

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Texas vs Arizona State

Saturday, December 28, 2024

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Texas Longhorns

Kyle Flood

Offensive Coordinator

Press Conference

KYLE FLOOD: On behalf of Coach Sarkisian and our offensive staff, appreciate you guys being on today. Appreciate the people at the Peach Bowl. We couldn't be more excited to still be playing at this stage of the season. Should be an exciting game.

I've never had the opportunity to play in this game but I've heard from other coaches who have, and I know everything is done first class. We're really looking forward to getting Atlanta tomorrow and being part of a great game. With that, open it up for questions.

Q. Could you explain the differences between playing left and right tackle, and also, with your redshirt freshman Trevor Goosby, what makes you comfortable playing him at either spot?

KYLE FLOOD: I don't know that there's necessarily a difference. The way we play the game, we don't have plays that we run to the left or to the right or protections or things like that.

I think it's a matter of reps. You know, can you get enough reps in practice to get comfortable. I think when a guy only plays one position, it generally takes like three to five days to kind of flip that guy over and get him comfortable on the other side.

But sometimes, for a guy who is a depth player like Trevor has been for us, he's been playing both sides the entire season. Not always. Not every week. Some weeks he'll play one side and some weeks he might play the other. But he's had the experience of doing it. So he's had to be trained like that.

I think it's a testament to him to be able to do it, and to play at the level that he did. So we're certainly excited about him and his future.



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But I don't know that there's necessarily a difference. I just think it's a matter of can you find the reps over time to get a guy to be comfortable doing it.

Would he have been able to do that Week 1? I don't know that. But we're pretty far down the road this season. So he's had ample time to do both sides.

Q. Speaking of Trevor, he was someone who was not highly ranked but obviously with his track and field exploits showed some athleticism but what attracted to you bring him into the offensive line room?

KYLE FLOOD: First thing I would say he was pretty high in my mind, you know, that's for sure.

Now early on in the process he was a guy who was really lean and when you have a guy like that, you're always trying to assess, all right, hey, can this guy ultimately put on the bulk to play in the SEC. Really, really athletic guy. Had a chance to watch him play basketball. Really, really athletic on the basketball court. So all that stuff was great.

I thought his coaching staff up at Melissa did a really good job of keeping me up-to-date with his process. So I thank them for that for sure.

But as he went through his senior year, or should I say -- I apologize.

As he went through the spring before his senior year, you could really see him start to put on the weight. When he ultimately officially visited in June before his senior year, I want to say we weighed him in around 270, 275 which for a guy with his frame was more than enough in my mind that we would be able to get him to where he wanted to get to. And I think he was 290 when he got here, and now he's usually between 310, 315, 317. That's usually where he is.

But the athleticism was always there. I was really excited about his athleticism.

And ultimately as soon as he showed me that, okay, this

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guy is going to have the size to play in the SEC, to me, he was a no-brainer. He went right to the top of my left.

Q. Since he's talking to us, I assume he's healthy but he could set the career start record for playing on Wednesday. Why has he stayed the course?

KYLE FLOOD: Jake has started every game at center for me since I've been here. That's pretty neat. Over four years, I don't know if I've ever had that before. That is certainly a really, really nice luxury for me to have somebody who has been with me and thinks like me.

But your question is, what does that mean to us or why is that a good thing? Because he loves everything about football. He is a catalyst for the energy of the football team. To steal Coach Sark's expression: Are you going to be a thermostat or a thermometer? Well, he's a thermostat. He sets the temperature in the room. He's not taking the temperature. He sets the temperature. And he kind of sets the standard for us in the offensive line room, and it does spill over to the rest of the offense just because of his personality.

I think it starts with his love for everything about football. He loves practice. He loves the meetings. He loves the rehab afterward. He loves the training and the weight lifting, and there's just nothing about it he doesn't love. That's infectious on a football team and it's really, really invaluable.

Q. To follow that up, Jake and some of the other guys have been with you for a long time and they will be moving forward on. Of course you're worried about here and now and the Peach Bowl, but somewhere in the back of your mind, are you at all thinking about what 2025 could look like and the need to ingratiate some new pieces?

