

Florida Blue Florida Classic: Florida A&M Rattlers vs Bethune-Cookman Wildcats

Saturday, November 19, 2022

Orlando, Florida, USA

Camping World Stadium

Bethune-Cookman Wildcats

Terry Sims

Jalon Jones

Press Conference



Florida A&M - 41, Bethune-Cookman - 20

TERRY SIMS: Obviously it didn't go the way we planned. We talked about the things we needed to do to have an opportunity to win this game, and that was protect the ball, make the plays that we were supposed to make. We had some dropped balls. We had a couple turnovers, and we blew two coverages, which gave them two big scores.

We also had a lapse in special teams, and they got a fake punt, which gave them really the go-ahead touchdown later on in the game.

So against a team like Florida A&M, you can't come out and make the mistakes that we made or not take care of the ball or blow coverages because they're going to do just what they did, and they made the plays they were supposed to make.

I thought the game was going the way we wanted it to go in the first half. Even coming out in the second half, the first part of the third quarter, wasn't bad, but we just didn't hold up. So that's things that we have to go back and all the guys that are returning we have to get all those fixed.

Q. Can you talk about the momentum that you guys had? Two touchdowns back-to-back, and then with 3:35 seconds left, scored. Talk about that momentum you had and your sense of optimism at that time.

TERRY SIMS: Anytime you can get momentum, you take it. It took us through those two scores and got us back in the game. We knew coming in at halftime the game was not out of reach. We just had to come in, you know, like I said in the opening statement, we had to make the plays that we were supposed to make. We did that coming out.

But then they had the fake punt that gave them momentum. Anytime you can ride momentum that's what happens in a football game. Football games, they're games of momentum. They're driven by momentum. And when you get the momentum and you start riding it, good things happen for you.

Q. Talk a little bit about the Classic. You had a fair share of victories. This is a beautiful thing for everyone in Florida, HBCU football, the rivalry, and the whole deal.

TERRY SIMS: Yeah. The Florida Classic is great. Had a great opportunity starting in 2010 here. And you're correct, we won our fair share. And we'll get back to that. We just have to make sure that we don't do anything to hurt ourselves.

And not to take anything from Coach Simmons and Florida A&M, those guys played a great football game. They did the things that they needed to do. They made the plays they were supposed to make to give themselves a chance to win the game.

Q. The renewed spotlight on HBCU football. In this case, it was a MEAC rivalry, but now it's SWAC. Talk about the B-CU and Florida A&M and the renewed spotlight.

TERRY SIMS: I don't think it's much of a renewed spotlight. We can be in the SIAC, it's going to be a great football game. It's two schools that have been battling for years and will continue to battle.

When you talk about being in the SWAC, I think just with everything going on in the conference right now, there's a platform put on this league right now that allows all these young men to showcase their skills on a larger scale and on a larger platform.

So it's been great being in this league and we just have to continue to do the things we're doing. We're not far off. But we have to make sure that we come out on the other end of some of these games.



Q. The game got close until that fake punt, which changed the momentum of the game. Was that something you all expected to see?

TERRY SIMS: Yeah, we expected to see it. We practiced it. I will never blame a game or blame a play on a player. But all week long, he took that guy. And I guess it was just a lapse. It was (inaudible), he didn't hold a guy up, and he came scot-free, and they made the play.

So we expected it. We knew it. They had already done it on film and that's the reason we practiced it because we knew in certain field zones that they would want to do that with short yardage.

Q. All year long turnovers and penalties have been a kind of your guys' Achilles Heel. Talk about how much those come back to factor in games like these, these close ball games.

TERRY SIMS: They're huge. When you have turnovers, when you have momentum, and you have a turnover it starts your momentum back over. You have to start back over. The opposing team has the momentum at that time because they made a big play.

With the penalties, the same thing. We didn't have a ton of penalties tonight, but we had some penalties in key situations that stopped our momentum. We had a really, really crucial penalty on fourth down, well, on third down, it was third and short, and we were just trying to draw 'em offsides, but we jumped offsides. So it ended up killing that drive. Those are things that you can't do and expect to win football games.

Q. I wanted to ask you, what offensive adjustments did you make and what did you see from Florida A&M's defense because the second half you were rolling until the fourth quarter?

TERRY SIMS: Well, honestly, we didn't make a whole lot of adjustments. We just started blocking the guys we were supposed to block and making the plays that were there. They were the same plays that were there in the first half. We just didn't execute.

I think that was the big thing in the second half, we just started to execute and we made those plays that we didn't make in the first half.

Q. This one is for your quarterback. Can you talk about just taking this offense to the point that there were times when you guys were able to get past the secondary, challenge the Florida A&M defense, and

there were times when you pretty much took it on your shoulders. What was some of the things or weaknesses you were seeing at the points where you took off running and was able to make that play to challenge the secondary?

JALON JONES: I feel like it goes back to what coach is saying, executing at the time where you're supposed to make your play. We know that they were scared of our receivers. They were going to try to drop the coverage a lot of times and when they did that, they opened up a lane for me to run. And I was just taking advantage of my O-line setting up good blocks and getting me good lanes to escape the pocket and stepping up and taking off and getting yards.

Q. Jalon, you all seemed to pick up the pace in the second half. You brought the score in 27-20. What was said at halftime to make you guys come out there and turn up your guys' game?

JALON JONES: Before coaches even came in there, we all circled up as an offense on the right side of the locker room and said, We need to stop and look at ourselves right now and realize what we can do.

And we sat around, we talked about the plays that were right there, the plays that we thought we need to get back to, what we were seeing in certain situations that we wanted to come back to and tell coaches about that, and we just knew that we had to come out there and execute.

We couldn't sit back on feeling sorry for ourselves in the first half, right? And just coming back out there strong and executing how Bethune-Cookman does. And so that was our mindset. We had 30 minutes left in this season to show who we are, and I feel like we answered that call. Coming out of the halftime, we just got to continue to work to get better.

Q. Jalon, this is your first Florida Classic. Just what did you think about the overall spectacle and then the game itself?

JALON JONES: It was my second Florida Classic. I was here last year. I watched the game. It's a great environment, a great atmosphere and a sour taste level left in my mouth that's going to say stay here for 365 days. And my work ethic this off season is going to show that so that we can come back out here next year and start the streak on the right note.

Q. Coach, we're at the end of the season now. You look back on this season, obviously you dealt with a ton of obstacles. Away from the field dealing with

lightning delays and hurricane displacement. Through all of that can you look back and say one thing you're really proud of your team about, despite the record. And then as you look forward to kind of self scout what's one thing you know you need to fix going into next year to turn that record around?

TERRY SIMS: The first thing I'm proud of is the resiliency of everyone in this program. Because a lot of places, a lot of folks would have tucked their tails and quit. But these young men, the young ladies that are working in our program, everyone that's around this football program right now -- we were displaced for three weeks. That's tough. Then we were displaced for four more days. And things like that, it takes a toll on you. But none of these folks in this program turned and quit. Everyone continued to move forward. Everyone continued to play the game of football our support staff continued to get us everything we needed to be successful, to push us toward being successful.

So I'm definitely proud to see the resiliency of this group. When you look at spending a week in Chattanooga, a week in Nashville, a week in Jacksonville. Then you got to turn right around and spend four more days in Mississippi. And we didn't practice in our facility for a month all together. And we had games all throughout that. But these guys continued to play. The things we have to fix, we have to finish. They know. My thing is we're not using any of that as an excuse. We have to finish. We have to control what we can control. Continue to prepare and finish.

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