

CFP Semifinal

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl:

Georgia vs Ohio State

Thursday, December 29, 2022

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Ohio State Buckeyes

Coach Ryan Day

Press Conference



more physical, who's winning the game upfront, who's going to play harder, who's going to play through the whistle, who's going to play for four quarters.

And they're a very, very good team, but so are we. This is going to be a great game on Saturday night. I think it's going to be one of the more -- I think they said more people in this game they've ever had in the stadium. So our guys are excited about that. When you get to this point of year, this is where you want to be. All the focus has been on this game for our guys.

Q. Do you need some help with Jalen Carter? Can you compare him with anybody you've seen at this level?

RYAN DAY: Very good player. Disrupts the game, and their entire frontage is really good and so is their back end. They really don't have any weaknesses on defense. They're very, very good, and you can see why they're ranked one of the best in the country. They do a good job, and he is very good as well. Our guys know what the challenge is, and that's why we've been prepared for it so hard.

Q. (Inaudible) it's kind of ridiculous the amount of talent.

RYAN DAY: Yeah, a lot of talent, but they're well coached, too, and they play hard. You can see that based on what they've done the last two years. We know again what the challenge is going to be, and we're going to have to play really hard in the game and execute well because at the end of the day, it comes down to who plays harder and who is going to execute better in the game. When you get into games like this, there's a lot of lead up. There's a lot of conversation, and that's what matters the most.

Q. (Inaudible) said I think our team, I think our defense is pissed off. And that's the kind of attitude you want right now?

Q. How do you think you guys are to play here?

RYAN DAY: Yeah. I think preparations have been excellent. I think the practices have been excellent. Our guys -- we got down here Christmas night. It was good to get down here early. Had a good practice Monday, two really physical practices the last two days. We'll have a really good practice today and good preparation here as we head into meetings this morning. But all the focus is just playing the fastest and most violent game we've played all season here Saturday night 8:00.

And I think all the work that we've put in the last month is going to show. Our guys are going to play with confidence because we've had a really good month of prep.

Q. (Inaudible).

RYAN DAY: Nah. He's had a stomach bug, and we expect him to be at practice today. We'll just kind of take it as we go.

Q. How do you look at the Georgia defense? Do you feel the strength in their team. Do you see it that way. And how difficult.

RYAN DAY: I think they have good players all over the place. They have five stars running around all over the field, certainly in the back end. The corners are excellent. Their safeties are really good. Linebackers are really athletic and play downhill and play physical. The front is very good as well.

We're going to be balanced like we always are. We're going to have to find ways to score in the red zone. We're going to have to be creative in all kinds of different areas, but at the end of the day, it's going to come down to who's



RYAN DAY: Well, they should be. And we all should be. We know what we need to do in this game to win, and that's kind of the way this month has been for a lot of us at practice every day. There's been an edge. There's been friction. There's been conflict. There's been a lot of that going on, and that's a healthy thing.

And so the one good thing about this, we're going to go play. We're not going to sit there and worry about what if or anything like that. Nobody really gives us a chance to win this game anyway. So we're going to let it all out. We're going to play as hard as we possibly can and look up after four quarters and see where we're at.

Q. Coach, (inaudible).

RYAN DAY: I don't know. That's for the fans and everything like that. Whatever it is, I know that we're going to play fast in this game. We gotta play violent in this game. We gotta execute at a high level, and that's what it's going to come down to. What we're not going to do is play it close to the vest. We're going to go and then our guys are going to play that way and have that mentality when they walk in that stadium because we know what the stadium is going to be like. We know the electricity. We know it's going to be heavy.

The fans will be heavily in Georgia's favor. It's going to be a loud environment, all those types of things. So it's going to be like being on the road. Certainly we appreciate all the Buckeyes who are going to be at the game and having that presence there, but it's going to be that type of feel, and our guys know that. So we've talked about it, and we've prepared for that.

Q. Are you happy weather is not going to be an issue?

RYAN DAY: No. That's one less thing we have to worry about. Again, it's the same thing all year. You have to have balance. You have to be able to win the line of scrimmage. The team that wins the line of scrimmage typically wins the game. That goes back a long time. So we have to do that again in this game.

