

# CFP Semifinal

## Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl:

### Georgia vs Ohio State

Wednesday, December 28, 2022

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

**Ohio State Buckeyes**

**Tommy Eichenberg**

**Jack Sawyer**

**Lathan Ransom**

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Defensive end, Jack Sawyer, and safety, Lathan Ransom. For the players, just a kind of quick opening statement. We'll just go down the row starting with you Tommy. Talk about there's been a lot of events that you guys have had a chance to enjoy this week. What's the highlight of the week for each of you?

TOMMY EICHENBERG: There's been a lot of things that we've got to do. Going to Martin Luther King site was cool. There's another thing as well, too. I forget, but it's been a good time. So I'm really happy to be here.

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, like he said, being able to go to the MLK site and learn all that history was awesome, and then also the Drop It Like It's Hot, we won at our dinner with Georgia was really fun, too.

LATHAN RANSOM: I think the highlight for me was I think getting to step into the stadium for the first time, go to see where we're playing at, definitely my biggest highlight, and a lot of juice and excitement for Saturday.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll go back to questions. Raise your hand, and we'll get a microphone to you.

**Q. Lathan, just for you guys, what are the lessons learned coming out of that Michigan loss, and putting it behind you while also maintaining what happened and how to fix it for this Georgia game, and pretty similar offense, if not better?**

LATHAN RANSOM: At the end of the day, I think our biggest lessons were just to do your job, not try to do too



**PLAYOFF  
SEMIFINAL**



much. And then I'm just -- when the play is called, just everyone needs to do their job and execute at the highest level and those plays don't happen, but we're all focused on Georgia now, so that's where our minds are.

**Q. For all three of you guys, just how big of a challenge is this as you look at this Georgia football team, and what's the biggest concerns in defending them in your mind?**

TOMMY EICHENBERG: I'd say overall just a great offense. They can do a lot with the ball, and I think that's hard to defend, but it comes down to us.

JACK SAWYER: Yeah. I just think they got a veteran quarterback, obviously, who's a great player, and they got a really athletic offensive line, too. So I think they like to play their offensive line strength with how athletic they are and big upfront with a lot of stuff they do. And having a veteran quarterback as good as Stetson Bennett brings a lot of challenges as well.

LATHAN RANSOM: Yeah, I agree. I think he does a great job getting the ball into the play makers hands, does a great job with what the defense gives him, and I think they do a good job of motions, shifts. So at the end of the day, like Tommy said, it's up to us. Everyone just needs to be on the same page and to execute their job, and I think we'll be good.

**Q. I'm just curious, you mentioned the versatility, all the athletic movements. I'm assuming you're talking counter, things like that. Does that ever slow your rush when you know that, hey, I could be getting kicked right now. I could be getting wrapped. Things could be happening to me in the run game. I need to maybe hold up with my pass rush?**

JACK SAWYER: Yeah. It's something to keep in the back of your mind a little bit. I wouldn't necessarily say it slows you down. Just kind of that thing where you know every

**ASAP** . . . when all is said, we're done.®  
sports

time you get off the ball, you could be coming to get kicked out. And I just gotta necessarily be ready for it and be able to transition in the pass quickly and transition into kicking that guard attack while coming to get you quickly, too, if it presents itself.

**Q. Guys, it's been over a month since you guys have played. Can you just all explain the emotions, maybe anxiety, excitement, heading into finally getting back on the field and maybe proving some of the doubters wrong after that Michigan loss?**

TOMMY EICHENBERG: Yeah. We're really excited. This past month practicing really hard, and really excited to get back out there.

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I think definitely after that loss we took late in November, we've all been very eager to get back out on the field and just prove everybody wrong and prove ourselves right. So we're looking forward to stepping on that field Saturday night.

LATHAN RANSOM: Yeah, I agree. Everyone's excited. This is an opportunity, an opportunity to show what our defense is really about and how good we really are. So I think we couldn't be looking forward to it more.

**Q. Is this an angry defense? I mean, obviously there's a lot of people, and some of your teammates said it's Ohio State against the world. Is this something you guys have embraced?**

JACK SAWYER: Yeah. 100 percent. We feel like it's always been Ohio against the world. We feel like that's never going to change. So throughout this whole month of bowl prep, our defense has been playing very pissed off in practice, I think the whole team as a whole has been. And I think that's where we need to be. And like I said, we're just really focused and really eager to get back on the field Saturday night.

**Q. Y'all talked about the versatility of Georgia's offense. How do the tight ends that Georgia has make your all's challenge that much more difficult?**

TOMMY EICHENBERG: I think that they're good in the run, but they're also good in pass, too, so they're very versatile.

JACK SAWYER: Yeah. Tommy hit it on the button there. I think they're really versatile, and the way they can bring them out of the back field and do different route combinations really makes it difficult to defend and gives you a bunch of different looks, and they got three good ones, too. So they're always rotating and bringing another

guy in here and there. So I think it poses a good challenge, and I think we're up for it.

LATHAN RANSOM: Yeah, I agree. I think when you're looking at both those tight ends, they present different challenges, and they're different types of tight ends. So when you're looking at them and if you happen to be on covering one or covering the other, you just gotta know what you're getting and what this tight end likes to do. So I think that's the challenges they present.

**Q. Are you guys tired of talking about the Michigan game?**

TOMMY EICHENBERG: Yeah.

LATHAN RANSOM: Yeah.

JACK SAWYER: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: All right. I think we have a consensus there. We'll move on from Michigan.

**Q. Lathan, knowing the particular focus on the safety position and the defensive secondary in general for Ohio State, do you feel that a lot of eyes are on you to perform well against Georgia?**

LATHAN RANSOM: I mean, playing for Ohio State, there's a lot of eyes on you at all times and a lot of critics and a lot of people that have some stuff to say, but at the end of the day, that's what you come to Ohio State for. You come to Ohio State for big games like this to play and great players that we are about to play. So I think that we're just excited for the opportunity.

**Q. Kevin Wilson yesterday said this isn't bowl week, it's playoff week. Describe the difference. Is it a different sense of urgency? Can you put that into words?**

TOMMY EICHENBERG: Yeah. We're playing for the national championship. We're not -- it's different than last year. We were going to the Rose Bowl, and that was our last game of the season, but we're playing for another game.

JACK SAWYER: Yeah. I think like Tommy said, this is a completely different mindset. I think when you're going to a bowl game with no implications of the national championship, that it really doesn't ride as much on the line. There's not as much riding on the line. So when you're coming to the playoffs like we're in right now, everything is on the line every day. And you're competing for a national championship.

LATHAN RANSOM: Yeah, I agree. Like he said, everything is on the line. One of our -- it's our biggest main goal that we set when come to Ohio State out of our three goals, and we have a chance to achieve it. So there's nothing to lose.

THE MODERATOR: While they're thinking about that, a question I like to ask you guys. I know you guys have seen a ton of Georgia film over the last several days and weeks. What team do they remind you of from the Big Ten? I know offensive styles are different, but what's the closest approximation to a Big Ten team you've played?

TOMMY EICHENBERG: Probably wouldn't say anyone really. You probably want me to say some team, but I'm not gonna. (Laughs). Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: I'm not going to force you to.

JACK SAWYER: I'll just say scheme wise and the way they use their tight ends and whatnot, Penn State probably is what I'd say.

LATHAN RANSOM: Yeah. I feel like y'all know the answer to that, but I'm fixing to just say Penn State, too. (Laughs).

THE MODERATOR: Tommy, last chance, are you going to say Penn State?

TOMMY EICHENBERG: Yeah, Penn State.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. Penn State. It's unanimous.

**Q. Tommy, any future in speaking arrangements? You seem like you enjoy these type of media engagements. (Laughs).**

TOMMY EICHENBERG: No. I don't think so.

THE MODERATOR: Good questions out of this front row right here. I can tell you what right now. Anybody want to talk about Michigan anymore? All right. That's a no.

**Q. Just curious, in the last month, have you felt back home more support or, awe, you guys messed it up, et cetera, et cetera? What is the feeling that you get from Buckeye Nation right now?**

TOMMY EICHENBERG: I'd say, you know, just being on the team, we really just keep within the building. We play for each other in the building, too, and obviously for Buckeye Nation as well, too, but we really just try to stay in the building and have each others' backs and just try to get

better.

JACK SAWYER: Yeah. I just think we try not to look at any of the positive or negative things that fans or media has to say and just focus on each other and coming to work every day and getting better and staying within the building is what Tommy said.

LATHAN RANSOM: Yeah. I agree. I think we stay in the Woody and whatever is said outside the Woody, like he said positive or negative shouldn't affect us. We're here, here for each other, here for the brotherhood, and I think that's all that really matters.

**Q. Sometimes adversity brings a team tighter together. The brotherhood, we hear often you guys talk about that. How has that been the last month and the circle the wagons kind of keeping everything? You guys said you kind of stayed in the Woody, but what's that been like and has it made this team and defense tighter?**

TOMMY EICHENBERG: It's definitely made this team tighter. We were down for a little bit, and then we all came back together, and we got stronger. We have each other, and that's all we need.

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I just think you find out who's really there with you when things aren't going well, and when things didn't go our way, we still had each other, and it was big just being able to lean on each other through that time and know we got a second chance at life, so to speak, with the playoffs, which I thought we deserved to be in anyway, but we've just got that much tighter, and I know the last month of practice has been really great with the whole team, offense and defense. And so definitely thought the adversity brought us a lot closer together through that past month.

LATHAN RANSOM: Yeah, I agree. Like he said, I think the adversity brought us together, and then for the last month we've been competing against our offense like it's camp. So we've been competing against the best offense in the country every day, so the defense is excited. And you don't get looks like that very often. So it brings the team together, and I think by competing also brings us together even more.

**Q. Lathan, you mentioned walking into the stadium for the first time. Georgia has the advantage of having played here before and also playing on this stage before. How do you not let the moment be too overwhelming and try to get comfortable in a position you hadn't been before where Georgia has been here before?**

THE MODERATOR: All right, guys. Thank you very much.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

LATHAN RANSOM: I think like I said earlier, when you sign to come to Ohio State, you sign for games like this and opportunities like this. And I think -- considering us the underdog, being the underdog, I think we should take pride in that. For me personally, I've been the underdog my whole life, so I almost prefer sometimes being the underdog.

JACK SAWYER: Yeah. I don't really think that -- I wouldn't necessarily say they've played in an environment like this and we haven't. I think every game we've played there's 110,000 in our stadium anywhere we go. So I think we're very well prepared to walk in that stadium and play on this stage, and I think a lot of guys on the team have played on this stage before. And so we're really excited to get in there and kick that ball off Saturday.

TOMMY EICHENBERG: Yeah. Just really excited to get out there and be a good turnout, so we're excited.

**Q. A lot has been made of this Georgia offense and some advantages they may have. Where do you guys, and this is for all of you, where do you guys think you may have some advantages?**

TOMMY EICHENBERG: Everywhere. I think it just comes down to all of us just doing our job. And if we do that, we have a really good chance.

JACK SAWYER: Yeah. I agree with Tommy. I think we got advantages across the board on both sides of the ball, and we just gotta go out there and execute.

LATHAN RANSOM: Yeah, I agree. I think it just comes down to doing your job and executing at the highest level, and I think we should be fine.

**Q. I know you're 100 percent focused on Georgia in this game, but there is another national semifinal going on, TCU and another team. How much are you paying attention to that and do you have a prediction on that game?**

LATHAN RANSOM: Yeah, we're not paying attention to that game at all. We're focused on Georgia.

**Q. I just kind of wondered what's it like to play alongside Steele Chambers.**

TOMMY EICHENBERG: Yeah, it's nice playing alongside of him. He's a great player. We played for some time now, so pretty comfortable with each other, and communication is good, too.

