

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Hayden Hansen

Press Conference



HAYDEN HANSEN: How is it going, guys?

Q. Three years ago, different position. A lot of changes. Take us through this journey for you.

HAYDEN HANSEN: Yeah, man, I mean, I never expected to not play quarterback. My parents sacrificed a lot for it, I sacrificed a lot for it. The countless private lessons outside the sport. I never envisioned anything else.

Kind of recruiting came in when I moved to Weatherford, my plan was to take over for Ken Seals, the Vanderbilt quarterback. Good playing against him, even better beating him.

After OU, SMU, guys came in, Why don't you try tight end? I kept it in the back of my mind about first week before season started, junior year. I ended up making the switch. Here we are now. Really crazy how it all happened.

Q. Do you notice anything from your time at quarterback benefiting you?

HAYDEN HANSEN: Great question. For sure, man. Especially in coverages, but surprisingly even more in blocking. Just, like, IDing the front. If I do a read route, I can see what the safeties are doing pre-snap, capped, I see a quarter looking in, I know a blitz is coming. Just a lot of stuff like that.

Q. Any buzz about wearing the black jerseys this week?

HAYDEN HANSEN: Oh, yeah, of course, man. We're all hyped about it. Napier's big message is don't forget why. It's very important to know why we're wearing it. We take a lot of stuff for granted. People put their lives on the line. People choose a career path. We respect it a lot.

But, yeah, there's a bunch of hype. New cleats we're wearing, new gloves. I think the fans will like it.

Q. Any friends or relatives that were military

members?

HAYDEN HANSEN: Yes, sir. I had my great, great grandpa was a purple heart receiver on my dad's side.

Q. (No microphone.)

HAYDEN HANSEN: Yes, sir, and Vietnam.

On my mom's side, my grandpa got drafted to Vietnam as well. Those are the only two. We're not a huge military family, but those two did.

Q. What are their names?

HAYDEN HANSEN: Steve Galich (phonetic). He passed away three years ago. The other one was Arthur Charles II. He passed away about 10 years ago.

Q. Do you remember what he got a purple heart for?

HAYDEN HANSEN: I'm trying to remember exactly what it was for. I know it was from Vietnam. Not the exact reason, no, sir.

Q. (Question about sticking together.)

HAYDEN HANSEN: Yes, sir. The example I like to do is Kentucky. We obviously didn't go out and execute the way we were coached to do. The way we bounced back the next two games. I feel like it all starts tomorrow at practice. I already feel kind of the buzz, one of the recovery groups, I feel the urgency to get back.

Coach Hocke said someone else has to feel this pain and we shouldn't be feeling it. We have to go out next week, execute against Arkansas, and take it to them.

Q. You're a young player. You look at the big picture, your career is just starting and you're building something?

HAYDEN HANSEN: Yes, sir, yeah. I mean, I think it's very exciting once you put it all together. I don't think we've had a complete game this year yet. We do have a lot of young



players. As a part of the young group, I feel like we're definitely getting better every week. We're looking up to the core group of veterans, Kingsley, Princely, Graham. I feel like once the team puts it all together, we're going to be dangerous.

Q. It's a developmental game, as Billy says.

HAYDEN HANSEN: Yes, sir.

Q. Do you ever talk about that, we lose a game but we have to keep pushing?

HAYDEN HANSEN: Yes, sir, yeah. We understand that very well, especially the younger guys. We always talk about it. Especially the group of redshirts, my Arlis, Jamari. We were talking about this last year, now we're here. We're appreciative of it. We know we have to keep getting better to help the team. Anything we can do, we will do.

Q. You and Arlis in particular, what is the relationship like?

HAYDEN HANSEN: I mean, it's awesome. It's kind of rare you see a Texas-California bond. It's awesome. We're both very different tight ends. We both know our strengths and weaknesses. We play very well together. People don't know what they're going to get when we're on the field at the same time.

It's been awesome watching Arlis, man. He's grown to a pure threat. It's awesome watching him run routes. When we're on the field together, I feel like it creates more problems for the defense.

I love watching him go up and grab the ball. I'll always support that guy.

Q. People talk about Georgia's defense, it's a different category. Did you notice that, a gap between how they play and what y'all are striving to get to?

HAYDEN HANSEN: Yes, sir. I mean, me personally, the one thing I noticed was discipline. They didn't fall for the reverses. They didn't fall for the hard counts.

At the end of the day in my opinion, I didn't feel like they were more physical than any other defenses in the SEC that we've played. I just feel like we made more mistakes. Against the No. 1 team in the nation, you can't do that. You have to come out, can't give them anything. We just gave them too much.