And they're very good at that on both sides of the ball. Our defensive line is going to do a great job. Our offensive is going to do a great job, and it's going to come down to one-on-one matchups at the end. Their inside guy against our guards, their tackles against our defensive ends, our linebackers against their tight ends, those types of things.

Q. Obviously you practice indoors a lot. Does that matter?

RYAN DAY: I don't think so. Yeah. I hadn't really thought of the fact that they hadn't played an indoor game before, but we practice in it all the time. Yeah, I don't know. I think that we're comfortable in that. We've practiced in it the last month, and we've been over there the last week. So still the same field, still the same dimensions. Everything is about the same. So I don't think it'll play much of a factor at all.

Q. (Inaudible).

RYAN DAY: Well, it comes down to the little things. It comes down to one or two plays typically that can change the game. When you look at the game they played against LSU, they're kicking a field goal. They block every hat return for a touchdown. That's a ten point swing in a game. Things like that in a matchup game can be the difference. It can come down to one or two plays.

You never know when those things are going to be. When you are in matchup games, you gotta playing. You have to keep swinging. And you have the mentality that you're going to go out there and swing as hard as you can for 60 minutes and then you'll come up for air at the end, but the team that prepares harder and continues to work towards 8:00 is going to win, and that's the mentality we've had all month as we've prepared is who's practicing harder, who's preparing better, who's doing a better job and meetings. And once we get on that field, who's going to play harder, and that's what it is.

Q. I know a lot of people have made a lot about (inaudible) when you're down three scores. Is there anything in that game? How do you attack (inaudible).

RYAN DAY: I think it got a little sideways in that game. So they kind of played one way, and you never want to be in that world. You want to have that balance all the time. You don't want to be playing one way. And certainly we haven't done that all year. We won't do it this week. We'll just continue to find that balance and keep attacking teams or keep attacking the defense and try to put them in as much stress as possible. That's what it comes down to. You start have tendencies one way or another, you set yourself up. We want to keep having a clean game plan where the guys can play and hard and fast as possible and not think a whole bunch.

Q. (Inaudible) everybody in that room would have a role. Coming off the two games he had, do you see him playing more than he did against Michigan?

RYAN DAY: Yeah, I do.

Q. Did he establish some confidence?



RYAN DAY: I think so. I think so. And he's had a great month of preparation. So, yeah, we're going to need him to win this game.

Q. Is he ahead of the pecking order? How does the three of them go?

RYAN DAY: Again, we don't really have a pecking order. I think one of the things that we've had to do all year is nothing new is we've had to adjust as the season has gone on because that's just kind of the way it's gone this year. That room is we've had some guys in and out. So we've had to put some guys into the spots. And the good news is we've been able to adjust and we've responded in that area. So that's nothing new. And the good news is we should have everybody available for the game.

Q. Having so long to prepare for just one game, are you tempted to put stuff in you have never put on tape before?

RYAN DAY: Similar to a first game of the season, you can overthink things, but you do have a lot of preparation time to get ready. And there's certain different things you can do, wrinkles, new things, and then that's all real. But you want to make sure it comes down to fundamentals at the end, who plays harder, and that's it.

Q. On the flip side, what kind of adjustments do you anticipate having to make in game because of stuff maybe they've put in that you've never seen?

RYAN DAY: Yeah. They do a great job of being multiple on both sides of the ball, and they have a bunch of ways to attack you, and they're going to have wrinkles and things that are new. So we'll have to do a great job of identifying what those things are and adjusting from there in the game.

Q. (Inaudible) one score game all season. It might come down to a one-score game. How do you kind of prepare the guys to keep composure in that situation?

RYAN DAY: I think it's a great question. I think that's one of the things we've gotta do a great job of in this game. And I talked to the team last year about the Rose Bowl and how that was a back-and-forth type of game. And some of the games we've been in have come down to that. The Penn State game for us this year was close in the fourth quarter. We were down. We had to come back and win.

