

CFP Semifinal

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl:

Georgia vs Ohio State

Thursday, December 29, 2022

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Georgia Bulldogs

Coach Kirby Smart

Press Conference



throw them something they hadn't seen on tape versus just being who you are?

KIRBY SMART: I think you do that every game. There's not a game we play that we don't try to complement something we've done, and you do what you do. And the best teams I've been around, you know what they're going to do, and you gotta stop them or they gotta stop you. And that's the best teams I've been around.

So we don't try to overthink it, try to be at our best when our best is needed, and that comes from a mental disposition, a physical disposition and maybe a schematic disposition, but we try not to overthink it.

Q. The story on Brett, how did that come about?

KIRBY SMART: We reached out to the kicking academy over there. They got the Pro Kick, and they kind of deliver players. They try to pair you up with what your needs are, are you a rugby need, are you a straight on. They've got hundreds and hundreds of kids that kick over there, and he was one of those guys that they thought was capable of coming to the States and kick and very talented and he did just that?

Q. You got guys lining up on your staff to go recruit visit over there?

KIRBY SMART: No. We did a lot of Zooms, and that probably is the best way to recruit Australia in terms of Zoom. If we would have gone there, we probably would have lost five days' travel time. So nobody made that trip.

Q. Is there anything you took from Alabama that sets the tone for this team?

KIRBY SMART: I can't remember that far back. Like honestly, it's too hard. I don't have a book of notes or you just have experiences from your coaching career. In 20 something years coaching, you just try to do the best job

KIRBY SMART: I think you always want more time at the end, but 28 days ago, you're counting down the days and now it's upon us. I was telling somebody, I don't know one sport that you have 28 days between contests in season. It's very unique, and even for them, I think it's 35. So it's pretty different to have that. You gotta do a really good job of trying to game scrimmage, manage it, because you just don't have that long of layoff in any sport. I mean, competitive. We've practiced, but just competitively, you don't have that long of layoff. So they're fired up and ready to go.

Q. Will it be information overload, do you think?

KIRBY SMART: No. I think you always try to at the end go back to what the basics are in terms of who they are, who we are, and then you try to find things that are different. You throw a curveball at them on Thursday and Friday because something is going to happen in the game different. They're going to do something different. We're going to do something different. It's not what either team does. It's how the team responds.

Q. (Inaudible)?

KIRBY SMART: It's a one-game season, and the one-game season is this one because there is no game after this one if you don't win. So we don't even think about the management of that or the next game. We're thinking about this game, and that's all we're focused on.

Q. Any update on Warren (inaudible)?

KIRBY SMART: Yeah. Hopeful to get both of them out there and hopeful both of them can play.

Q. How do you balance what you guys do trying to



you can. There's no like this magic potion. Let me go to the book where you have a team go twice. There is no book for it. You just manage each and every team and each and every season as best you can.

Q. (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: Not really. I mean, I remember the game well because it was definitely frustrating, but nothing positive or negative or something we would have done different. We talk about all the time limiting regret, and I think one of the ways you limit regret is through a lot of detail and thought about the way you plan, and there's a lot of detail and thought into that plan and a lot of detail and thought in this plan. There's are just two numbers in front of somebody's name. At this point, it's the best teams in the country playing another best team in the country.

Q. (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: He got put in a situation to get a lot of snaps. He took advantage of a lot of those opportunities. There's a lot of growth that you see in practice he's made. He's only played in 13 games, which seems like a lot, but there's a lot of kids on our team that have played in 26, 39 games. And he hadn't had a chance to do that. He has a lot of room for improvement.

Q. In games like this, you're getting two teams out at the highest level. (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: Yeah. I feel like it's that way each week. I mean, you play against really talented teams every week, and you want to be at your best. I certainly think when you talk about the caliber of recruits that Ohio State has, our kids know their kids, and they know each other from the recruiting experience, and now more than ever kids pay attention to that. They go do trips together. They go play in all star games together, and there's a lot of overlap there between Ohio State and Georgia.

And I think the familiarity kind of brings on a new energy of competition. They want to go compete against the best, and this will be two of the premier programs going against each other.