Q. Bowl eligibility, how important is that?

HAYDEN HANSEN: I mean, it means everything, man. We know we got to go out and get one more win. We want that. We want to win out the rest of the season. We want to win a bowl game and start next season out on a great level, so...

Q. (No microphone.)

HAYDEN HANSEN: Yeah, I mean, it's been a dream come true. I worked so hard for this. Especially no one wants to redshirt. I kind of knew coming in I was going to redshirt, a big learning curve. Just to put all that work together.

I mean, the biggest thing for me is proving Napier right. He stuck his neck out for me at two schools. To bring me here with him was a huge honor. To play and show you guys I can do it, to prove him right overall is the best thing for me.

Q. (Question about position coach.)

HAYDEN HANSEN: I love that dude, man. He's awesome. When he came in, he took a liking to me and Arlis right away. He knew we were going to be a little bit behind because we didn't play much last year.

Once he kind of instilled the offense in us in the spring, we got to play a lot faster. We saw a big jump in our productivity.

Q. What has he helped you on?

HAYDEN HANSEN: Me personally, he's helped me on the signals in the pass game. That's what I was behind on. Splits-wise. Lining up outside receiver. I'm automatic on that now. I'm grateful for him, for sure.

Q. What were your hands like as a quarterback? What are they like now?

HAYDEN HANSEN: So my dad used to always joke, The reason you can catch is you caught so many snaps.

I tell you right now, it's two different things. Even last year catching balls from AR, coming a hundred miles at your face. They've definitely gotten better. I've never really had problems with them except for this last spring, I kind of had a couple fundamental issues. But I got it fixed for the most part. I'm just going to continue to get better with it every day.

Q. What does that look like? What is the process of improving?

HAYDEN HANSEN: When Graham first got here, we had a couple throwing sessions from him so I could learn how he throws, stuff like that.

It's different for a lot of people. A lot of people like to do jugs. I like to work the angles. That's where I used to struggle. Coach Ogas, our strength coach, I get on one knee, run my hands, have him throw the ball over my shoulder, track it. I get obsessed with tracking the ball. That's 90% of it. You have to see it, then the rest is clamping down on it.

Q. (No microphone.)

HAYDEN HANSEN: No, sir. I did not know about her.

Q. (Question about switching from quarterback to tight end.)

HAYDEN HANSEN: It was a lot of people's idea. That's a good question. It started out, I already told you this, I first moved to Weatherford to take over for Ken Seals. The first idea sparked was OC. I was competing with a sophomore, I was a junior at the time.

Q. (No microphone.)

HAYDEN HANSEN: Yes, sir.

Q. What was his name?

HAYDEN HANSEN: He just moved to Brock, his name was Coach Christianson. Yeah, he got it put in the back of my head. They wanted both of us on the field. If that's what it takes to win, I'll do it. The OU scouts came in, started to sway me a little bit. The cherry on top was the head coach. I've been getting so many people talking to me about you. You know what, let's do it, so...

Q. What sold you to Billy? Committed to him twice really.

HAYDEN HANSEN: My mom loves Coach Napier. He did a great job bonding with my family. My sister really likes him, too. Back at UO, they do the same thing here, summer cookout going into my senior year. We went up there right before I committed. That sealed the deal. My dad was, This is the guy you need to play for. Great program for tight ends. Johnny Lumpkin that went to the Patriots, I was really close to him when I committed there.

Q. Why did he stick his neck out for you?

HAYDEN HANSEN: What he told me was he liked that I came from a blue-collar background. He knew I worked

hard. He knew I had the frame for it. Watching my film, he saw my big suction cup hands is what he said.

He said he knows it's raw. I agree with him. Junior year I was trying to figure it out on the film. Senior year I took a huge jump, new coach, new system.

So he just saw a lot of potential there. He knew once I put it all together, I'd be a better player.

Q. Mom and sister couldn't have fallen in love with Billy because of tight end. Why did they fall in love with him?

HAYDEN HANSEN: That's a great question.

My sister, she's 6'3", a freshman. She plays volleyball at Texas Tech. He was really invested in that, too. Asking her questions, all sorts of stuff like that.

My mom, he really took the time, him and his wife and kids took the time to bond with her. I remember at the UO cookout, she was playing with his kids and stuff. Felt like the right decision. I had a couple other schools that were interested in me, it was close before that. After that, it kind of sealed the deal. All right, this is home. I'll be a part of this all day.

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