If we go up, if we go down, if it's close early on, we gotta keep playing for four quarters, and that's what the CFPs games are typically like. And I just kind of shared with

them some of the history of this game and what it's been like, and we've talked about what the first Clemson game was like, the second Clemson game, and different games along the way, some of the games that Ohio State has played in in the past. But this is about them. This is going to be their story. They have an opportunity to write a story here that could be very special, and I think our guys recognize that.

Q. Coach, when you look at Georgia defensively, what is maybe one thing specifically that consistently presents problems?

RYAN DAY: Oh, where do I start. First off, it's the talent. They have a tremendous amount of talent. In the back end, they can fly around. They have great coverage skills and create a lot of problems, and it goes right to the linebackers and the guys upfront. Schematically they're very, very well coached. They do an unbelievable job of getting them to play hard. They have a history of knowing how you're trying to attack them, and they can make adjustments in game and certainly you try to recognize what you're doing and how you're lining up and things like that. So very, very good talent and very, very well coached.

Q. (Inaudible).

RYAN DAY: You know, I think that's coaching, and that's life. There's going to be things that come along the way that you have to bounce back from, and that's something that I think all of our guys have really embraced the last couple weeks, and there's certainly been a lot of noise, but our guys have done a great job of focusing on what really matters. We got a chance to go win a national championship here and play Georgia in Atlanta, and that's been the focus of our team.

Q. (Inaudible).

RYAN DAY: He's resilient. I think people can recognize how resilient he is as a young man, but I don't think anyone can prepare you for being on this type of stage and everything that comes with it, and I just give him an unbelievable amount of credit for the way that he goes about his business every day and the way that he's handled himself as a person, you know.

I forget if he's 20 or 21 years old, but for him to handle himself the way that he has, I got a lot of admiration for that and a lot of respect for that. There's a lot of people that I know that wouldn't be able to do that. And he's growing every day. He's building every day. This team loves him. I love him. And I can't wait to see him compete on Saturday night.

Q. (Inaudible).

RYAN DAY: Yeah. They're very good. They have really good talent. And again, they're coached really, really well. This is a matchup game. And whether it's the front, the linebackers, the tight ends or like you said, the receivers and DBs, you're going against your clone. You're going against a guy who's as talented as you are.

So you have to embrace that role. You have to embrace the fact that you're going against really good players and go do it. And how do you do that? You have to figure out how you're going to win that matchup, and it isn't just going to be with talent.

Q. Talk about getting into this game and losing to Michigan, did that add extra juice?

RYAN DAY: I don't know. Everyone has their own journey to get here. The bottom line is we're here, and we gotta go play in the game. How far each team gets here, that's their own story, but there's four teams left. And everyone's got a chance to win it. And I guess I could tell you that the last month of preparations have been excellent, though.

It's been a really good week. We got in here Christmas night, and everybody in the Peach Bowl has been wonderful and the city of Atlanta has been great and been very well taken care of. Great accommodations, and I think our guys have appreciated everything that the Peach Bowl folks have done here for us.

Q. Playing indoors, do you approach it differently?

RYAN DAY: We've tried to treat it like the Woody Hayes Athletic Center the best we could. We kind of said, okay, that is where we come out of the Woody. We try to make it ours, but also talk to them about visualizing themselves playing in the capacity crowd on Saturday night and what that's like so that when you run out, it's not the first time. You've already done it. You've played it. You've felt what it's like to be on third and 3. You feel what it's like to be in the red zone, coming out the first kickoff of the game, all those types of things you've already played.

That's a part of coaching or really preparing a team is like, hey, you can do this, but it's gotta be through your imagination because the first time you do it can't be on Saturday night. You gotta already do it. And being in the stadium for a whole week has allowed us to do that a little bit.

Q. Can you compare the quarterback (inaudible).

RYAN DAY: Two really good players, both Heisman Trophy finalists. I got a lot of respect for Stetson and what he's done. And certainly he's a winner, and he's a competitor and very, very talented, makes some unbelievable throws, tough running the football. He can do -- it he can do it all. Great player.

And then obviously we know about C.J. and all his ability and what he's done, and he's had an unbelievable week of practice. And, again, I said it before, I know he's really excited about playing in this game.