KYLE FLOOD: As a college coach, especially, you're always coaching your current team and then there's always an eye to the future of, hey, how are we building this roster; how are we building this position group. We have to do that. That's just good practice in terms of what you have to do as a coach. It never, never takes away from what you're doing right now.

But I'm excited about my room. I think we have a got a deep room and I think we've got a versatile room in terms of guys playing different positions, and that's something that will all shake out in the off-season. They are practicing hard right now.

One of the advantages of playing this long is we get to continue to practice. So these practice weeks are really,

really valuable to these young players, the freshmen in our group like Nate Kibble and Danny Cruz and Brandon Baker, the guys who have only been here a year.

Well, now, not only do they practice with us through the regular season, but now we are deep into the postseason. Those practices are really valuable. So we are always looking at it, and again, I like the room that we have. But, you know, that stuff will all shake out in the off-season. Right now we are kind of focused with the team on getting a win in this game.

Q. The line was pretty healthy for the most part but when these injuries came, with Kelvin and with Cam, how important was the cross-training that you did in the preseason, just in case this happened?

KYLE FLOOD: It's really important. It's really important. I think part of my obligation to Coach Sark and to the offense is to make sure that we can always get whatever combination of the best five players on the field is. That's why I tell people, it's not like, okay, this guy is the backup right tackle and this guy is the right guard and this guy is the backup center. That's not how it works. It's not a negative to any player who didn't go in the game when the injuries happened. It's just, to me, I have to make sure we have the best combination of five.

So if that means Cole Hutson has to play right guard or left guard, that's kind how far we train them during the week. And if that means Trevor Goosby has to play right or left tackle, and Hayden Conner has to go to center so how we can keep that best combination in there; that's really -- we start that very, very early in the year to make sure we are ready to do it when we need it.

We were fortunate this year to not need it for a while but now need it, and we're probably going to need it going forward.

Q. Are you interested in being a head coach again?

KYLE FLOOD: Right now, I'm interested in winning the Peach Bowl. I appreciate that question. I think those kind of questions are always a function of success, and generally when you're an assistant coach, if you get an opportunity to be a head coach, it's because you were really good at the job you were doing and the team you were with was successful.

We'll entertain those things down the road if and when they come. It's always flattered to be considered for those things. I don't have put my mind there because right now we have got enough of a challenge trying to play really well against a good Arizona State team.

Q. Appreciate the time today. I was just curious, something interesting that came out of yesterday was a couple of the players talked about Peach PK and I guess his patience when it comes to making late adjustments in the play clock pre-snap. From an offensive perspective, what challenge does that pose when an offensive coordinator is willing to do that and tweak things late before the snap?

KYLE FLOOD: You mean like when the defense changes late?

Q. Yes, sir.

KYLE FLOOD: That's certainly a challenge. I think offensively, we try to be really good at controlling the tempo to try to make the play-callers on defense not have the ability to know when the ball is going to be snapped and sometimes that -- you know, you saw us in the last game, sometimes we go faster and sometimes we don't go nearly as fast.

But no, it's an issue. And it does. It does complicate things. One of the harder things to deal with on offense is when the picture changes because now 11 guys got to make a change in their mind in terms of what their assignment and technique is going to be.

Q. Through your career, you've coached a lot of great players. What is it about this group of guys that you'll remember most?

KYLE FLOOD: I think the first thing is that I've had them for three and four years. It's kind of unique. Nobody likes to move around as a coach. I was in one place for 11 years. I'm certainly -- I've had that experience before this.

Everybody likes to be in one place. You like your family to have stability. All those things are good things. But things happen in the profession, whether sometimes you get promoted to a job or it's a job that's a good job and you move, kind of like I did when I came here from Alabama to be the offensive coordinator at Texas. Those are all really good things.

