

TaxSlayer Gator Bowl: Duke vs Ole Miss

Friday, January 3, 2025
Jacksonville, Florida, USA
TIAA Bank Field

Duke Blue Devils Manny Diaz Jordan Moore Press Conference



Ole Miss 52, Duke 20

MANNY DIAZ: First of all, congratulations to Ole Miss. They played a great game. It was a great -- this week has been a great week for Duke football, the entire experience, the Gator Bowl committee, the green coats, the green jackets have been phenomenal, and we learned a great lesson tonight, which is really what we needed, where our program is, is to be in a game like this in a setting like this against an opponent like that, a team who is going to be difficult to beat when you're playing well, but to make the mistakes that we made, and we've preached all year that it's really doing simple well is what wins, and we made simple mistakes.

In the first half it was possession downs. The inability to get off the field on defense allowed them to drive the ball and keep possession of the ball, and all stuff that we feel like fundamentally we should be able to do.

So it's a great thing for us to unpack all off-season. I think this game will provide tremendous fuel for our football team in our off-season program and through summer workouts.

We're going to really, really miss this senior class, including this guy sitting right here next to me. Phenomenal leaders, phenomenal players, phenomenal men that I'm really proud of in terms of not just what's next for them in their football career but what they'll do in life, because I do think this is a school that can transform you, and these guys have been through a lot, but I do think they leave here transformed and ready to be special people in the world.

I'm thankful for them, to be their head coach. With that, we'll open it up for questions.

Q. Jordan, I was wondering how you and the rest of the offense were able to help Henry prepare for this

game, obviously with limited playing time this season, especially you as a former quarterback?

JORDAN MOORE: Yeah, being in his position freshman year, not really getting on the field but being a backup and having some opportunities to play, I just tried to give him as much knowledge as I could how to manage that. We were all behind him. Henry is a competitor and he's a very talented quarterback. I believe he can play anywhere in the country, and he showed that tonight. I'm so proud of him for stepping up in that role and just rolling with the punches.

Q. Coach Diaz, obviously anytime you talk about Ole Miss offense, they've been scoring a lot of points, making a lot of things happen. Is there anything that they did that was different that maybe you weren't expecting this time, any changes to their approach?

MANNY DIAZ: No, they kind of do what they do. They're pretty simple. I think the thing that just jumped out today is a special quarterback who played special. It's been well documented a lot of guys who have had a career like he's had don't play in bowl games necessarily, and so the way that he played today and some of the throws that he made were elite.

Again, sometimes you've got to take your cap off to somebody or whatever, but then there are other times where, again, us just not doing the best job of being us certainly helped them out.

Q. Jordan, when you look back at your four years at Duke, what can you say about your career and what do you think defines your experience here? And Coach Diaz, same question, what do you think guys like Jordan did to help you in your first year with the program?

JORDAN MOORE: I mean, I'm blessed to be at Duke and to make that decision. My parents always told me when I was going through the recruiting process don't choose a school for the coaches but choose it for a place that you love and place you want to be, and that's what I chose, and that had a funny way of rewarding me with some great

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I'd like my legacy to be known as somebody who's a competitor but also a teammate who you can lean on, talk to, joke around with, and be there for because at the end of the day, the cleats are going to hang up at some time, but the memories and the lasting impact you can make on other people, that's what really matters.

MANNY DIAZ: Let me say two things about that. One, the buy-in, because again, when you've heard a third new coach come in and say, hey, here's how we're going to do things, that can get old. You don't necessarily have to trust the person is who he says he is, so I'm thankful to him for that because if guys like him don't buy in, you're not going to get with the younger ones.

But what I think of when I think of Jordan Moore, when I think of what Duke does, it's people who excel at doing hard things. There are no easy days at Duke, but generally speaking, the people that we attract, they had to do hard things that other kids when they were in high school, they didn't want to do those things.

Doing the hard thing right now is pushing this program up to the top of college football, and that's why, again, today was a great lesson and a great step on the way to achieving that, and who better to achieve that with than people who enjoy doing hard things and excelling at them, and that's why, again, I'm thankful for his contribution, and he'll always be a part of all the success this program going forward. It will always have Jordan Moore's fingerprints all over it.

Q. Coach, from a defensive background, it felt like there were a few plays in the first few drives where the pass rush got some pretty quick pressure on Jaxson Dart and he was able to evade it. How hard is it to stay composed on the sideline and what are you telling your defensive line when he makes plays like that even though they're doing their job early on?

MANNY DIAZ: Yeah, that's the hard thing about quarterbacks that can extend plays with their feet. You saw that with Henry tonight. Henry did a great job extending plays with his feet. There's no greater stress point on a defense than a guy wins a one-on-one pass rush and gets home and can't get the guy on the ground.

Again, I think that's why he's thrown for all the yards and touchdowns that he has. But I think we will look back at our performance and say, okay, there are still some things down the field coverage-wise we could have done to make it harder on him.