

Aflac Kickoff: Syracuse vs Tennessee

Saturday, August 30, 2025

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Tennessee Volunteers

Jalen McMurray

Colton Hood

Postgame Press Conference



Tennessee 45, Syracuse 26

THE MODERATOR: We have Jalen McMurray, Colton Hood. We'll take questions.

Q. Colton, can you take us through your first touchdown as a Vol?

COLTON HOOD: Why first I want to say I give all glory to God. Without Him, me and my teammates would be nothing. I want to give all glory to Him.

I've been playing baseball since I was six years old. When I seen that ball on the ground, it's like picking up a groundball in the outfield. I just ran it into the end zone, so...

Q. What kind of tone do you think this win sets for the group going forward?

COLTON HOOD: I think it just, like, showed all the haters and the doubters out there we still like the same Tennessee we was last year. Probably going to be better. We going to keep getting better after this game. I think that what it show for real.

JALEN McMURRAY: It allows us to really have confidence within ourselves, honestly. Like, we know what we can do. In our doors, how we go out and how we play. Like I say, we know what we can do.

Q. Jalen, can you take us through your deflection and the interception by Telander.

JALEN McMURRAY: Yeah, no, I should have picked it off (smiling). Yeah, coach called my number. Had to make the play. God has given me the ability to be able to jump a little low-high. He threw the ball and I felt like I could get

both hands on the ball. T made a heck of a play.

Q. Colton, about all the haters and doubters, do you think some of that comes from what happened at the end of spring?

COLTON HOOD: Yeah, I mean, like shoot, I think I got a lot of hate. I didn't really try to feed into it too much 'cause I know who I am as a person. I know just who the people I have around me are. I just leaned on them.

The people kind of hated on me. Not even me, but I seen what happened with the team. They said we weren't going to be good. Our receivers...

They went out there and made plays. Joey made plays. They said we weren't going to have no quarterback. We always believed in ourselves. We weren't worried about anything anybody else was saying. We was always just locked in, ready to go play, so...

Q. Colton, how much fun can you have with the different PBUs, but the celebration afterwards? What was that?

COLTON HOOD: Man, I had a great time playing with my brothers. My last name Hood, so put the 'hood' on, thumbs down. You know what I'm saying? We ain't going over there on the outside. I'm looking it up. That's what it was (smiling).

Q. Jalen, overall how would you assess the play of the secondary?

JALEN McMURRAY: Yeah, so it's the first game. There's going to be a lot of ups and downs. Thank goodness for us there was a lot of ups. All we have to do was go back and watch the film and learn from it, improve for the next few weeks.

Q. Colton, can you share the influence Jermod McCoy has had on you and any communication he helped with today.



COLTON HOOD: Yeah, I mean, him, Rickey, J Mack, Dre, all them boys, Edrees, all them boys, they helped me learn to play. I got in a little late in the summer. All I had was the summer and fall camp to learn the plays.

They all was very helpful. Nobody was like, He might come in and do this, take my spot. Everybody in the room was helping me out. I think that just shows what kind of brotherhood we have on this team. I'm just so excited to be here and I'm really happy about it.

Q. When you look at a guy like Nathan Robinson, banged up through fall camp, injured, he gets in today and forces the fumble that leads to your touchdown. Talk about his determination to still help the team.

COLTON HOOD: Man, I mean, like he definitely done a great job, even having to be out a lot of the fall camp. Just playing with that club, he's done a great job working every day.

Not just him, there's a whole bunch of players. Staley, he came in there in the first game from being out for a good bit of time, just made plays.

I think everybody did a great job coming in, knowing their job, executing. We just going to keep getting better week to week.

JALEN McMURRAY: It shows the grit of the team. This team's a gritty team. We'll fight through everything. We'll do that together, so yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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