

Aflac Kickoff: Syracuse vs Tennessee

Saturday, August 30, 2025

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Tennessee Volunteers

Joey Aguilar

Star Thomas

Postgame Press Conference

Tennessee 45, Syracuse 26

THE MODERATOR: We have Joey Aguilar and Star Thomas. Questions.

Q. Joey, you don't look stressed or concerned or anything. Seems like this would be a game your anxiety would be up. How do you keep your composure?

JOEY AGUILAR: I guess that's just how I am. I came prepared. I mean, I go into every game cool, calm, collected. I have a mellow flow to me. I get excited obviously good plays, but don't get too down on bad plays. Everybody looks to me on the team, so I got to keep that composure and just keep going.

Q. Joey, you've had a really unique journey up until this point with Tennessee. What effect does this game have on that? What's the additional chapter to this process for you from tonight?

JOEY AGUILAR: Just a new chapter. Everybody got a step in their chapter and in their life. This is the next one. My transfer from App State to UCLA to now is just another chapter in my life. Coming out here and representing the Big T, GB0, just grateful and happy for the win.

A lot of things to work on a lot of things to clean up. We're going to enjoy this, go and watch film and get better.

Q. Star, it's a little bit different from the practice field coming into a game field, but being a part of that three-man rotation, how good was that?

STAR THOMAS: I mean, it's been cool. It been good just like being in the room with those guys. Getting here in January, didn't really know the ins-and-outs of the



playbook. Those two guys, P Lew, Bishop, the whole room really helping me learn the ins-and-outs of it.

Just keeping my head down, working, man, knowing my time will come when it come. Go out there, make the plays, trust what I do, trust what the coaches call. Go out there, make the plays. Even when drives don't go how I want them to go, come back, listen to what they see, what I missed. Those guys helping me come back the next drive, then I pick up on that.

Q. Joey, in the first drive you convert a third and 10. Second drive, again. Given how new everything was for you today, how much confidence did that give you? What did those mean early?

JOEY AGUILAR: Yeah, I mean, confidence, I got that no matter what. But going to execute, our goal is to put up points every drive we touch the ball. Just going out there and, like I said, executing and doing our job, just keeping everything rolling.

Q. Joey, earlier in media days you were saying you were going to take what the defense gives you, but you're still going to give your guys a shot. Today you gave Star and Staley a shot. How did you feel you did both?

JOEY AGUILAR: I feel like I did well. It was very good defense. Syracuse is a very good program. When they gave me a shot, I took advantage of it. Executed on some of 'em. Gave Star a jump ball, came down with it.

I felt good. Like I say, a lot of things to work on. Overall I think I felt decent.

Q. Joey, go back to the very first play, how nice did it feel trotting on the field, getting your first play a pass?

JOEY AGUILAR: First set great. All week of practice, just running that play. Just talking through everything. Coach asked me if I felt comfortable with that. I did. Mike just popped open, gave him a nice, easy ball, let him go play.



Q. Joey, since you've come in and had to learn so much so fast, what have you learned about the team you've joined and the players around you?

JOEY AGUILAR: Like Hood said, the brotherhood we have, once I stepped foot on campus, the team brought me in ASAP, you know what I mean? Obviously took a while to learn trust, for them to believe in me.

Coaches, staff, players, once I stepped foot on campus, it's like I've been for a while. The connections I made with my teammates and coaches just made the transition just way easier, building bonds and friendships with everybody.

Q. Colton said this win silences the haters and doubters in a way. What tone do you think this result sets and why?

STAR THOMAS: I mean, we had a lot of people probably questioning what we'll be when we lost our quarterback. Just different, we lost Sampson and stuff, all that.

We just came in every day, put our head down. Coach told us, like, Keep going. Everything change. We go by the saying, FEB. Can't say what it means. We go by it. We know what we got, we know the work we put in, just go out there and play.

JOEY AGUILAR: Yeah, like he said, all the outside noise is just rat poison. We only focus about who's in the building and the team we got. We got to go back, execute, dial in on everything we got.

Like he said, it's FEB. Everything outside is rat poison and we got to focus on ourselves.

Q. Can you talk about the offensive line, especially considering David wasn't able to go, and he anticipated to be able to play.

JOEY AGUILAR: Dogs, man. They're out there dominating every snap. They're giving everything they got.

I go out there and I tell 'em every day that they're doing good, keep it up. I got 'em, I see what they're doing. I mean, it starts with them. It starts and ends with the O-line. They did a good job today. Obviously we got some things to clean up. That's all around. But praise to them.

STAR THOMAS: Basically like he said, they dogs. They go out there, they compete every day, even if it's the ones, the twos, the threes. They all (indiscernible) for each other, willing to help each other. They stand behind each other. That's what I like that I haven't seen from other programs.

But those guys, like, they just dogs.

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