Now to be here for four years and have guys like Jake and Hayden who I've had for four years and the first recruiting class where we took seven and they are all still here, that's unique, and in this day and I think, especially now with the portal and all the other stuff going on to, recruit seven players in the same class and have them all still be here, that is really, really unique.

I've got a real connection with these guys and I've had

good connections with other players in the past. I would say the fact that I've had these guys for three and four years, my connection to them, and how much they like each other, because I promise you they would not have all stayed if they didn't like each other. They get along. They kid each other. They push each other. They are not afraid to hold each other accountable. It's really a special kind of culture that they have created in this room. Kind of more specific even than what it is as a team.

All that stuff is really neat, and the other part of it, for me, is, I had an older son who kind of grew up in a football building. And now I've got a younger son who is doing the same thing here. And they were both out there at practice today, and that was kind of neat for me to see that and how comfortable my younger guy is with these players, kind of like my older guy was with players at another place. Those things are all special and made this group a little bit unique.

Q. I know Sark has talked about Isaiah Bond getting healthy and working his way back. When you have IB healthy and part of the plan, how much does that dynamic change what you can do offensively to stretch the field and also as an extension of the run game?

KYLE FLOOD: I don't know if it changes what we do on offense necessarily and but IB is a special kind of weapon, and you answered the question with the question. His elite speed, it's just different. He's got the ability to be explosive every time he touches the ball because of how well he runs. He's been out there practicing. I'll let Sark speak to his availability. I don't know if he has yet or not but I'll let him speak to that

Certainly we are all excited when he's out there, and I do think it just causes one more different kind of stress on the defense when you have somebody out there with that kind of speed.

Q. These extra Bowl practices are not really Bowl practices like they have been in the past where you have two or three weeks building up for one game. What's that like for you to utilize the young talents moving forward in what's expected to be extra practices or opportunities for development for these younger guys?

KYLE FLOOD: I kind of like it. And I like it for this reason: I think learning a game plan is a skill. And just like any other skill in life, the more you do it, the better you get at it.

So even though some of these younger guys are playing on the scout team and maybe doing some different stuff, they are still in some of the game plan meetings and they

are having to learn the game plan. I think that's going to serve those guys really well going forward next year when they are a little closer to the top of the depth chart.

I think the idea of having to continue to learn game plans in a kind of game-specific mode -- kind of like it. I think it's been good for these guys.

Q. Outside of Georgia, you found some real success in the run game the last back half of the season. What do you attribute to that success, and what do you need to do moving forward to be playing on through January 20th?

KYLE FLOOD: You're thinking a little bit more big picture than I think coaches think. We've had some success running the football. There have been a couple games where we haven't.

But regardless of any of that, we don't start the game with any rushing yards this week. So we've got to execute this game plan. That's how I look at it from our perspective. It was great to rush the ball the way we did in the last game but we don't get any kudos for that.

We've got to earn every yard that we rush for this week against a defense that presents a lot of challenges.

I'm not worried about January 20th right now. I'm not worried about the 10th or the 11th right now. We are worried about the Peach Bowl and playing really well in this game, and I think the way do you that is to practice well, and I'm excited about how we practiced the last couple days.

Q. Sark talked about how you got outside zone back on track and he spoke to the offensive line and what they did. How did Trey and Jaydon, as well, your running backs help outside zone also get back on track?

KYLE FLOOD: There is no good run game if your running backs are not in sync with the offensive line.

So I think the tracks, the reads, having their eyes in the right place. When you watch running backs, the way that you know you have a really good running back is when you have a change of speed as they go through the line of scrimmage. That means they are really seeing it. I've heard people say their feet are connected to their eyes. That's kind of what they mean. There's an acceleration as they burst through the line.

You saw that last week with Trey and Jaydon. I think the reps they have gotten this year have shown up, and we're

doing a better job of blocking it. I think they are doing a better job of reading it. And then when they do make their read, they are doing a great job of accelerating through the line. And every once in a while, they have to make a guy miss, and they have done that, too.

So we are fortunate even with the situation we are in in the running back room to have guys like Trey and Jaydon and Jerrick who are doing a really nice job running the ball for us.

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