

# Atlantic Coast Conference Football Kickoff

Thursday, July 25, 2024

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Clemson Tigers

### R.J. Mickens

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions for R.J.

**Q. When you walk into the locker room in the spring, you see Tyler Venables, the old guys, does it feel like this is kind of come full circle for you? Do you feel like the old heads in the room?**

R.J. MICKENS: Coach always says the days are long, but the years are short. That's never been more true. Feels like I just got here yesterday. Five years, four years gone by, it's just been amazing, amazing.

**Q. Clemson has always had such a stellar defense. This year is no different. What can you tell us about you and the players alongside?**

R.J. MICKENS: Just the work we've been putting in. Me, Barrett, Tyler, we got a lot of great leaders. Young leaders, as well. Avieon Terrell, Shelton Lewis, guys just stepping up and grinding this whole off-season and summer. It's been amazing to see. We just have to be consistent.

**Q. You steadily improved your starts each year. What is it about the evolution of your game that's translated to more starts in your career?**

R.J. MICKENS: For me personally, it's just been being consistent, like I said. Every single play could be that play that could win or lose the game. Especially being a safety, you got to have that mindset every single play. You cannot take a play off.

I feel like I've really improved in that sense, just maturing and developing as a leader and as a man off the field.

**Q. To come back here and to put the NFL dreams on hold for a minute, what is it about this season and Clemson that makes you believe the national stage is where you will be again?**

R.J. MICKENS: Just having the people in that building,

Coach Swinney, Coach Conn, Coach West, Coach Riley on the offensive side. Then the guys in locker room are really a special group of guys. Just seeing the work and the camaraderie. Those long days that I was talking about just grinding, early mornings, late nights, grinding in the facility and putting in work. I've just really got a lot of confidence in this bunch.

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