

2021 Orange Blossom Classic: Florida A&M vs Jackson State

Sunday, September 5, 2021

Miami Gardens, Florida, USA

Hard Rock Stadium

Jackson State

Coach Deion Sanders

Shedeur Sanders

Aubrey Miller Jr.

Press Conference



Jackson State - 7, Florida A&M - 6

COACH PRIME: They did a great job. They were hospitable to our kids, enjoyed themselves immensely. This was like a bowl week for us, and it's going to be hard -- all the other classics got to -- hear me clearly -- it's going to be hard to top this. It was incredible. My first real classic. Home state. FAMU which is right around the corner. I was married to a wonderful woman from FAMU that gave me two beautiful kids.

I ain't talking about your mama.

I loved it, we played great defensively. Offensively we were really sporadic. We've got to do better inside the 40s. And we'll fix it. We'll clean it up.

But it was a great win. A great win. I'm always critical. That's who I am; I'm a perfectionist. And it's going to be hard to sleep tonight but I'd rather sleep with a dub than sleep with an L.

Q. What were your thoughts on Shedeur's performance today?

COACH PRIME: Shedeur was all right. I was on his butt -- you gotta understand, I'm his father, too. I know what he's capable of doing. He was trying to do too much early on. Made a couple of bad decisions and fumbled -- it's funny at the halftime; tell me what you told me at the halftime. You were going to stop doing what?

SHEDEUR SANDERS: I'm done being Lamar Jackson. (Laughs).

COACH PRIME: He walked over to me. I said you straight, you done being Lamar Jackson. I said, thank you, sir, because you are killing us.

But he made a couple of freshman mistakes. But overall, I think he was 18 of 24. I'll take that -- 18 to 24, 221, no picks, no turnovers. I like that. In that aspect I like it.

We've got to make more advantage of certain situations we had. We're going to do a better job with understanding who he is, how he is, what he is and put him in the right situations to be successful. That's our job.

I've got another son, too, by the way. Played pretty darned good. And I'm thinking of adopting him if he stays straight.

Q. As far as going forward for next week against Tennessee State, you're now 1-0 in the SWAC. What are you looking forward to?

COACH PRIME: You're going to let me enjoy this right now. I'm going to enjoy this immensely. We got a wonderful plane ride home. We gonna make sure everybody bathe, they get on the plane. Everybody bathe, get on the plane. And we're going to be straight.

But we'll enjoy this tonight. Before we have turn up. The only one probably who is going to have his mind fixated he should receive a handout from his coaches to prepare him mentally for next week's opponent. We'll probably have tomorrow off, then we go back to work on Tuesday. And it's going to be a short week.

Q. Shedeur, you scored the only touchdown in the game. How did it feel to get that done?

SHEDEUR SANDERS: It's my job. It's my job to lead the team in the end zone, and we only put up one touchdown. That's not really acceptable in this offense and what we're trying to do here.

Q. The speed of the game, how different is it from coming from high school?

SHEDEUR SANDERS: Honestly, like I said before, in practice we get almost the same look. So the mistakes I made, it was simply just not being aware of every note I took during the week. The speed of it was exactly the same if not slower.

Q. Aubrey, you had seven solo tackles, one sack. Could you explain how you were able to just get to the ball?

AUBREY MILLER JR.: Through my defense and my coaches. Just point-blank simple. We practiced these things, went over the defense I've been waiting on since the spring, it was here. So they came and they provided and I was able to do my thing as well. Just a full defense thing.

Q. You got the W, but there were still some things, 10 penalties today, other things that happened. How do you plan on moving forward --

COACH PRIME: We're going to clean that up. You've got to understand, shoot, this is a whole new team. I think it's only several kids that played from the 2019 season. We don't have a lot of kids that were on this team. These are a bunch of new guys coming together.

And we made some mistakes. Our motto is smart, tough fast, disciplined. We weren't disciplined. We weren't smart at times. We played tough and we played fast. We'll clean up a couple other things that we weren't successful at. But we'll get that fixed. We'll get that fixed. Those are not bad things that we can't fix. We can fix what we did wrong. And we will.

I stay on them. I stay on them and they know it. Like, when they do something, they know it. They already know. I don't even have to yell at them. But I do, because it's just who I am, but they know.

We're trying to get to the next level. We're trying to go pro. We're trying to win everything and we want the whole team going pro. We want us (indiscernible) at the draft. That's what we want. That's the goal. That's the vision. That's the expectation.

Q. Can the three of you all talk about what it felt like to finally be able to play in front of fans, the sounds and the sights of college football being back this weekend, and what it was like for the three of you?

AUBREY MILLER JR.: Biggest thing, I was just happy to be able to play with my teammates. Those guys being able to play for the first time, having their debut, that was

the biggest thing for me.

The fans, I know we've got the most loyalist fan, so that was kind of a normal thing for me. But it was great to be in Miami and for them to travel all that way to support us. And also to be able to play alongside my teammates and coaches.

SHEDEUR SANDERS: I was really excited for game time because last time I played I played in front of 200 people in high school. So leading up to this game, I knew it was going to be stuff that I wasn't used to. So just being able to play in this atmosphere and then just really actually living in the moment. It was really exciting to me.

COACH PRIME: Last time I played here I think we won a Super Bowl. Phenomenal. This atmosphere, just to see the fans, to feel the fans, to hear the sonic boom, to feel the boos and the jeers and the haters and the naysayers, that was wonderful. I love those emotions. I love that kind of emotional roller coaster.

I like seeing the guys' faces because they feed off the fans and the crowd. And we gotta be on one accord. I think we got a legal procedure because they couldn't hear the snap count because they were playing when we had the ball. We just have to work together, have to work together.

Q. Just talk about what you preached mentally to the team and some of the aspects that you preached overall to make sure the team was grounded to come out victorious.

COACH PRIME: I'll let you hear it from them first.

AUBREY MILLER JR.: Biggest thing is he stressed where we always going -- what we're always supposed to do, and that's being smart, fast, tough and disciplined. He always stresses it through practice. He's not afraid to get on us at all. He's Coach Prime. And biggest thing is it's all coming together playing as one.

SHEDEUR SANDERS: You practice how you play. This week in practice we had okay days, decent days. And we had good days. So offensively we started out slow. We wasn't really a team at first. And it showed us like, yeah, we're going to get challenged and this and that. So we have to bond together and get together as one.

COACH PRIME: Just these guys, giving them the vision and understanding. What did we talk about before the game, what was the talk before the game?

AUBREY MILLER JR.: It's time.



COACH PRIME: It's time. I talked to them about -- I don't know if you've seen the biopic of Aretha Franklin, when Dr. King was about to speak, and she said, Say it, Martin. She was pretty much saying it's time, go ahead and tell them.

And then he ushered that wonderful "I Have a Dream" speech. And just I wanted to let them know, this is time. We've been walking and talking and all the hype, but this is time. This is not just time for Jackson State, this is the time for HBCUs to shine. We're on television. How many times have we been on television since the beginning of the season?

They played a national game last week with Alcorn, right. And we was the national game this week and the raves are through the roof, I'm pretty sure.

This is our time. We've got to shine, not just us. FAMU as well. They had some phenomenal players on the other team. And I'm pretty sure on Draft day they better get a phone call.

We as a family, HBCUs, MEAC, whatever, we would never go another draft without someone being drafted.

This is our time. And we've got to seize the moment. We've got an opportunity. We've just got to seize it.

Q. What did you like most about your defense today?

COACH PRIME: Everything. They communicated. I'm on their butts every day about getting to the ball, because big things happen when they get to the ball. I can't wait until they see the film so they can see how oftentimes it was at least eight or seven helmets getting to the ball. They were phenomenal. They were resilient.

They usually have busts like crazy at practice. But they didn't have a lot of busts today. We'll find some on film, I'm sure. But overall all we did was what he was supposed to do.

As long as the leaders lead and do what they're supposed to do, followers are going to follow. Everybody's not a leader. This world consists of followers, for the majority.

But the leaders gotta be the one that lead those other guys. And they did. That's why he's sitting up here today.

Q. Listening to you, Coach, and watching you, you bring memories back of Jake Gaither and Coach Eddie Robinson --

COACH PRIME: That's unbelievable. Thank you. That's humbling.

Q. Watching you talk about the NFL Draft, there's something else you add in that and it is character and what you're trying to instill in the young men. Would you talk about that a bit?

COACH PRIME: It all starts with that. I don't care how much talent they have. The character is going to allow them to remain in the situation that they desire to be in. Your talent will get you there, but your character gotta keep you there.

And I'm not crazy enough to believe that all these guys are going to be professional football players, we just desire them to be professionals, and the character is everything.

Just like the offensive line. I have a guy in my office right now that truly wants to bless the offensive line with an NIL deal. And he's looking for character. They don't even understand who he is. He owns a mega company. He's been focused on by the Wall Street Journal and furthermore. And they never understand the eyes they have on them, because he has the propensity to change their life instantly with a stroke of a pen on a check.

But they've got to understand he's watching. You're watching. Everyone is watching, because now they have a spotlight.

Another thing I need to add that was phenomenal that some people sleep on. Our babies -- I call them babies. Turn around. Just stand up and turn around. He got his darned name on the back of his jersey. You can turn back around.

Why don't we do that in the SWAC? Is it that expensive to put the darned name on the back of the jerseys? Don't you think his momma and them would want to see their baby's name on the back of the jersey? Don't you think his siblings, his friends, his family, loved ones? That's the kind of stuff we take for granted. I don't. I'm very detailed.

That guy worked his butt off, did what he had to do, changed his whole composite of his thought process. We could at least put his darned name on the back of his jersey. How simple is that? What is that an extra \$5 a jersey?

I'd take care of it for the whole SWAC if they'd do it.

(To someone in the room) You already blessed the team with suits. It's my business manager who makes it happen for me and him.

But those are the types of things, we're very detailed.



We're very detailed with the little things. And our kids deserve it, don't they? I should get an amen on that.

Q. You just mentioned your offensive line. If you would take a second and talk about their performance today, especially in protection for Shedeur, who was able to -- he had a couple of good throws, some deep throws today. And then Shedeur, if you would talk about that offensive line play. Those passes, you had at least I think three that were over 40 yards. Maybe over 35, at least. Was that maybe something that you picked up from the defense, the secondary, or just your protection allowed that to happen?

SHEDEUR SANDERS: The only bust we really had in protection starting out early in the game, that was on me. That was my fault. So other than that, the O line played pretty good. I feel offensively we've got to get better at running the ball. But other than that, the offense did a phenomenal job.

COACH PRIME: I think they played all right. They played all right. We've got to do a little better. We've got to run when we want to run, be able to throw the ball when we want to throw. And he needs to be a little smarter.

Sometimes he sees too much. He sees the game. He sees too much of the game and tries to do too much instead of just let the game come to you, let it come to you. Take what they give you. Sometimes he sees too much. It's a blessing and a curse.

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