Q. (Inaudible).

RYAN DAY: When you're playing in bowl games this time of year, this is the setting, but we've had a good week of work in the stadium. This is my first time in the stadium, I believe, actually, because I was going back to when we played a Monday night game back a few years ago when I was in the NFL, and I actually wasn't at the stadium.

So this is our first time kind of being there and feeling it, and I think it was good to at least get a feel for what it was like and try to visualize ourselves playing in the game, because it's going to be an electric atmosphere.

Q. What's it like to control your own destiny? Now you're in it (inaudible).

RYAN DAY: Well, that kind of was something that happened there at the beginning of December where we weren't sure how it was going to shake and then some things broke our way. And now all of a sudden, you had a second opportunity to go win this thing and kind of gave a lot of energy and excitement and juice around the facility and then it just kind of translated to some really excellent practices and preparation. So we're now kind of into the game preparation. All that stuff is kind of behind us now, and it's all about Georgia.

Q. Are you guys keeping an eye on the other game in case you end up having to play them?

RYAN DAY: No. It's all about this game right now.

Q. How anxious are you to finally get out there?

RYAN DAY: I'm excited to see us play. I'm excited to play in this game. I'm excited for our team to go play, going to play fast, going to play loose, going to go and have a bunch of fun playing on the field. But we can't play the game right now. When you get in games like this, you just want to get to the game, but there's still a lot of preparation to be done.

Q. Where does this rank in terms of the magnitude of stakes?

RYAN DAY: Every game you play at Ohio State has got huge magnitude. And if you don't think so, try losing a game. That's kind of the world we live in at Ohio State.

Q. What's the situation with your quarterback?

RYAN DAY: Yeah. So we're expecting him to practice today and have everybody available.

Q. Seems like you guys have had a lot of different (inaudible).

RYAN DAY: The one thing is we've kind of been working through that all season, and the good news is our guys have responded well to it. And some guys have stepped up. So this is not something new, and certainly when Tray wasn't available, we had to go down the road of a surgery for him, even though he was working real hard to try to get back on the field. I give him a lot of credit for that, but in the end, he just had to have the surgery. And that was the right thing for Tray. And then from there, okay, so now where do we go, and all these guys have been preparing hard, and we have some good options going into this game.

Q. How challenging have the logistics been over the last week and a half, getting down here, trying to keep half an eye on Christmas, be with the kids and family?

RYAN DAY: Yeah. There's a lot going on on a week like this for sure, but that's what this is all about this time of year is managing it all, put the focus on our players and focus on practice and the focus on making sure our guys are prepared to play in this game. That's the number one thing. But there are a lot of things going on. Like you said, there's the holidays, there's the bowl and the events and all these types of things, but I think we've done a really good job of keeping the main thing, the main thing, and that's about playing here at 8:00 on Saturday night.

Q. (Inaudible).

RYAN DAY: We allowed them to go home for a couple of days to be with their families during the holidays and everybody met here Christmas night, and we got back to work. We also did our senior tackle the Saturday before we left and had the senior banquet there on campus, which was a nice event. And then obviously we are able to help out with the families getting down here to the bowl game as well, so that's great. And most of the families will be here over the next couple days.

Q. And, specifically, Georgia, when you think about all of the different things they present, is there something that stands out, okay, that part of their team or their game is something to watch?

RYAN DAY: I think it's just the complete package of three levels or three phases. You have offense, defense and special teams. I think they do a good job on all three phases. I've gone through it all, what they do in all those areas, but they have obviously very, very good players and a lot of talented players, recruited very well. And then they're well coached and execute well.

Q. The last loss to being named into the playoff, what was that week like for you and how did you manage that?

RYAN DAY: Well, what we did is took a couple days there, and then quickly just got together with the team and said, listen, if a couple things go our way, we're probably going to be playing Georgia here in this game. And so that started the Wednesday before we even knew what was going to happen, and we got out there and had a couple practices, which was good, because the best thing to do is get back to work, and that's what we did.

