

CFP Semifinal

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl:

Georgia vs Ohio State

Thursday, December 29, 2022

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Ohio State Buckeyes

Paris Johnson Jr.

Press Conference



PARIS JOHNSON JR.: I've played a lot of great teams this year with talented players, and I have a lot of talent ability from God. But a lot of things I see sometimes is there's a laziness when you're consistently defeated.

I would say they have a motor that is unlike a lot of guys that I've seen this year which stood out on film, not just the production that they had, but the fact that they keep going, which I respect, you know what I mean?

For some people you kind of have to motivate yourself to stay locked in because you'll go against a guy that's kind of lazy and you don't want to get lazy, and he turns up on you and unnecessary hit.

There's a lot of things where I feel they'll keep me going easily because I know they're going to be going the whole time too. I respect both of the defensive ends just as much as Carter and Stackhouse on the inside. So I would say for me it's a big thing. I'm not looking past anybody.

Q. Paris Johnson Jr., people talk a lot about Nolan Smith and what he meant to this defense. Now that he's not here, what do you see from the edge guys and trying to make up for his loss?

PARIS JOHNSON JR.: Nolan Smith is a great player. I've been watching him when I was in high school, you know what I mean? And even preparing for this game before I knew about his injury, I was watching his film. I wanted to understand his rush.

I know one of the edge rushers is a young guy, and I wanted to watch his game and his success because in the defensive room as a young guy sometimes, you kind of want to emulate what the older guys do to have success and try it out every now and then.

So I watched his film, and he's a phenomenal player.

Q. Will Muschamp called you a first round pick the other day. Is this a game you've got to put on film to show the next level like, yeah, I'm that guy.

PARIS JOHNSON JR.: One, I want to say it's kind of cool for a coach from another school to say that. That's kind of cool to hear really. I didn't know that.

But I think for me I try not to think about the next level because I've seen a lot of players think about it while they're in college and they're like living in the moment. It starts to affect their play, affects their mindset, affects their mentality. I think that's cool.

So as much as this is a big game to solidify what I want to do in the future, I would say my mindset is getting to my spot in protection, using my length, and I want to have vertical footwork to move the down linemen. That's my only focus.

The defense respects me as much as I respect them, and honestly that's my goal. At the end of the season, I want to look back to have my name on Twitter and snap, this guy said that, but as far as now, I try not to look at anything like that. I stay locked in the moment.

Q. Paris, coming out of high school, extremely highly rated offensive tackle. To get on the field at Ohio State the first couple years, you played offensive guard. Talk about that transition from tackle to guard and guard back to tackle.

PARIS JOHNSON JR.: As soon as I came in, I was a left tackle. After one practice, he was like hey, Paris, you should go to right tackle. You have a chance to compete with Nick Petit. I was all in on it. I had a hard time understanding the playbook. I didn't care. I just wanted a spot.



Then COVID hit. We had a small camp in the fall, and it got cancelled. Another camp, and it got cancelled. We didn't know if we had a season. I was still trying to compete, still trying to do drills.

Then from there, Nick obviously got the spot, and from then on I would come in maybe one to four plays now and then at the end of the game at right tackle. Then in the Clemson game, he went down, I think with a cramp or something like that or whatever, so I went in at right guard. Matt Jones went down with the same thing. Then I went in at left guard.

At this point, I might have had 15 total reps ever at practice, like when everybody's gone, just the young guys. So I went in for that. Coach was like, do you remember all the plays for this? I'm like of course. I just wanted to go out there. But I had fun.

Then I did the same thing versus Alabama. From then on, Coach is like, okay, you picked up on that fast. If I go all in, I'll be a guard. It will be cool. So I tried to tell myself I am a guard. I'm not a tackle. I'm a guard. I feel like, if I try to stay I'm a tackle and guard. I really should be a tackle. I'm not going to be all in.

I'm a college football player right now. I'm not thinking about the NFL right now. If you think about both, your energy is going to be half and half, you know what I mean?

Q. Your thought process is so uncommon for a football player. I want to fully buy into guard. I'm worried about college, not the NFL. Your thought process is uncommon. What makes you think that way?

PARIS JOHNSON JR.: I feel like I learned about it from other people. I would talk to older guys, and they would tell me their reasons for why they had to come back another year instead of being able to leave when they thought they could have left. They all said they were just too worried about certain things they had to do. I've got to have this type of game in order to lead. They're putting all this stress on themselves.

I'm thinking I just want to win and keep my quarterback up, and on a play, I want to put that linebacker on the ground. Northwestern, the sideline is kind of low. I want to throw somebody over it. It's kind of weird. It was on a little hill, but that was my plan once I found it out.

For me, I'm trying to stay in the moment so all of my energy can be poured into college and not trying to think about what's next because too many people have told me that

story. I feel like for me I couldn't fall in that same thing.

Q. I know you guys are tired talking about the last game, but I think when I studied what Michigan did to you guys best, it's eliminating -- 10, 12 plays to score. Limiting the explosive plays, do you think that's a recipe for defeating Ohio State? Or on the inverse, do you all talk about explosivity all the time? Talk about scoring on every play, and when you walk down the field like that, when you're required to work 12 plays, is that something that's not necessarily Ohio State football?

PARIS JOHNSON JR.: I feel like we can do both, but definitely as a lineman, I think all linemen around the world prefer explosive plays where you get to jog down the field. You know what I mean?

At the same time, I feel like we're built to do both, and we've had a lot of games this year. We've had drives we've had to go 10 to 13 plays. So I think just being able to do that is something that we've done before.

Q. Describe to me what you think it's going to be like in the trenches on Saturday.

PARIS JOHNSON JR.: I think it's going to be hard fought play, just swinging and swinging and swinging. As Coach Day says, this is a matchup game, like you're going against yourself. In a game like this, you can't go into a game like this and think they're going to back down because you're wearing an Ohio State patch. I don't care if there's a G on their jersey. That's how you respect the game. You respect them, and they respect me.

I think it's going to be swinging and swinging and swinging for four quarters. It's a four quarter game.

Q. You talk about respect. Do you feel like you guys haven't completely gotten that given what happened in the last game?

PARIS JOHNSON JR.: I can definitely say we lost a lot of respect after that game going into this game. But we're playing with house money, like it doesn't really matter now. We aren't losing anything.

I feel at this point we're the only team in the playoffs with something to gain.

Q. I think I saw you're a journalism major. Why is that?

PARIS JOHNSON JR.: I love to write. When I got into it, I thought I would be writing long articles and long stories.

When I got to Ohio State, I had to learn about word limits and trying to tell a story in the fewest amount of words, and that was really hard for me.

Once I learned to do that, it became fun to do. I feel like for me it just became something that's really fun to do to tell other people's stories. I like to find a lot of groups out there, like a lot of community service groups on campus because that's what I covered. Like I covered disability, the diversity and accessibility on campus. I covered a lot of those type of groups on campus.

So being able to tell their story was really cool. Sometimes, though, I'm sure you guys know, it's hard because you find someone with awesome things to say but your editor has a word limit. You're trying to figure out what to say.

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