

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Ole Miss vs Penn State

Tuesday, December 26, 2023

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Ole Miss Rebels

Ashanti Cistrunk

Press Conference



Q. I'm curious, when you watch the Penn State offense that's been operating with some interim coordinators for a little while, I'm just curious what you've seen from them on film and how you evaluate them. Thanks.

ASHANTI CISTRUNK: They have a very effective run game. We're working on stopping that. Their O-line is very good. They even have a first rounder, I think. So we're just working on stopping that run game and forcing them on the perimeter.

Q. Ashanti, it seems like you guys won't have one starter in Cedric Johnson on Saturday. What does that loss mean for the defense, and how do you guys adjust?

ASHANTI CISTRUNK: Ced is a valuable piece of our defense. It's going to hurt us a lot, but next man up mentality. We're going to get the next man in. He's going to perform and do what he got to do.

Q. I wanted to ask you what has Coach Kiffin's message been to you this week, and especially for all the seniors that are on the roster?

ASHANTI CISTRUNK: He's been stressing to us to take the moment in, enjoy it, have fun, but at the same time, we came out here to win a game and that's what we're going to do.

Q. I also wanted to ask about the opt-out situation. It's a part of college football obviously, including New Year's Six bowls. But you guys only have the one. How do you think -- what does that say about your team? And how much conversation did you hear among your teammates about the possibility of any others who at least contemplated that possibility?

ASHANTI CISTRUNK: We haven't really just talked about

it, but we respect Ced's decision. We understand he want to prepare for the draft. He got the Senior Bowl invite. So we've been congratulating him. Like we're just going to practice and haven't even thought about it honestly.

Q. I just asked Dayton Wade this, but you've been on Ole Miss, I think this is your fifth season. Can you just reflect on your time from your first season until now?

ASHANTI CISTRUNK: From my first season until now, it's been a long journey. I've been through -- how many DCs? A couple DCs. It's been a lot.

Over those years, I grew as a person. I learned a lot about myself personally, and it's been an amazing ride. I can't wait to top it off with this win.

THE MODERATOR: Meghan, you want to ask him about grits?

Q. I guess I'll keep it rolling. I asked Dayton this question as well, so my question to you is does sugar go in grits?

ASHANTI CISTRUNK: No, no. No, it doesn't. See, me, I put syrup over it, so I guess -- I mean, I guess sugar can go on grits, but I just use syrup.

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