of that during the fundamental phase, kind of that first phase, and we mixed in that during the second phase.

As we head into this week, we'll still have some good-on-good like we always do, but this is a typical game week practice for us. There will still be good-on-good, but I think mixing that in keeps their edge, so we'll mix that in this week.

But as we head into the game week, this will be more of a typical week where leading up to this we did a lot more good-on-good.

MATT GARVEY: Thanks very much, Coach. We appreciate your time.

