

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

Thursday, December 28, 2023

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Penn State Nittany Lions

Keaton Ellis

Quick Quotess

Q. The cornerbacks seem like they might be up for a bigger stage on Saturday than certainly 2024. Can you talk about Cam, Zion, and Elliot and what they've been able to do this December with maybe more opportunities on the practice field?

KEATON ELLIS: They just continue to do what they always did. They compete every day at practice, and they make plays every day at practice. So I'm excited for them.

Q. Do you have any kind of -- as you see people making their announcements around you, and this team has a few days more together, what is kind of the defining themes that you've picked up here about the 2023 line squad?

KEATON ELLIS: I think this is one of the most connected teams I've been on, and it's truly a brotherhood. I feel like -- obviously wins and losses is tough. We've had, I think, a great season, and we're able to put it together. But overall I've enjoyed this season with this group of guys specifically.

I feel like we really have a great squad, and I'm really excited for their future.

Q. What about the culture has changed since you got here to where it is? How has it changed?

KEATON ELLIS: Culture-wise, it's the same. We're all family. We're brothers. We work hard every day. That's not changed, and I don't think that will ever change, especially under Coach Franklin.

Culture-wise, it's really been the same, and I think maybe there's some slight differences, just in the personalities, but you're going to get that new every year.

Q. Can you tell us what it's looked like with Tom Allen since he got to campus? I know you're not going to be



playing under him next year, but how is he kind of acclimating, and what do you think overall about his presence so far?

KEATON ELLIS: He's a great dude. I was able to speak to him a couple of times. Like you said, I'm obviously not going to play for him, but I'm excited what he can do for our defense and then the guys that he will be coaching.

He's a great presence. He's really a true leader. When he speaks, you listen. So I'm really excited about what he's going to do here.

Q. When you guys played against Indiana when he was the coach, did you ever notice things that their safeties did that impressed you?

KEATON ELLIS: Yes and no. I really wasn't too locked in to watching their safeties, kind of just going through the game. When I'm on the sideline and they're out there, we're making corrections and whatnot. So I'm not really too focused on it.

Q. Is this like a last ride kind of moment for your defense? Everybody here is moving on. Coach Poindexter has Saturday's game, and then Penn State's defense is going to change. For this unit right now, for the season it had, does this represent kind of a last ride moment for you guys?

KEATON ELLIS: Yeah, I would say so. I think it's just really we see it as an opportunity for us to play together again. We don't take that for granted.

Every year the team looks different. The defense looks different. So to go through a season with your group of guys, it means a lot. You want to end it with them, and I think we do see it as that kind of like last ride. Let's finish on a high note.

Q. Do you think being done hits differently for you? Because a lot of these guys generally wanted to play football somewhere. Growing up in State College like, hey, I want to play at Penn State. You've done that, and now it's done. Is that somehow a different kind of



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feeling than maybe what some of these other guys are feeling?

KEATON ELLIS: No, I wouldn't really say so.

Q. Or is it surreal that you kind of did that thing that you wanted to?

KEATON ELLIS: I think I've kind of faced that and met that earlier on and kind of realized like, yeah, I'm here. Let's be here and not thinking about anything bigger than that.

For me, it's obviously bittersweet when your college career comes in, and that's the same for everybody. You're never going to get a locker room or a family like this ever again.

I would even say Beaver Stadium, just in itself, is just special, and you're not going to get that again. Obviously I'm going to come back for games and whatnot, but to be on the grass and have the cleats on the ground. It's bittersweet. You're proud of what you've accomplished and what you've done and experiences you had, but obviously it's hard to see that go.

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