And then when it did kind of fall that way over the weekend, our guys had so much energy. We already talked about this. And then it just kind of translated into some really good practices and some physical practices. And we've had an edge about us. And then we got down here and had three really good days of work and about to have another day, and we'll just keep working towards 8:00 on Saturday night.

Q. You're obviously an offensive guy. When you look at Georgia the last two years, one of the best defenses of all time maybe, what do you see when you look at that defense?

RYAN DAY: Well, like you said, one of the best defenses of all time. They're a great defense, and it's a huge challenge for us.

Q. From the front 7, a lot of guys that are new, they don't play like they're new. What do you see from those guys, specifically Jalen Carter, a guy who didn't really get a lot of reps last year?

RYAN DAY: Yeah. Strong, talented, physical. Done a really good job of preparing for that over the last month, and the game is going to be won upfront. It always is, the line of scrimmage on both sides of the ball whether it's offense or defense.

Q. C.J., obviously a two-time Heisman Trophy finalist. Kind of explain his development from a guy who starting last year to a guy who has so many accolades?

RYAN DAY: Yeah. I've just been very impressed with how he's handled himself over the last few weeks. He's a special young man who this team loves, I love, and I'm looking forward to seeing him play on Saturday night.

Q. Jim talked a little bit about Stetson Bennett and how he is dangerous as a passer deep, doesn't get the credit that he should, but also as a general athlete. What do you see from Stetson?

RYAN DAY: Yeah, a great player. Somebody who's already won a national championship. He can do a lot of things. Like you said, he's got a quick release. He's accurate down field, can run. He kind of operates everything, gets in the right play, and he's got some real good weapons around him.

Q. Ryan, what did you see from C.J. in the days and weeks post Michigan loss leading up to the preparation for this game?

RYAN DAY: Really what I saw everybody do and that's get back to work and focus on preparing for Georgia. But he's grown a lot in a short period of time, and he knows that his best football is ahead of him, and he's using everything opportunity to grow as a football player, as a person. And like I said, this team loves him, and I love him, and looking forward to see him play at 8:00 on Saturday night.

Q. Once you guys found out you were going to be in this game, after the Michigan game, did he say anything kind of like, okay, we've got like this second chance at life almost? How did he address finding out you guys would be here?

RYAN DAY: I mean, I don't think he addressed the team, but his work every day and his practices preparation has been excellent, and he knows how important this game is. We all do. So I don't think he's doing anything different than anybody else.

But we got an opportunity of playing in the semifinals and compete for a national championship here. There's only four teams left and we're one of them. So what matters is how we prepare and how we play in this game, and that's it. What we can't do is let a game beat us twice. So continually have to field questions about that, that he's had to do and certainly we've had to do, but that has not affected our preparation.

Q. What are your expectations going into the game?

RYAN DAY: Well, we expect an unbelievable crowd, unbelievable atmosphere, and a great opponent, and a great challenge, but I think you're going to see some really physical play. You're going to see some high-end execution, and you're going to see a heck of a game.

Q. If you go anywhere before the game, where would you go to get mentally prepared?

RYAN DAY: Oh. I like being with the players. I like being with the team. Yeah. And the locker room, on the field, you know, whatever it is. Every once in a while you gotta have a little time for yourself, but I like being with the players.

Q. And what music do you play?

RYAN DAY: Me? I let those guys choose the music. Not that I always know what they're playing, but I let them choose the music.

Q. What will you eat? If you could eat anything.

RYAN DAY: Anything? We keep it pretty bland before a game, you know, grilled chicken and spaghetti and things like that.

Q. If you had to rename a drink, the Ryan Day.

RYAN DAY: I have to think about that. I don't know.

Q. Did you get out in Atlanta?

RYAN DAY: In recruiting, I've stayed up in Buckhead before, and been over to Lenox Mall and those areas. I know my family really enjoyed the Aquarium. I've not been over there, but they said it's a great Aquarium. Usually when we're recruiting, we're staying in some of the suburbs and some of the areas, up in Gwinnett County and some those towns. There's great football here. Usually when we're here, we're not here sightseeing. We're usually here recruiting. But it's certainly a great city with great players, great coaches, great programs, and everybody here has been great to us. We've had a great week.

