

# Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game: Clemson vs. Georgia Tech

Tuesday, September 6, 2022

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

## Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets

## Coach Geoff Collins

### Press Conference



Clemson - 41, Georgia Tech - 10

COACH COLLINS: Obviously, just talked to the team. Ten penalties and two blocked punts, even against, when you're playing a caliber team like that, that's not a recipe to win the game. So obviously we've got to clean those things up. The penalties, the blocked punts, the attitude, the demeanor, the response -- disappointment, hurt.

For me, obviously, as the leader of the program, take great responsibility in getting the things cleaned up. And the biggest piece, too -- I just told the guys -- it's a five-day week right now. We've got a five-day week to put this game to bed and start on the next opponent. And so we've got a lot of work to do to clean those things up. And we'll go from there.

**Q. When Charlie Thomas went out of the game, he had nine tackles in a little over half, score was 14-10. It seemed like the defense did not get any stops after that.**

COACH COLLINS: We think have are highly of Charlie Thomas in this program, and play-making ability, leadership ability. He was very powerful in the locker room as well.

And so we just gotta -- Demetrius Knight came in and played his role. Really good player. But obviously when you lose a player the caliber of Charlie, that hurts.

**Q. Coming out of halftime, offensively, that's where you guys find your stride. You got your first score of the game. What did you tell your guys at the half? And what did you feel changed for you guys to kind of lose the stride offensively?**

COACH COLLINS: It was actually the exact thing that we said we were going to do coming out of halftime was kick the ball off, get a three-and-out and drive down and score.

The guys did it. And just gotta consistently put together drives and not hurt ourselves.

Those are things, obviously, we've got to clean up. We spent an inordinate amount of time with crowd noise in the weeks leading up to this because we knew it was going to be a loud environment.

So you go back through and try to think through all the different things we could have done to cut down on self-imposed things that hurt us. And obviously we've got to do a better job. I've got to do a better job as the head football coach. And will continue to learn from those things.

**Q. Given, I know you made a point of attention to detail on those things. What does it say that you have the penalties and the blocked punts?**

COACH COLLINS: It's very frustrating, very disappointing. And it has been addressed, will continue to be addressed. And the guys in there are committed to doing that. But it falls on me. And I will work relentlessly to get that cleaned up.

**Q. Was there a pattern on the two blocked punts that you could detect?**

COACH COLLINS: There were some things that we made adjustments to. And then the second one, the adjustment didn't get made. We'll get it cleaned up internally. So those kind of things will -- the schematics of that, we'll keep in house, but we've got to get that fixed because those things cannot happen -- you cannot have blocked kicks, blocked punts, those kind of things. So very disappointing.

**Q. You had a lot of self-inflicted wounds on offense, some drops and obviously the penalties you've mentioned. Is there anything you can put your finger on that you saw out there? Was it just mental mistakes or guys not just not finishing?**

COACH COLLINS: The biggest thing with the false starts, they were doing a good job of stemming and moving the front and those kind of things, and just playing those



situations with poise. And just staying focused, doing their assignment, listen to the snap count, see the ball snapped, all those kind of things.

**Q. You had your defense being put in some real difficult situations, a blocked punt and some things like that. Talk about the resiliency you did see with a couple big stands and getting off the field?**

COACH COLLINS: One of the key things I think -- even though it's a very disappointing loss, and we're very upset about it and hurt -- there were things to build on.

So we've got to just find that balance of making sure we fix the things that have to be fixed, but also building upon the things that were good in tonight's game. But right now nobody wants to hear that. I don't want to talk about it.

Just the things that we need to clean up, we're going to work relentlessly hard to clean up. And, again, we've got five days to get this done before we play next Saturday night in Bobby Dodd Stadium.

**Q. You just said it, you only have five days. How do you go about fixing the mistakes, yet still focusing on West Carolina?**

COACH COLLINS: I've been through this before, playing on short weeks. We've got the plan. We've got the schedule. Obviously we've got -- tomorrow will be an off day for the guys. We have to give them an off day. Tomorrow will be their off day.

But knowing our guys, they'll come in on their own and watch the tape and start watching tape on Western Carolina. And then we'll get to work on Wednesday when we can officially begin the work week. But obviously it's going to be a challenge. And we've just got to rise to that challenge.

**Q. With three timeouts left at the end of the half and with Clemson getting the kick to start the second half, was there any thought to burning one right there and maybe trying to take a couple of shots?**

COACH COLLINS: Sure, there was. Just it was fourth-and-4, right around midfield, with the possibility -- and there was the situation with the clock -- and if you guys remember, that was like an eight-minute ordeal trying to figure out how the clock was going to be administered.

So the defense was playing good relative to having a punt blocked and putting them in a bad field position. So there was discussion. There was thought about that. But the best thing to do was to go into the half because it ended up

on the 8-yard line. Wouldn't have been a lot of time anyway.

**Q. The three timeouts you used in the second half, the last one with I think 13:08 left in the fourth, what prompted you to burn those so quickly?**

COACH COLLINS: The last one, if you guys recall, it was fourth-and-6, right around the 37-yard line. And in the past, right around that area, they've had a formation that they've run a trick play out of. They shifted to it. Saw it. And banged the timeout, regrouped, and then they didn't run the fake after that.

There was another situation earlier. We don't ever want to have a situation that could be an explosive play because we're misaligned. I saw we were misaligned. I wanted to make sure we did not have something very unfortunate happen to us during that drive. Banged it and got it corrected.

So obviously you want to keep the timeouts as long as you want, but you also don't want to put yourself in harm's way if you don't have to at key points in the game.

**Q. The one thing that I thought was a positive takeaway for you guys today was the pass rush was pretty significant. And really D.J. made two plays out of that that changed probably the momentum of the game as well, particularly the one play where he got the ball out where he was dead to rights. Talk about what worked with the pass rush, why you feel you guys were more effective today. It's been the most effective pass rush you've had.**

COACH COLLINS: Obviously the development of the players, and we've got really good players on the defensive front and the second-level defenders that we were activating in some pressures.

But I thought there were some things that we dialed up that got home. And just gotta make sure that we get the quarterback down and not let him scramble and do the really athletic things he's able to do, because there was two of them that should have been a sack, but really good players make really good plays. And those are learning experiences for the guys to make sure we finish those plays and get the sacks when we've got them dialed up.

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