Q. A lot of talent at their wide receiver (inaudible)?

KIRBY SMART: It's both. It is great quarterback, great system, great coaches, great receivers. They've come up under four, five, six first rounders. Those kids watched those guys before them play. It is very similar to our inside backer room where you had three inside backers last year drafted for us, and the inside backers that are now playing emulate those guys. They watched them work. And that

group they've got now is as talented group as there is in the country.

Q. (Inaudible). How have things changed for you all on defense?

KIRBY SMART: Just depth. I mean, he's a talented young man. He's a force to be reckoned with. It allowed us to play more players. It gave us more a little more disruption in the middle. Gave us a pass rush interiorly that we needed, and he's really brought an energy to the defense that is kind of needed. He was the most experienced player coming back, and now having him back and healthy has been big for us.

Q. How do you feel about that defensive line against Ohio State?

KIRBY SMART: It's a great matchup. You look across the board, there's a lot of great matchups in this game. That's one of the interesting ones because they're certainly very talented on the offensive line. Got a great group, a lot of experience, and our defensive line will be challenged. Nolan being down. We kind of do it by committee now outside of Jalen, and it'll be a great competitive match up for both groups.

Q. Stetson was talking yesterday about (inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: They're just great leaders. They're great humans. They care about Georgia more than they care about themselves, which that selflessness is hard to find nowadays, and I think it just means a lot.

Q. Jalen is obviously an all American, dominant player, NFL prospect. We haven't had many chances to talk to him. Is that more Jalen not preferring to speak to media or is that like until you get well or whatever?

KIRBY SMART: A little bit of combination. He's a kid that's a bit shy. He's been injured some throughout his career. That position is not one that lends itself to the limelight. Jordan had a lot bigger personality when it comes to that. That wasn't something that Jalen was intrigued by.

And to be honest with you, we cater to our kids and make sure they represent our program in the right limelight, and he's done nothing but that, so I'm proud of everything he's done.

Q. When you talk about Jordan and Devonte and those guys and then you look at Jalen, strength is clearly one of his strong suits. (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: All-around talent. I mean, he's got what you call instincts, balanced body control. He can probably play end if he needed to. He can probably play linebacker if he needed to. He just has instinct and athleticism that's not natural for that position. That is a position that's usually one gap and play it. He can feel blocks. He can get around blocks. He's just really athletic.

Q. (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: I'm not a big comparison guy. I think Ohio State stands out on their own. They've got a lot of talent across the board, probably the most talented roster that we will have played against, but it's hard to do comparisons.

Q. Back at it in the playoffs again, how hard is it to get players to buy back in and say let's do this all over again?

KIRBY SMART: I don't think it's hard. I think it's your job, and I think our kids that played last year, a large percentage of them are gone when you look at the roster flip we had, so these kids are hungry. It wasn't like it was a repeat as you guys call it. It was a new start.

And this group just started brand new. And I think they've done a good job leading to this point, of getting themselves in this position, but it's not easy to do, but it's easier to do when your players are all relatively new. These guys weren't major contributors last year.

Q. Kirby, what was your reaction when you saw (inaudible)?

KIRBY SMART: I didn't pay much attention to it because every year we have a draft, we usually have someone getting evaluated or I guess talked about, whether positive or negative. I've seen it for years with Tyson and Stokes, I mean, Tyson and Stokes. And then last year, I watched Travon climb the board over stuff that we already knew to be true.

So a lot of information in the NFL gets portrayed positively or negatively too far in either direction. And the truth usually lies somewhere in the middle. So it's never as good as it seems, and it's never as bad as it seems. So I don't pay much attention to it.

Q. How does stuff like that get started? (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: I don't think so. I think it gets started through the channels of whether it's the NFL teams or you'd have to ask whoever it was that said it. I don't give it much credibility to it because I go off real-life circumstances, my interactions with people. Sometimes

people say it comes from disgruntled agents that didn't get him or won't sign with them. I don't know. I don't really care.