Q. If you had to tell players in high school, what would you tell them ahead of time you are looking for in recruiting?

RYAN DAY: I think the first thing is when you recruit you have to keep the focus on what really matters, and that's their development on and off the field for the rest of their life. Everyone's chasing the dream of going to the NFL and

having a 15-year career in the NFL or whatever it is. But guys in college are still in the most formidable years of their life, and there's going to be life after football. So choosing the right school for the right reasons I think is the most important thing. Once you choose a school, you have to go live it. After you put out the tweet and after you go through signing day, now you gotta go live there and you gotta go embrace the culture of the program that's there. So, and I just think for every recruit and their families, the number one thing has to be their development as a person, as a student, in getting a great degree and then obviously as a player.

Q. Ryan, following last year's Rose Bowl ping pong match versus Jesse Mirco, have you looked forward to any rematches?

RYAN DAY: Well, there was a little trash talking yesterday that we'd be going against each other, and certainly Jesse did get me last year, and I can't tell you I've had a lot of time to work on my game, but there will be a rematch before we play in this game on Saturday night, and I will win.

Q. This will be our third trip to Mercedes Benz Stadium this season for the Georgia Bulldogs. Obviously your first time here. How do you assess the opportunity of playing in the stadium?

RYAN DAY: Yeah. We figure certainly it's going to be the majority will be the Georgia fans, and so we'll have to handle it as such, which we've done. We knew that coming down here. So almost treating it like a road game. But like you said, this is their third time playing here, so it is kind of familiar for them. But we've had an opportunity to practice in Mercedes Benz Stadium all week, and we've known what we are up against here, and it's a great challenge. I know our guys are excited about it.

Q. I'm curious of how you assess media day and how your players have handled it. I know they're no strangers to media, but obviously the semifinal is different?

RYAN DAY: Yeah. This is probably one of the few times that we're all out here together as a team for an event like this. And it's good. It's good for our team. But there will be a lot of questions and things and distractions on a week like this. This is not something typically we go through like if it was a normal game week, but when you're dealing with a bowl game like this, what you have to do is you have to focus on the game. There's a lot of things along the way that can be distracting, and we can't let that happen. But our guys are pros. We have a great group, and I think they'll do a great job today.

Q. Speaking of today, practice is just right around the corner for you guys and certainly getting closer and closer to kickoff. What will you focus on in today's practice?

RYAN DAY: Well, we've had really good practices these three days. The last two days have been physical. They've been edgy. You can just see it in our guys' eyes, the way that we're practicing. They're looking forward to playing in this game, and today will be no different. We'll get out there today and have a great practice. We got meetings here in a few minutes, and keep grinding and keep working towards playing, because the most prepared team will win.

Q. When you're going up against a player like Stetson Bennett and you learn about his story and his journey, I'm curious your thoughts on how you unique his path has been for his college football career.

RYAN DAY: I think everybody has their own journey, and whether it starts when they go into college or high school, everybody kind of has it, and it comes usually with adversity along the way. And when you think about even for us this season, life is about overcoming adversity, and I think Stetson has done an unbelievable job of that, not exactly the way you draw it out. He came in as a walk-on and left Georgia, came back to Georgia and was in a room with some really talented, highly recruited guys, but just kept grinding. Got a lot of respect for him and the way he's handled himself, because that's what life's all about is overcoming adversity, and he's done that, and he's turned into a great player.

Q. You've dealt with so many injuries this year. (Inaudible).

RYAN DAY: Yeah. It has. I was looking at the injury report. We're clean going into this game and expecting to have everybody that you know of that'll be available. I just think this year it's been a couple key spots that's hurt us. I think overall we've done pretty good. When you look at the overall games and who guys are -- who missed games, I think we did pretty good. Certainly not having Jackson available, it just felt like is he going to be ready next week, it never quite got better. And so that was frustrating, and the same thing with Tray. And, again, I give those guys credit. They were trying to get back in, but when you have injuries that don't allow you to do that, it's frustrating and when you have such high-end athletes, those things come into play. But when you look at all the different areas, I guess the corners early on, we had some struggles there, but some guys stepped up, but then we got them healthy. And so we think overall across the board we've done pretty

good, but they've been in key spots, which is -- it's been frustrating, but that's part of the game. Everybody deals with it. I think about some of the great teams who have had to overcome injuries along the way, and it'd be one heck of a story if we can go out there and win this game and go on and win a National Championship overcoming some of these things. Again, that's what life's all about, and that's what we're going to look forward to do here Saturday night.

