

Aflac Kickoff Game: Louisville vs. Georgia Tech

Saturday, September 2, 2023

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets

Trey Cooley

Haynes King

Press Conference



Louisville - 39, Georgia Tech - 34

Q. Haynes, in the second half, why was it so difficult to get it going offensively?

HAYNES KING: I mean, at times we couldn't run the ball. And then couldn't get anybody on the perimeter, get people loose.

That's what happened in the first half. We got a couple of people loose on the perimeter. They made plays. Second half, just didn't happen. They made a couple of adjustments, and we didn't respond well to it.

Q. You talked about them making some adjustments. Did they double up on the perimeter with their coverage? Or what were they doing out there?

HAYNES KING: They were just flying faster, just making tackles. At the end of the day, that's what it is. If you're going to get the ball on the perimeter, defense is going to have to tackle. If you miss tackles, you saw what happened the first half.

Q. The first three drives you guys went 0-3. After those, the next three you guys got into a momentum and a rhythm. Talk about what were the things you saw differently after those first three drives, where it started clicking for you guys offensively?

HAYNES KING: We just got things going. A big part of our offense is tempo. After the first three drives we ended up getting a couple more tempo plays in, and they worked out perfectly for us.

Second half, it just wasn't working for us. Sometimes it's like that.

Q. Haynes, obviously a tough game. You guys were in control for much of it, especially in the second half. How do you kind of rally the team? I guess, you're a new guy as a leader, and you guys obviously made a comeback, came close. But what is your message to the teammates and the offense after the way the game unfolded?

HAYNES KING: Times like this, you've just got to stay together. You've been through a lot -- summer workouts, fall camp. You've been through a lot. You've got to stay together. You're family.

You mentioned leader. I read something the other day, a leader is when you look at a person and he gives you confidence. I feel like if I continue to bring this team along and they can look at me and still have confidence in me and what I can do with this team and what we can do on offense, we'll be just fine.

We can score points when we have stuff rolling. And that's the key, just gotta keep stuff rolling. Can't get cold.

Q. Trey, you're facing your former team. You have a pretty good game -- two touchdowns, 50 yards. Any comments? Did you have any back and forth with your old teammates? Or what were your reactions to playing the game that you did?

TREY COOLEY: No, there was really no back and forth comments. But it was just a regular game, honestly. We just wanted to go out and execute and that was just the plan. We're taught just to hit somebody in the mouth and not say anything out there. Just line back up.

Q. The second quarter, the running game got going, and then what was the difference between in the second quarter when it was going and the second half when it seemed to not be going as well?

TREY COOLEY: I think, as you guys could see, they kind of went from four down to a mint [phonetic] front. So three down linemen in a stand-up. It was sort of an adjustment to the run game. I think in the second half, there was more a focus trying to stop the run game.

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I think the first half they were trying to get a feel of things and what we were going to come out and do.

Q. Haynes, one, in the second quarter, especially the drive that you threw to Malik, you had the 55-yard gain -- it seemed like kind of whatever Coach Faulkner was dialing up was working. I'm curious what did you get a sense that he was seeing or you guys were seeing that kind of unlocked things? And the other thing, obviously a tough play, the fumble, when you're in the pocket. Is that something where you feel like you probably should have got rid of the ball or done something different with it?

HAYNES KING: Yeah, I mean, at the end of the day, like you said, the second quarter we were on everything. We were on a roll.

And then the second half, I feel like I gotta do a better job putting all the offensive players in better situations.

Like you said with the fumble, just throw it away. I had two costly interceptions, one at the beginning of the game, one in the fourth quarter. I've just got to get rid of the ball.

We were in plus territory there, field goal range. Just can't hold onto it. That was a mental error by me. And at the end of the day, second half, I just gotta do a better job putting people in better situations.

Q. Trey, with the running back by committee you had to wait your turn to come into the game. What was that like? I imagine you weren't necessarily sure how many touches you would get and make the most out of those opportunities when you got your number called?

TREY COOLEY: I think we have a really good running back room, and I'm confident with any of us going out just having a good game. Like you said, you wait your turn and obviously you show them what you can do. But we're all capable of doing what I can do and what the next person can do.

Q. Coach has spoken throughout the offseason and into camp about the process of establishing an identity. Now at game end, what identity do you think you guys showed tonight?

TREY COOLEY: I think, as you could see, I think our team is a lot tougher. Obviously we never quit no matter the circumstances during the game. I'm very proud of our team because even though the odds were against us, we kept fighting.

I think we just seen a lot of goals, we put a lot of work in the summer, spring, fall camp like you mentioned. It showed. We're definitely on the climb. We're not done yet.

HAYNES KING: I'd like to add on him. Our four pillars are toughness, discipline, execution and commitment. That's what we try to model this team around.

Like he said, toughness, toughness was the biggest one. You've got to be mentally tough, physically tough, and it will put you in the battle at the end of the game. It will always give you a chance, if you're mentally tough and physically tough.

And I'd like to add, be explosive. Like I'd say this game, it showed we were tough. We were explosive. Now we just gotta work on these upcoming weeks, just being consistent, holding it throughout the game.

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