Q. Buster is going to Georgia Tech (inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: Unbelievable person, father, husband, known him for a long time. Played at Valdosta State when I coached down there, and he knows our state as well as anybody. He is a great teacher. He's a really good football coach. And I think Brent Key has done a great job getting him to be part of their staff because he's going to impact recruiting and the team equally.

Q. What do you think he'll bring to them?

KIRBY SMART: He's been an OC, and he had OC opportunities last year. So I don't see it as a huge leap for him because he's done it. He's done it really Middle Tennessee and a couple other places he's been, Southern Miss. He's been an offensive coordinator before.

So you could say, yeah, ACC is different. It is, but when I coached at Valdosta State, I coached just as hard then as I do now. I don't coach harder if I am at a higher level. I don't look at it that way. I look at it as you give the best you can to your team, and he has done a hell of a job for us, and he's really done a hell of a job everywhere he's been.

Q. I'm here with the man, the legend, Kirby Smart. What's the past month been like for you especially with Stetson going to New York, have you had any time to enjoy the holidays?

KIRBY SMART: Oh, yeah. We got time, a couple days in December, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, in that window. You get to spend Christmas with your family, which is more than most guys get. It's been great. It's been awesome to get away for a little bit, but I've really enjoyed being with the team. That's where I get my most joy out of is the day-to-day interactions, the meetings, the schemes, the practices, the contact. I mean, I enjoy being around the players, and that's been great.

Q. All right. You look at this offense, you look at the skill guys on that side of the football, obviously C.J. What stress points do they present to a defense that you guys have been working on?

KIRBY SMART: You work on them every week, right? They got really good wideouts. It's usually one or two or a tight end or a back. They've got a lot. And when you start looking at it, they've got a guy who can distribute the ball to all of them. He is an elite passer. He knows what he's

doing with the ball. He has great velocity on the ball so he can throw it to all parts of the field. There's not a touch throw or a direct throw he can't make.

So you can't really say what part are you working on because if you work on one part, the other part gets you. Everybody's gotta do their job, and you gotta win some one-on-one matchups. You're going to be one on one on lot of plays in the field. You gotta win some of those. How you respond to the ones you don't will probably determine the outcome of the game.

Q. So there's the narrative out there that Ohio State has been soft. That's the reason why they lost to Michigan last year. That's the reason why they lost to Michigan this year. And obviously you guys are a physical football team. How do you not let that mentality, that narrative about Ohio State that this is probably going to be a physical football game?

KIRBY SMART: Yeah. I've not heard that narrative. I don't look at narratives. I look at tape, and the tape doesn't say they're a soft football team. I know how they practice. I know what players they have. I watch the tape. I know how physical they are. We don't get caught up in narratives. We get caught up in controlling what we can control, which is how we play.

Q. Mitchell is back for the SEC championship game. Obviously he played a big role last year in the national championship. How good has it been to see him back on the football field getting those reps?

KIRBY SMART: It's been great for him, great for moral for the team having him out there working. He is doing a good job. Eh is a competitive kid. We want him just to go out and play.

Q. Has there been any lesson you can take away from the SEC championship game?

KIRBY SMART: Yeah. Play the ball in the air much better. Rush the passer much better. Execute and be on the same page more often. So I think there's a lot of lessons you can learn from every game, and that would include your best games, when you play well. You still gotta -- you gotta get better and you gotta grow. And hopefully we've done that. We've taken a lot of work in the last three, four weeks to get better at those things.

Q. (Inaudible) back to back national championships. Is there any added pressure now that you've won the title?

KIRBY SMART: This is a different year. We got a different

team, very different team this year than last year. So I don't get caught up in one year to the next. Wipe the slate clean and try to redraw the art piece, and you start all over each year with what you got. This year's team was very different than last year's.

Q. We've been asking players to describe what it's like to play for Kirby Smart. What do you think the answer has been?

KIRBY SMART: I don't know. Depends who you ask. You ask young players, it's going to be different than old players. At the end of the day, I hope they just respect the work ethic and commitment we have to our university, which I love, and I value what we put out there on the field.

Q. You have a reputation of being demanding on the practice field, things like that. How do you balance that with making sure you're not pushing them too far, too hard?