Q. (Inaudible).

RYAN DAY: I mean, our focus has been on this game, and certainly I would assume one of the reasons we're an underdog is because we lost the last game. And that plays into it. But what matters is how hard we play and how well we execute. That's it. Nothing else matters. And our preparation. So I don't know what to think of it all. But I know it doesn't really matter about point spreads or anything like that. It matters if you win the game or not, and sometimes during the season that becomes a topic of conversation. After every game during the season, how many did you win by, style points, did this guy look good, did you get the running game going. In this game it's all about winning. It doesn't matter how you win. You could win pretty, clean, ugly, nasty. It doesn't matter how you win. You just gotta win. And we've been in that pressure room before. That was an ugly win. We'll take any win when you're in the CFPs. So, yeah.

Q. Coach, whenever y'all are sitting there and you find out you're going to play, what was that like?

RYAN DAY: Well, I think there was a point there where we were expecting to be in that fourth spot after everything that shook out. But there was just something we had talked about the week before was that if things played out the way we thought they could, that we'd have a chance to be in this situation. So we got to work the week before. We practiced two days and had really good practices. So when it did happen it was like, all right, we already talked about this. We planned for this, and now here we go. It's happening. And that was excitement there, especially after the week before, it wasn't good there for a few days. But new life, great month of preparation, and now, again, it's all about this game.

Q. What's the toughest thing about preparing?

RYAN DAY: Oh, there's not just one thing. It's everything. Again, the talent, the scheme, all of the above.

Q. You talked about not wanting to give away tendencies. (Inaudible).

RYAN DAY: Having guys who can do multiple things like Emeka is great. The more you can do, the more versatile you can be, the more value you bring. And we have a few guys like that. You look at Mitch and Emeka and Xavier and those guys, and it helps us.

Q. When you were game planning, Jackson went down. You were trying to change things around. How big was not only Emeka's first, but his intellect knowing he can handle it?

RYAN DAY: Yeah, and his toughness. I just think he's been a warrior all year. You look at what he's done and whether it's special teams, whether it's playing the slot, whether it's playing outside, like you said, running the ball, he's been a warrior. And he can handle high levels of information, but he's also physically tough and turned into one heck of a football player this year.

Q. You mentioned a couple of tough days after that loss in November. I know we've heard from J.T. about his speech, but can we hear from your perspective a little bit what you heard and how that kind of helped the team get back on the right track?

RYAN DAY: There was a lot of things that were said, and I'll kind of leave some of that stuff to the team, but no, some guys have stepped up and shown really good leadership over the last month, and that's what you gotta do. You gotta be resilient. You gotta have perseverance. You gotta work through tough times. That's what life's about. Life isn't always going to be easy. Certainly we're not proud of what happened. It was a bad loss, but we gotta rebound. No one is going to feel sorry for ourselves, and we didn't that. We got back to work, and now all the focus is on this game.

Q. The team seems to be embracing the underdog mentality, excited to be quote, unquote the enemy. Are you happy with how these players have turned the corner like that and embracing that mentality?

RYAN DAY: Well, I think we have an opportunity to do something real special here, and more than anything, I just want them to go out there and play as hard and as fast as they can with -- not pressing at all, because, again, this is what life is. Life is about going through obstacles and being strong and not veering away from hitting the issues head on, dealing with conflict, and then improving from it. And we got an unbelievable opportunity on Saturday night.

Q. There's been no shortage of talent on the Ohio State teams. Have you noticed the talent shifting from position to position? Is that something you've noticed, and is there areas in the team you feel you need to

shore up?

RYAN DAY: No. I think we've done an unbelievable job of recruiting, and I think we've done a great job of developing.

