

Aflac Kickoff Game: Louisville vs. Georgia Tech

Friday, September 1, 2023

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Louisville Cardinals Coach Jeff Brohm Press Conference



Louisville 39, Georgia Tech 34

JEFF BROHM: Well, we're happy to get out of there with a win. As everyone saw, it was a tough football game for our team. It wasn't a great performance in the first half for sure. So that was disappointing.

But that's how college football works. I talk about it all the time to our football team. Nothing will ever be easy. We challenged our guys at halftime to play much harder, play much tougher, figure out a way to grind this thing out, and just try to win the half.

Also, we said look, we're going to judge effort, and if you're not giving more effort than the other guy, you won't play the rest of the year. I think our guys stayed together. They gave way better effort.

Fortunately for us, our coaches hung in there, too. We found a way to coach better in the second half and have a better plan and some adjustments, and it took everything to win.

We have a long ways to go, but like I told them, every college football game is going to be like that, and if you're not ready for that, you might as well not show up for the game.

Q. In addition to the effort thing, did you change anything schematically defensively in the second half, because they had 282 yards in one quarter and then the rest of the game they had less than 200.

JEFF BROHM: Yes, we did. You know what, we got in a rut there playing too much man coverage in the second quarter. We had some guys running all over the place and not knowing where to be. I thought we played the same front too much. We were on our heels. The linebackers weren't attacking downhill.

Fortunately we've worked a lot of things throughout fall camp, the summer and the spring, and we made adjustments, and we used different calls, changed the front, stemmed the front, played more zone, and we did a much better job.

I just think you come into the game thinking you can do something, and if it doesn't work, you've got to be able to adjust.

I applaud our defensive coaches for making those adjustments. Our defensive players were coming out and really doing a heck of a job in the second half in the the last drive, getting the ball back for us when we needed it. It really was a great team effort in the second half that we had to have or we're not going to win the game.

Q. Can you give us some insight into how much -- given all the veteran guys you brought in from the portal and everything, was halftime a matter of you having to lift any spirits in terms of having confidence that you can come back from this, or with the older guys was it easier just to be like, okay, we do this execution-wise we're going to be fine?

JEFF BROHM: I didn't lift a whole lot of spirits at halftime. (Laughter.)

I try to be as positive as I can, but it came down to somebody needed to challenge our players to do more. It's got to come from me. Somebody needed to challenge our coaches to do more. That's including me. I made too many mistakes.

There's a lot of things we've got to clean up. Football is a game of toughness, intensity, passion, and that's just how the game works.

You know what, if you don't have that, you're not going to win.

I just think that with all that said, you know what, we communicated what we needed to do. We didn't give in. We didn't give up. We didn't feel sorry for ourselves. We just came out and played football much sounder and much



better and found a way to win in the end.

Q. Jeff, what did you see from Jack? He looked like he was pressing early, missed some easy throws, then maybe you got him an easy throw, and from there he played better. What did you see from him? Did you talk to him about that?

JEFF BROHM: Well, I've coached Jack a long time. It wasn't his best first half, without question. I thought he was misfiring. He was timid. He wasn't cutting it loose. He was throwing it late. He missed some open guys.

If we're going to throw the ball, we have to hit those.

So in the second half we ran the ball more. We got some easier completions. He got a little bit better of a rhythm, and he hung in there and played hard.

I applaud him for his effort the second half. He really wants to win. I think sometimes he's the type, he cares so much that he will press early on, and I think like everybody, he was nervous and wasn't playing as confident and as sturdy as he easily could.

I just think he's got to learn from it. That's one thing about quarterback play, that you have to either have that skill or you have to continue to develop that skill that when it gets game time, the mentality has got to be that you will stand in that pocket and you will throw it with conviction, you will not allow anything else to detour you, and if you get in a little rut, you've got to be able to bounce back.

Fortunately for him, he bounced back. A lot of other guys played better around him, and it helped us score enough points.

Q. Not to get too sentimental about the game, but how does it feel to actually have that first win as head coach back home at your alma mater and do it the way you guys did tonight?

JEFF BROHM: Well, every win feels good. It's funny, as I've been a head coach, especially at Purdue, there's not one win that's easy, and just when you think you're feeling good and you're in a good place, man, you're going to fall flat on your face.

I just think having the mental fortitude and toughness to just know hey, this is how it's going to be. Sure, I'd love to play a perfect game, I'd love to win by double digits, all those things. You've got to find a way to win.

I just think we have a long ways to go. I didn't think we were gelled together as a team early on, and yes, there are

new pieces, but I thought we'd be gelled together better, but we were not.

But we regrouped, and we just have to continue to help our players get in the best position to succeed, help them make plays more consistent, have answers when bad things happen, which I do think we eventually did, and just hang in there and get better.

Q. You spoke all off-season about what happens when your team faces adversity when that happens. Do you think you got your answer?

JEFF BROHM: Well, we got our answer for this week. I like our guys. They really care. They work hard. Just like I tell them, I said hey, you know what, you guys have worked really hard to get to this point. You've put in the effort. You've put in the time. Sometimes when you prepare this hard you think you can go out there and win.

Guess what; the other team prepared just as hard and they worked just as long. So no, you still have to perform on game day. You have to perform. You have to ring the bell, meaning play your best game that you've had to date. Otherwise we're not getting better.

I just think that's how football works. It's not an easy game. Different things come up.

But I think we have enough leadership in the room that, you know what, they'll hang in there and they'll fight until the end, and hopefully we can get better as we proceed forward.

Q. Jeff, talk about that run game; you had three guys with Isaac and Jawhar and Maurice. What did you like from that rotation and what they were able to do tonight?

JEFF BROHM: Well, we needed all of them, and I think it's a good crew that this year we're going to have to be able to run the ball, and we're going to have to be able to hit some play action. But the running game is critical.

So those guys ran hard. They were able to rotate in there, give us different elements. Isaac stood out a little bit, made some good runs. Maurice made a couple. Of course Jawhar hung in there and got on the edge a few times and hit the big run that got us the lead.

We needed all of them, and we're lucky to have them, and we've just got to continue to press forward with those guys and make sure they get enough touches because I do think they can make people miss and get extra yards after contact.

Q. There are going to be big plays obviously throughout a game, but take us through the stretch where it looked like you all are arguing, you went over to review what looked like might have been an incomplete pass up until the snap, and that's the play you get the sack, you get the turnover, and then Jawhar gets the touchdown run?

JEFF BROHM: Well, sometimes you just need to shut your mouth and let the referees call the game. (Laughter.)

The ball popped out. I'm thinking, really, did he have it long enough? Of course sometimes when you talk to referees, they don't look at you and don't tell you anything.

So I'm glad that they got their way.

You know what, we made a good play on defense. The turnovers were crucial for us. It got us points every time we got the turnovers. We were awful on 3rd down. We couldn't convert, which is disappointing. But we took advantage of a few good plays by our defense, and that was one of them.

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