KIRBY SMART: Yeah, I don't worry about that. I do what I tell them I'm going to do when I'm in their home, and I tell their parents what I'm going to do. I'm going to push them and be demanding. And if you're right with them off the field and you connect, they gotta know you care about them before they care what you tell them. So we spend a lot of time investing in our players. I spend a lot of time investing in those relationships.

And I expect them to enjoy the demanding part because the guys who have left have flourished because of the demanding parts we put into our program. And I really don't think it's different anywhere else. I don't know how other people do it, but I do know that's how we're going to do it here. And I hope one day they appreciate it because the guys that have left have told me they appreciate it.

Q. Stetson said the same thing. He said guys want to come here want to be pushed. That's part of the success you guys have had.

KIRBY SMART: You hope so. You hope you choose the right guys with the right kind of hard wiring.

Q. How do you make sure your guys are ready physically? (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: Well, you have to ramp up. You gotta go ramp down, ramp up. There's stages within those 28 days where we took time off. We lifted weights. We didn't hit. Then there's times where we did hit, and we did ramp up. And you hope you balance it the right way as a coach.

It's tough because you don't want to have a team that's not



prepared out there. And I talked earlier when I first started today, it's 28 days between games for us, and that's a long time. And the management of that is so critical, and I think it's why you see sometimes sloppiness in bowl games is that layoff, and you try to avoid that as a coach.

Q. Two parter. What can you learn from the LSU game and what can you take from the success Michigan had against Ohio State?

KIRBY SMART: I think anytime you watch a film, you're looking for ideas and things. And every offensive coordinator I know has copycats and every defensive coordinator I know has copycats, meaning they copy what the other team did. You'd be foolish to think the other teams didn't work on the same things as well because people know how you're going to attack them, and it boils down to can you do it better than they do it and do your players respond and you get better at their weaknesses, and we certainly showed a lot of weaknesses in the LSU game.

I think in both situations you reference, it's not as good as it seems, and it's not as bad as it seems. People make up the Michigan game, but that was really a close game. Ohio State started playing a different way. Ohio State started playing to get the ball back, to do things, and that made the score like it did.

Same way with LSU, we didn't play our best game, but there were plays that we had people in position to make the play. We just didn't make the play. You have to make those plays when you have an opportunity and get the ball down or intercept the ball. And some of that gets blown out of proportion both ways.

Q. (Inaudible) sometimes they might miss it by an inch. (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: Yeah. That's probably not a reign in. That's just a repetition and experience thing. It's not trying to make a flash play as much as it is it happens. You make mistakes as players, and you grow from those mistakes. And nobody cares more about playing well than he does. And as a coach, you have to be sure that it's not -- you correct the mistake, not the behavior or the person. And I think that's really important in his case. He's made that play a thousand times. He's just gotta make that play in the moment.

Q. Kirby, (inaudible) go up against Marvin Harrison?

KIRBY SMART: Yeah. He was there the whole time I was there. I just wasn't there long enough for him to know who I was. He was a talented, talented wideout, and they had a

lot of talented wideouts, James was there as a back. Marvin was there. And he was a seasoned vet by the time I got there, but he's very talented.

Q. (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: Athens?

Q. What do you see from Marvin's son?

KIRBY SMART: Talent, a lot of talent, well coached. They come from a room that has a pedigree -- everybody knows Ohio State puts out tons of wide receivers. And those guys have followed in the footsteps of some really great players. So you know they watched those really talented guys work and perform, and they are just as good as those guys. It's as good a group as I've seen.

Q. Kirby, when did you decide you wanted to be a coach and why?

KIRBY SMART: My dad's a coach. It's in the DNA. It's in the blood. I don't know the moment. I didn't have a premonition. I didn't have a sleepover and just, wham, it hit me. It just kind of formed throughout my childhood. And as a player at Georgia, and after finishing playing, you gotta make a decision in life what you're going to do. And I made a decision to commit to doing this. And if I didn't like it, then I would do something else. And I fell in love with it.

Q. Even as a kid, you were thinking about it?

KIRBY SMART: I don't know what I thought about. I think as a kid, I thought I was going to be a pro baseball player or pro football player like every little kid that plays sports does. But it never crossed my path that I would become a coach.