You can see that with really all positions over the years. And I think each year is different, because you have some young guys, you have some older guys. You have some experience. You have different mixture of players, and this year we went to a different defensive scheme, and went to a three-safety system, and so that's a little bit different, and we've had to adjust our recruiting there. But I think you're seeing really good play at all positions. But every year is a little bit different, like you said. You have young guys who have to step up. You have some older guys who now have experience, and then once we get done with the season, it'll all kind of change again, and we'll have to regroup year in and year out. But there's a certain amount of talent in each room, but to me it's all about the skill and discipline you build over your time. And talent is God given, but you have to earn discipline and skill, and that's what we focus on.

Q. (Inaudible).

RYAN DAY: It's a big part of playing quarterback is being able to do that, and the more you can do, the better. But then, also, you also don't want to give it just because he can handle it, do too much, where it puts too much on his plate either, and that's the balance you have to find, and I think the thing for C.J. is he's really given great feedback to me. He's given great feedback to the coaching staff on what he's seeing, what he's feeling. When you're young, you don't really know, but he's got now a bunch of games under his belt, so he knows what he likes; he knows what he doesn't like, and he's had a really good month of preparation here, and I know he's real excited about playing in this one.

Q. (Inaudible). He said he wouldn't just change something on his own.

RYAN DAY: No. But the feedback that he's giving like, listen, what do you think about this or I'm seeing this thing a different way. So we adjust him in practice, and certainly he has some plays that he can change, but, no, that's not how the offense is run. You don't just all of a sudden start changing plays at the line of scrimmage.

Q. What is your relationship with Coach Smart?

RYAN DAY: Just professional. Got a lot of respect for him and seen him at a couple different events, and he's always been a gentleman.

Q. So your roster, when you look up and down it,

there's tons of guys from Ohio, Georgia. How important, at least speaking for yourself, how important is that state representation?

RYAN DAY: For us, our number one goal in recruiting is to recruit the best players from the state of Ohio, but then from there, going to identify the areas that we think can help us, and Georgia's just had an unbelievable amount of talent come out of this area now for a long time, and certainly strong now than it's ever been. And great high school coaches, great talent. But it's heavily recruited as well. You know. It's competitive.

Q. The way college football is four and five star, a guy like Stetson Bennett, how much admiration do you have for a guy like that?

RYAN DAY: A ton. A ton. Kind of similar to the way that I kind of came up, smaller school and just kind of overachieving in different areas, but, boy, he's really turned into a great player. He can beat you with his feet. He's accurate down field. The position of quarterback is one that you have to just continually overcome adversity. And that's what he's done. And you can just see that, and I think that's the trait of a really good quarterback. And, shoot, he's already won a National Championship and gone undefeated. Again, a lot of respect for him.

Q. Marvin Harrison, how much of him was nature and how much do you think has been nurture?

RYAN DAY: I think when you find special players, you have talent. Like you said, that was God given. And Marvin did not earn that talent. Like RJ Day is not going to have that talent, but Marvin does. But I think what makes Marvin special is his discipline and his skill.

He's built a tremendous amount of discipline in his life, takes care of his body, prepares at a high level, just unbelievable amount of discipline, the way that he runs his routes. His work ethic is unbelievable. Then the skill.

I mean, the amount of work that he puts in I think you could say that he's one of the hardest workers on the entire team, the work he puts in. You can ask anybody on their team, they would say he's ranked number one or two top hardest working guys on our team. So when you combine all that together, you get a special player.

Q. Your office is right by there, do you just constantly hear the joking?

RYAN DAY: Yeah. I think he had it going in the hotel somewhere this week. It's just the way he is. Yeah. There was a point during the season where there was only a few



of us. I think it was around midnight, and someone said to me, there's only a few people in the building, Coach, you, a couple of the assistants and Marvin is in there. I said get Marvin home. He needs to get some rest. But that's just the way he is and, again, I think that's what makes him special.

Q. One of your players is 21 and said he has a deal with a beer called Kentucky Cold Snap. Wonder if you've ever heard of that?

RYAN DAY: No. But if we win this game, I'll take one.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports