

# CFP Semifinal

## Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl:

### Georgia vs Ohio State

Thursday, December 29, 2022

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

## Ohio State Buckeyes

## C.J. Stroud

### Press Conference



**Q. Talked a lot this year about your whys. Tell us a little bit more.**

C.J. STROUD: Really I was going to start by just thanking God. That's where my foundation comes from growing up in the church with my family, and kind of meeting God that way. When I got to college, I kind of got to know God for myself.

That's a really big reason why I play football, just shine a light on his name and his glory. That's the reason I'm here.

Then of course my family, mom, sister, brothers back home. Really where I come from, Southern California, the Empire, shine a light on where I come from and how special it is and how much I love it back home.

Those are some of the whys that I really hold near and dear to my heart and I take very seriously to play this game.

**Q. You talk about your family and your grandma and the struggles you went through. You look now at this podium and these cameras and you're at the Heisman. Can you describe what it's like from one to the other?**

C.J. STROUD: It's a blessing. It's surreal to be in this chair right now because a lot of times you lose hope and you lose faith. The Lord says you walk by faith and not by sight. I definitely try to live by that even though it's hard. It's very hard to do that.

It's easy to say, but I had to step back, I think yesterday at practice, and really just thank God for being in Mercedes-Benz Stadium where the Falcons play because I remember playing in stadiums where they weren't full at all.

It's just a blessing to be able to do a lot of special things, and something I think human nature is that you complain and that you have different reasons for why I got to do this, but at the end of the day, God has a plan, and I'm here for a reason. I really appreciate the path he's taken me on.

It's just amazing to do all these cool things, and hopefully my kids think I'm cool one day.

**Q. C.J., the Georgia guys have talked a lot about Marvin's catch radius.**

C.J. STROUD: Yeah, he has a great catch radius. He's very tall, very long, but his routes are like amazing. So I think that's what makes him so great. Of course he can really catch any ball that you give to him.

For me, I just say give the guy a chance. Even like sometimes when I take a hit and I can't really step into my throw, if I just give him a shot, he'll usually either come up with it or bat it down for me so it doesn't get intercepted.

As a quarterback, it means a lot to have a receiver like that that knows football where, if he can't get to it or he can't catch it, he'll make sure he knocks it down for the sake of the team. That speaks volumes about what type of receiver he is.

**Q. With the NIL stuff you do, do you pitch anything?**

C.J. STROUD: I don't pitch anything. I do work with a lot of companies. I have a deal with C4 Energy. That's an energy drink. I have a deal with DSW, Value City Furniture. I just did a deal with Lockerverse, a new NFT platform.

I have a couple other ones that I have going right now. Of course I have some memorabilia deals that I have and things like that. Definitely blessed to be in the position I am to make money off my name, image, and likeness.



I think it's been long overdue. I think players should have been paid because these TV companies, these universities, a lot of people make money off of us, even y'all make money off of us. So I think it's about time for us to get paid. Even more so, if you ask me.

Really for me, I think it will be a blessing, but at the same time, it could be a curse for some people because I always remember, my mom tells me, just keep the main thing the main thing. I try not to let NIL get in my way and try to stay focused on what I have going on with football because, if you play good, you'll get paid. That's kind of my motto.

It's been a blessing to work with the companies I have, and I appreciate everyone who's taken this on and worked with me.

**Q. When you look at Georgia's defense, what stands out to you?**

C.J. STROUD: Really a multitude of things. Of course Jalen Carter up front. He shines on film. He's a really good player. I'm actually a fan of his. I watch Georgia defense a lot. They fly around, play really good ball.

Their safeties do a great job, 29 and 24. Even though 24 is pretty young, he plays really hard and is good in coverage, blitzes really hard.

The leader of their defense is No. 10. He does a great job of calling the defense, moving the front, stunting them, and just really great communication. I think there's really 11 coaches on the field, and you can kind of tell because of motions and things like that, they handle it really well.

And they're ball hawks. They get to the ball. I know Kelee personally. Kelee is one of my good friends. It's going to be fun playing against him. I can't wait. He's a great corner.

**Q. How did you and Kelee become great friends?**

C.J. STROUD: Just through the recruiting process. Playing against him in seven-on-seven a couple of times. We didn't know each other then. I think we officially met at The Opening our junior year in high school. It's kind of crazy, we're juniors in college now, which is wild.

It was then, and then All-American Bowl we hung out every day up in San Antonio. He's a great dude, great family. He's been through a lot with his mom and stuff like that. So I've definitely been praying for them and making sure they know that I'm praying for them and they have a support with me.

**Q. Any trash talking between you two before the game?**

C.J. STROUD: I don't trash talk. It's all love and respect.

**Q. Up in Michigan, what kind of things did you hear, see as far as messages you got from fans, analysts, even the media? Kind of how tough was it to get through the days after that?**

C.J. STROUD: I don't really look, but people -- I'll say audacity to call me and tell me what people say, so I do hear it.

It is what it is. It comes with the nature of the beast. You can't accept the good and not accept the bad. For me, I think if you cut on the film, you watch the tape, I think I really try to do everything that I could to win games in my career.

If that means I didn't get it done, it is what it is. Everybody is entitled to their own opinion. I'm blessed to be where I'm at. I'm going to keep moving forward and learn from it, and I hope -- and I really thank God for having a second chance this game. I think we deserve to be here regardless of what happened that day, but we moved on. Our focus is on Georgia now.

I'm just taking it as a lesson and trying to learn from it.

**Q. What have you personally worked on heading into this game that helps you to go out there and have success?**

C.J. STROUD: A little bit of everything. Getting better at stuff. I feel like I've been doing well and working on things that I need to work on.

Really just as a team, I think that's been the real focus of getting better as a team. It's a team game. I don't go out there by myself and do it on my own.

We need all 11 players to touch the field and do their job really well. That's defense, offense, special teams. So that's kind of been my role these past couple weeks practicing, and we've been practicing hard.

**Q. Talk about the trust in the big guys up front. As the quarterback, it's your job to sit in there and trust the guys up front. Mentally, how do you gear yourself up, hey, I'm going to get three or four seconds, I know I am.**

C.J. STROUD: I've had a lot of games with these guys. This isn't nothing new. We've been playing football since

we were 6, 7 years old for a lot of guys. So I trust those guys with my life, and I think they know that.

Even if they do give something up, that's football. You know what I'm saying? I'll throw a bad ball every now and again, though. At the end of the day, you've got to line back up and forget that play. I definitely expect a lot of positive things with them and they'll do a lot of great things.

I have total confidence that I have plenty of time back there to sit and deliver the ball and do what I need to do to get the win.

**Q. Question kind of on the personal side. I had a chance to talk to your mom, and you talk about people being in your corner all the time. That's one of them. You're playing at the highest level of college football playoffs. What is she telling you in this journey?**

C.J. STROUD: One thing I appreciate about my mom, she does wonders in my life. She doesn't pressure me. She doesn't like really bother me when it comes to doing this, doing that, whatever it may be. She just lets me be who I am as not only as a football player but just as a man and a man of God. Whatever I do, whatever I have, she's walking with me, if that's in football or not.

I definitely appreciate my mom for that. I'm not trying to talk about anybody else, but I do see a lot of parents in this lifestyle that I am that are overbearing and want their kids to twist and turn and do a lot of different things, but my mom has been amazing because she's in my corner through thick and thin.

She doesn't pressure me for anything. She'll call me won't even talk about football, won't even talk about anything except how I'm doing physically, spiritually, and emotionally. So I really appreciate her for doing that.

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