Q. This team all season, how much confidence does that give you that you've struggled at times and you know you can bounce back?

KIRBY SMART: I think any team that's in these final four, they've had that. There's no team you can look at in the final four and say, oh, well, they just had it easy. It's been tough. We all play in really good conferences. We've all had really tough ballgames. They all showed resiliency. I think everybody should have that confidence. That's what makes these games special is if you get into the fourth quarter and you're sitting there in a tight ballgame, you're going to have a great opportunity to have a feature game.

Q. (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: I'm proud of Mykel. He's very mature for

his age. He's very diligent with his work ethic. He does not let success go to his head, which sometimes happens to freshmen. He's very coachable, which I think is important at a young age.

Q. (Inaudible)?

KIRBY SMART: His mental capability, his ability to process information. So much of the NFL game is what you can do pre snap and what you can do post snap. He'll be as good as anybody at the pre snap. He just has to continue that into the post snap.

Q. Do you think he deserves a chance to play in the NFL?

KIRBY SMART: Oh, absolutely. He's earned that right. I think he's going to get that opportunity. You can't play at the level he's played at and not get that opportunity.

Q. As a head coach, what's the process of figuring out how much you want to intimately remain involved on the side of the ball where you have the expertise? Obviously you're a defensive coordinator. You have all that defensive knowledge, but now you're also the head coach of the program. What was that experience like for you, and has it changed at all since you became a head coach? Is your direct defensive involvement the same now as it was?

KIRBY SMART: No. It's changed. I think you have stages, right? It's based on your staff; how involved do you have to be and where can you best provide your time to serve the team? And if my time is better served on the defensive staff helping scheme and do things, then I'll do that. If it's better served meeting one on one with the players and worrying about the psychology of the player, or if it's on offense or special teams, then I'll do that. But every team is different because every team has different players and different staff members. But my involvement and my time demands have changed throughout my time as a head coach and will probably continue to evolve that way.

Q. You were more directly involved with defense when you first started as a head coach?

KIRBY SMART: At different times. I had Mel Tucker, who I had worked with before, and he knew the defense inside and out. Then there was times I had new coordinators that I felt like I needed to be more involved and then maybe less involved as they evolved. So I think every year is different.

Q. And with the way things are now with NIL and the

changing landscape of college football, is there more on a head coach's plate?

KIRBY SMART: It's a decision you have to make where you spend your time. So do I say it's more demanding? It is what you make it. It is what you choose to do with it. So there's more there, but I only have so many hours in the day. So I chop mine up how I see chopping it up. I can't create more time.

Q. (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: I have no idea what you're talking about. That's ludicrous to me.

Q. (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: Nah, I mean like pregame? I don't know what you mean pregame. Like when I get in the locker room? Or like at the hotel when I wake up?

Q. Once you wake up, what do you do? What's the first thing you check?

KIRBY SMART: My cellphone. Then you go over the schedule for the day.

Q. How important do you think a good night's sleep is?

KIRBY SMART: Really important?

Q. You said one of the things that jumped out, how important (inaudible)?

KIRBY SMART: It's important for anybody. Like when you play the sport of football, if you don't like contact, you will probably not be a good football player. You might go and get away with it at some positions, but very rare that you get away with not liking contact. So we do look for that in players, how tough they are, and it's different. Some guys can -- you can train that and they'll embrace it, and some guys may never actually embrace it.

Q. More often than not you prefer to have that in them when they arrive as opposed to having to train them up?

KIRBY SMART: I'd love that. But I don't think you can always know. You don't know exactly what you're getting. You certainly do your research, but we're not allowed to do what the NFL does. We don't have a combine. We don't have a medical review. We don't get a workout. We don't get the same information they do. So you're doing it sometimes on a little bit of a leap of faith.



Q. You talked about some of your younger backs.

KIRBY SMART: Yeah. I'm proud of all those guys. I think they're going to do a good job for us. Really excited.

Q. Does Jalen Carter compare to anybody you can think of from your time at Alabama?

KIRBY SMART: Probably Jonathan Allen. I don't know. I don't like doing comparisons because it's hard. They're all so different. There's big bodies. There's quick he has twitch like Jonathan did. He's got strike ability. He can play any of the five positions up there. That's probably most like Jonathan. But he's got position flexibility.

Q. Is there any kind of highlight in his time that stands out?

KIRBY SMART: Yeah, everybody always says that. It's hard to pinpoint one because he's had some freaky plays, some pass rush moves that were one on one, you're like, wow! Some bull. He can two-gap. He can play both sides of an offensive lineman. But not one I can specifically say. I mean, his wow plays to me were the fullback plays at offense where he blocked like three people against Arkansas. That to me displays his physicality and his athleticism.

Q. Offensive line. You think that's helped him?

KIRBY SMART: Yeah. He played fullback a lot in high school. I know he played some tight end, which he may be counting as offensive line. That helped him in the role we used him in because we had seen him do that. He had done that at a really high level Apopka, and we knew he was a great athlete with the ball in his hands. When you play basketball at the level he did, you know the guy has got athleticism.

Q. (Question about the kicker.)

KIRBY SMART: Well, those guys out there, Pro Kick, they have a school, and they just say, all right, here's our pool of kickers. We think these two or three would fit you. Here's tape. You decide who you'd like. So they're almost a made-to-order kicking service, and everybody looks for a different quality in terms of roll right, roll left, can do both, pocket punt, this, that. And those guys reached out to us, and they kind of paired us, and then we did our investigation from there in him. And he's a great young man. We Zoomed with him a lot. I think a lot of him, and he's been good for us this year.

Q. (Question about special teams.)

KIRBY SMART: Pod? Pod's been great. Pod's been one of the most consistent players I've been around in terms of like his mental disposition, his consistency. He doesn't let positive sway him too far that way or negative sway him too far the other way. I think his mental disposition is his strength. And he's talented. But it's his mental disposition that allows him to be successful.

Q. Coach, I'm curious, you get a lot of questions about how players stay focused. How do you as a coach stay ready for these big moments?

KIRBY SMART: You do what you have to. Right? W-I-N, what's important now, and for us that's just a motto we follow in game, anytime pregame or even after the game is what's important now. You worry about the next step. Don't get lost in the moment. There's no perfect remedy. I think everybody keeps composure a different way.

Q. You have a lot of experience in these situations. If you were to give advice to young people about battling adversity, getting to the top, what would you say?

KIRBY SMART: Overcome adversity by what you do next. We call it play the next play. That's really all you can focus on. And put yourself in a position to be successful because of the habits you have when the moment's not near. So when the moment comes, you're more prepared for it.

Q. How special is it for you two years in a row to be in this position?

KIRBY SMART: I think it's just a credit to the organization, the people that work hard to put us in this position. We got so many people, strength staff, the training staff, the administration, the athletic directors. I mean, there's a lot that goes into this, and everybody's trying to do the same thing. And if there's 130 or 140 of them trying to do it, who does it best? And we've got an incredible organization that allows us to be successful, and we have to go out and do it on the field, and the players do that. But I'm proud of how hard they've worked to do that. It's not easy.

Q. Building this program comparing to Alabama?

KIRBY SMART: I don't know if that's the case. That's certainly a lot of carryover in terms of philosophy, because it's what I was kind of built under. I was at Georgia, and I was at Florida State before that, and been different parts of different organizations. We do it a little different probably than they do it, and everybody probably does it a little different than everybody does it, but you believe in what you do. And I do think that our team, the people in our

organization believe in what we do. They believe that the reason we have success is because of the way we do things.

Q. (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: I don't have a comment. I mean, it's not my place. You know what I mean? You guys make the stories up. I'm worried about us and what we're going to do next and what's the next step. I really don't concern myself with those comparisons.

Q. (Inaudible)?

KIRBY SMART: Yes. Chidera had twins, and had a long, long birthing process. So he got to shoot over yesterday, I think, for practice. But had to go back, wanted to be with the newborns, and rightfully so. I was shocked he even came back yesterday. But happy for he and his wife Hana. Had two beautiful baby boys, and team gave him a standing ovation yesterday.

