

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

Tuesday, September 6, 2022

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets

Keion White

Ayinde Eley

Press Conference



And at the end of the day we just have to go play with the situation and don't cry about it, don't kind of moan about it, and just deal with it.

Q. What do you think was working early that maybe kind of shut down that Clemson offense early in the game, and maybe what changed in the second half to allow them to kind of go on a run?

AYINDE ELEY: Well, first half, we just played our technique, played our defense. We knew they liked to run D.J. He was pretty sound on that in everything. And on the run game, we were sound and everything.

Second half they went in, made some adjustments. I don't even think second half they really opened up. They had some good, couple good explosives. And that's just how the ball rolls, really. That's about it, really.

Q. You guys, of course, you talk about the confidence all game. When they went up 14-0, what were you guys telling each other just so you could stay on the same page and continue to do what you guys could do?

KEION WHITE: So, as a defense, our motto is defense wins championships. So you let the offense do offense and we'll worry about our defense. So we had the mindset of continue stopping them, continue playing our game and let everything work out for itself.

Obviously tonight it didn't work out in our favor, but we still have confidence we have a good defense and feel good moving forward into the later games.

Q. With the short week before the Western Carolina game and a day off tomorrow, is it better to have a game like that earlier in the year before you're really banged up and that type of thing, maybe you can come back a little quicker earlier in the year?

AYINDE ELEY: I'm not sure, what are you asking?

Q. Do you feel -- you have a short week, is it better to have that short week earlier in the year before you get

Clemson - 41, Georgia Tech - 10

Q. Keion, this was your first healthy game at Georgia Tech. Just how did it feel? You got a lot of pressure, some sacks. How did it feel to play up to your potential a little bit?

KEION WHITE: Personally, I didn't feel I had my best game. I feel like I was moving slow, not making the right read assignments that I was doing. So that's unacceptable. I need to go watch film and work to come better next week.

Q. Coming out of the locker room in the second half, how confident were you guys, especially after the way you played in the first half?

AYINDE ELEY: We was confident. We was prepared for 30-minute battle. We was confident all the way through the game, really. We had faith in our plan and our confidence. We just got short end of the stick tonight, and go back tomorrow, watch the film, correct what needs to be corrected and come back next week.

Q. How difficult is it when you have a punt blocked, short-field situation or turnovers? You were in that situation twice tonight. That was really the difference, I think, in the game in a lot of ways was two easy scores they got off the blocked punts. How difficult is that situation as a defensive player when you get thrown back in the field like that when you expect to have some decent field position to work with?

KEION WHITE: For us, our defensive motto is put the ball down. So it doesn't matter what situation we're in, they're not supposed to score. And that's the standard. So the standard is the whole team is zero points and zero yards.



banged up? You're still pretty healthy.

AYINDE ELEY: Short week is a short week in football, really. Still have to prepare. I guess if you think about it like that, before the nicks and stuff come, but yeah, I'm pretty sure we'll have some nicks and bruises after this one, too.

Q. Earlier in the game you forced the fumble, at least it looked like you forced the fumble. Seemed to be some indecision about that. Do you recall that play? Can you recall that play for us?

AYINDE ELEY: They ran the quarterback. I think it was a quarterback counter. And Charlie, I think it was, came, tackled him from the side. He was falling and tried to stretch the ball out. And I just -- that's a trained behavior. You try to get the ball out and punch the ball out, techniques and stuff. I took a shot on the ball and it worked out for me.

Q. Ace, how much did it make a difference when Charlie went out of the game, because he was a little bit of your eraser tonight, he was making a lot of good plays, particularly in the run game? How much did that impact you guys? I know you have a lot of confidence in Demetrius, but Charlie is kind of that freak sideline-to-sideline guy. How much did it impact not having him? I think it was 14-10 something when he went out and they went on their run.

AYINDE ELEY: That was a big blow. Charlie is, like you said, a great player, not only a great player but a leader on the defense, a vocal leader, emotional leader. That definitely hurt the defense when he went out, losing a great player.

But next-man-up mentality. D-Knight came in and he held it down, did what he had to do and gave it his best. We just keep moving forward and we get Charlie back second half next week, and keep going from there.

Q. Middle of the third quarter, I think the score was 14-10. Either or, you had them third-and-10 and you pressured D.J., basically almost had him sacked. He turned around, flipped it to Shipley and got the first down. Do you feel it changed the momentum in your all's eyes?

KEION WHITE: That was a hell of a play by him. We had him sacked and he made a good play. Good players make good plays.

As far as changing the game, I don't think it really did. Our defense still had a next-play mentality. So you aren't going

to stop them on every third down. You just have to deal with it. And we just went next one up, and I still feel as a defense we still played solid after that.

Q. Despite the final score, it seems like you guys have continued to point out you guys feel really good about your defense. What are some of the positives you can take from this? And I guess why do you feel so confident going forward that this defense is kind of what you think it is?

KEION WHITE: I feel our defense is the nucleus of this team. Not saying anything to the offense, but I feel like our defense is where most of our seniors are. And we have a lot of that senior leadership. And I feel like as a whole we stayed cohesive as a unit tonight.

And we didn't kind of split apart. And that's the biggest challenge in teams, when situations like this happen, just splitting apart. But as a defense I feel we stayed together because of our leadership. And I think going forward that will be a big part of who we are as a team, not even just the defense.

Q. Ace, you mentioned a lot in the preseason, even in the spring about communication being better. Can you give me a sense of how that worked for you guys in terms of everybody being on the same page? It seemed, from watching it, you guys were in the right places most of the time?

AYINDE ELEY: Yeah, great defense is a defense that communicates and makes sure everybody is on the same page. I feel we did a pretty good job of that tonight. I won't say it was perfect. Definitely needs more things cleaned up.

But being on the same page is the first step of being a good defense. And I think we did some good things tonight, and we've just got to keep building on that, keep communicating, and make sure that everybody is on the same page.