

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

Tuesday, December 26, 2023

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

**Penn State Nittany Lions**

**Kevin Winston Jr.**

Press Conference

**Q. Appreciate the time. Obviously you guys have never played Ole Miss ever, but what have you kind of learned about them through the weeks leading up to this and what kind of sticks out to you about their offense and Jaxson Dart?**

KEVIN WINSTON JR.: What I learned about them, they're explosive, and they move fast. They do hurry-up plays. What stands out to me, they have three great receivers. We watch -- from every receiver from top to bottom, they're great players. They can make plays. The stats will show that. The film shows that as well.

The running back to me, much respect to him. He's a great running back, runs very hard, makes plays. Then the quarterback. So from top to bottom, overall the whole offense, to me, I have much respect for them. They're a great offense, and I'm looking forward to playing against a great offense like Ole Miss.

**Q. Bowls are a lot of work, but they're also a lot of fun. What has it been like so far in Atlanta, getting a chance to spend for the most time you'll see your teammates ever. What's it like for you getting to experience the Peach Bowl in a different city here?**

KEVIN WINSTON JR.: It's been great. Lately this year, my biggest thing is not taking the time for granted. You'll never get it back with your guys. Even if we're not doing the most fun thing around here, being around them for this amount of time, you never get the time back.

That's the main thing, spending time with them. Talking to some of my teammates that I don't talk to as much, getting to know them more and what they're into and things like that.

So it's been great, a couple of days we can get away from football, not just focusing on football, getting away from



that and being able to spend time with teammates. So that's been amazing to me.

**Q. Obviously you're playing under Dex at his position, but what's it like for you to see him get a crack at being the interim DC? Has he changed at all in that role, or is he still the same old Dex you know and love?**

KEVIN WINSTON JR.: It's great, being around Dex all the time. Him having an opportunity to do that has been great, and playing under him has been great. He's still the same Dex. Nothing changes with Dex. He's always going to be him. That's the perfect way for him to go about it. Him being himself is the best he could possibly be. It's been great playing under him and things like that.

It's going to be great going to the game and throughout these weeks and having an opportunity to be coached by him, just like that as an interim D-coordinator.

**Q. Now that you've had about a week with Tom Allen, what are your initial impressions of him? What should we know about him? What kind of guy is he? What's his personality?**

KEVIN WINSTON JR.: He's a great guy. I've talked to Tom Allen a number of times. He brings the energy. When we see him interacting and things like that, he brings the energy. That's what you've got to have on defense, that energy and that juice. Seeing that he has that to him, I'm looking forward to getting to know him more and seeing what else he brings to the table.

What I've seen lately, I'm very excited to see, being able to be coached by him next year.

**Q. A lot of people talk about bowl practice, as it can be a pretty good springboard going into next season. Who are some of the younger guys, not only in the safety room, but on the defense, that you think can really benefit from these 15 practices that you guys get?**

KEVIN WINSTON JR.: I could sit here all day and name probably from every position room, but I talk about this, the



secondary, that's the main thing I know about, so I'll stay in the secondary.

Corners -- obviously safeties, King Mack, DaKaari Nelson, those two are great players. I'm looking forward to seeing their future and everything. They're very mature for their age. They make plays that you'd be so shocked that a young guy like them are making, and they react in certain situations.

For the corners, when we talk about freshmen, Zion Tracy and Elliot Washington, to me, they're freak athletes. They haven't showcased what they are, but I've seen so much from them. I'm excited for them being able to get the opportunity to put it in front of the team, maybe even in the game. They're great players. I'm glad they're finally getting more reps in practice and things like that.

So being able to get that confidence, you know that. Then right now is the best time for them because, in relation to them, around this time, was the time I was getting more reps in practice and things. That's what allowed me to come out and feel comfortable this year. For them, seeing them get the same opportunity and same kind of jump and push and confidence, I'm excited for them. I wish the best for them.

**Q. Obviously Kalen came out and said he was going to the NFL but still playing in the bowl game. As a member of that secondary, what does it mean for you, not just him, but all these guys that have NFL aspirations to still come and play with you, with your teammates, with this team for one final time in this game?**

KEVIN WINSTON JR.: It's great. Like I said, I cherish the time with my guys. I never judge whether they do or don't choose to play or not. When you get the opportunity to play with them again, you don't take that for granted. One more game with your brother. You may never play with him or whoever it is again. You can't take that for granted.

Go out there and have fun. We're going to make sure we have the most fun with him and send him out on a great note. That's it. Never take anything for granted and enjoy the time with your brother because you may never get the time again.

That's how I'm going about it, being able to go out there with him and finish in the right way.

**Q. I wanted to ask you, obviously I saw through the back half of the season, you really blossomed. It seemed like you were finding yourself and finding out who you are as a player. But I wanted to ask you, what**

**did you learn about yourself when you were off the field?**

KEVIN WINSTON JR.: Pretty much off the field, I was very hard on myself earlier in the season. I was trying to be perfect and things like that and didn't think messing up was a part of the game. That was the main thing. I couldn't mess up.

As I went through, kept going through the season, I'm learning that's a part of the game, and that's what's going to allow me to be able to go into the game comfortable and confident and make certain plays. You have to see it in practice, or going around, it has to happen so you have to learn from certain things. That's been my main thing that allowed me to earn that confidence to go out there and play.

Just what allowed me to do that pretty much throughout the season, just being able to learn from everything and learn from my teammates and my coach and be able to take in everything. Just time out there on the field with the guys and learning the game, I took that upon myself to each game get better and better and be a better teammate and leader on the defense. I took that upon myself to make sure I get that down, and that was my main thing.

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