Q. Question about Stetson.

KIRBY SMART: What all he overcame? He overcame so much. It's just incredible what all he overcame.

Q. (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: Well, he overcame us. You know, we didn't put the guy out there. And he came and met with me and wanted more reps, and we tried to get him more reps, and he took reps with the threes. Every spring game he went with the threes he had success, and it's like what more can the guy do?

Q. Following up on Stetson.

KIRBY SMART: That's not for me to decide. That's a hypothetical. You know, it's just -- it's great articles and media talk, but the people will look back on that probably and have their own interpretation. But right now we're just focused on Ohio State.

Q. From last year to this year what he's been able to do, are you surprised?

KIRBY SMART: Surprised? I don't think surprised. Ever since he did what he did last year and the leadership he provided our team, there's nothing that's really surprised me he's done. He's an incredible leader and person.

Q. Coach, you get thousands of questions from the press all the time. If you could ask one question of them, what would you ask?

KIRBY SMART: I don't know that I have one. I've never thought about it, like what I would ask the media. Just I know they have a job to do, and they're trying to get answers, and I'm trying to coach a football team. So the two don't always agree.

Q. How would you describe your media strategy, how you approach, I mean you said, yeah, we got a job to do, but you've got a job to do, too. How do you balance that and what's fair or what's right in Kirby Smart's perspective?

KIRBY SMART: What's fair and what's right is what's best for our team and what's best for UGA, because that's who I work for; that's who I serve, and that's what my demands allow. I mean, there's only so much time you have in the day, and I want my time centered around my team, what's best for my team and really what's best for our organization.

Q. The microphone I've asked you guys about it the last couple of years. They always smile about it and have fun with it. They said Kirby doesn't miss anybody with the microphone. Is it fun for you? Is it extreme consciousness, calculated when you're talking to the guys over the microphone and calling different guys out?

KIRBY SMART: I don't really know. It's what I'm comfortable with. It's important that as a head coach I'm involved and want them to know what they're doing is important and that there's eyes on them. We only get maybe two hours a day, maybe two hours a day on the field. A lot of days you don't get that. So you gotta use your time wisely, and I think that the intensity with which we do ours mimics the game. And nothing more important preparing for a game than practice.

Q. Herbstreit recently said you were better than any coach in the country with your ability to relate to the players. How much of today's Kirby is similar to the Kirby that was the captain on the Georgia football team?

KIRBY SMART: Yeah, I don't know. I've changed a lot since then. I was not worried about the things I worry about now then. I was obviously focused on being a player. So it's way different. I've grown as a coach, as a head coach, from the years I've had. And I value the relationships with the players probably a lot more now than I did when I first started because I worried about too many other things. Now the relationship with the players is the key ingredient for me.

Q. (Inaudible).

KIRBY SMART: Yeah, I talked earlier, again, hopeful that both of them are able to play and be a factor in the game. That's the hope.

Q. Was there ever a time when you were an assistant that you thought about doing something else, like leaving coaching?

KIRBY SMART: Oh, no. I never thought about it. I enjoyed it. I loved it. I thought about what the next step would look like, but that was always head coach somewhere or wherever, but never thought about getting out. I just wanted to be good at what I did. And wanted to go -- I wanted to serve our players. Like did I do my best job for this kid so that he could be successful. That's all I ever tried to do.

Q. Warren Brinson, Channel 2 News Live with Coach -- can I call you Kirby, Coach?

KIRBY SMART: Absolutely.

Q. Kirby Smart. You're known as a great coach in the SEC. You're going to go down as an SEC legend, but let's take it back in the day to when you're a hard-nosed safety coming down, filling that alley for the Georgia Bulldogs. What was your mindset when you come down the alley to make contact with a wide receiver?

KIRBY SMART: My mindset was to get him on the ground any way possible. We used to call it grab a body part. So if you couldn't get him down because he was bigger or faster than you, you grabbed a body part. And, by the way, didn't I see you over the break doing all this stuff with these kids down in Savannah?

Q. This is not about me. This is about you, Coach. This is about you.

KIRBY SMART: He had one question. We're done. We're done. (Laughs).

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