

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Shemar James

Press Conference



Q. Talk about the defense's performance on Saturday. I know after the first game you were pretty vocal about not feeling the whole thing. What do you think Saturday did for you guys?

SHEMAR JAMES: I feel like we made a big step. We took a big step going into week 2, no matter the opponent. I feel like we communicated better.

It was more 11 guys on the same page rather than the first week, and I was proud of my guys. I was proud of the way that we performed, the way that we responded coming into week 2. So I was happy with that.

Q. What were the changes in communication that just led to more success and you guys feeling more comfortable?

SHEMAR JAMES: Honestly just being more intentional, just using verbal and non-verbal communication. I would say just intentionality, just making sure that everybody has the call and double-check that they have the call as well.

Q. Shemar, you were a freshman playing right away. You played Utah, didn't you?

SHEMAR JAMES: Yes, sir.

Q. What did you think about the way that DJ just handled getting thrown in the fire like that?

SHEMAR JAMES: That was impressive. I would say, no matter the opponent, he came out and had a big game, him and Tank Hawkins, Aidan Mizell, they all had great games. I was proud of him. Just watching DJ first come in and just seeing him grow by day by day, just learning the playbook and making certain checks to get the offense in a better situation.

I was just over there excited on the the sidelines, watching him throw touchdowns.

Q. With Tyreek, how has he set the tone these last two

games?

SHEMAR JAMES: Sapp, he brings the energy. Whether it's a walk through or a big game. Kind of feed off of Sapp sometimes. Sapp, he's one of the core players on our defense. Without Sapp, I feel like we'd be lacking a key player.

Q. SEC opener, how much do you guys use this as a reset that there's a championship to play for and this is the first step in that?

SHEMAR JAMES: Yes, sir, this is conference play. It kind of dictates where you go at the end of the year, and also winning out. This is a big game. It's another game in The Swamp and another game that I feel like we should come out and get a victory in.

Q. You grew up in Mobile. Have these SEC games the last two years been everything you expected? What's the competition like?

SHEMAR JAMES: It's everything I expected and more. I expected to play some of the best guys, some of the best teams. Coming into the SEC, that's what we expect.

I expect nothing else than Texas A&M to bring their best game. I want their best so we can be at our best.

Q. Scooby Williams and Jaydon Hill. What's this matchup going to be like with those two a part of it?

SHEMAR JAMES: I told Webb a couple of minutes ago, if you see J-Hill or Scooby, just run at them. I don't care if it's a touchdown, run that way, run at 'em.

Those are my guys, but come Saturday, they're opponents again. I wish them the best, and I wish Texas A&M the best.

Q. Obviously Coach Bateman is there as well. What did you think about losing him? Obviously he got to take a step up in his career, but do you get to show him something on Saturday?



SHEMAR JAMES: Yeah, that's my guy. I say that's my life coach. He's been there since my freshman year, just helping me, guiding me in the right direction. I wish the best for Coach Bateman and his family. I just want to show him a little something something on Saturday.

Q. Does the ties between the two teams create a little bit more juice for the game?

SHEMAR JAMES: Most definitely, yes, sir.

Q. How much has Michai Boireau helped you guys this season, up the middle?

SHEMAR JAMES: He has brought in the talent, a bigger body up front to kind of help stop that run. He brings in the double teams, so let the linebackers play a little bit faster as well.

Q. You mentioned RJ at SEC media days, a guy who maybe flew under the radar moving from safety here. What has he done that's impressed you, and how valuable is he to this linebacker rotation?

SHEMAR JAMES: RJ, he's very smart. You can tell by the way he plays on the field. He plays a little bit faster than other guys. I would say just moving him to the linebacker room has helped the team a lot, helped the defense a lot. I'm just excited to see RJ grow throughout the year.

Q. How does the demeanor change in the locker room in an SEC game, and all of a sudden, now you're going into conference play. Talk about how the demeanor changes in the locker room.

SHEMAR JAMES: Yes. This game just takes a little bit more. Speaking of the conference play, this is the kind of place you want to be at the end of the year. I would say everything needs to be just a tad bit more than the first two weeks. Just guys need to be more locked in, more focused in, and more vocal on getting this win on Saturday.

Q. What's been the message about penalties? I know there's a fine line. You want to play aggressive, but I guess there have been a few cross the line penalties you've had. How do you assess that going forward?

SHEMAR JAMES: Like you said, some of our penalties are being a little too aggressive. That's kind of -- it's coachable, but that's just guys that want to win, guys that's just playing fast.

We've kind of got to tone it down a little bit, kind of stay away from those penalties so we can have a cleaner game

and a cleaner defense as well.

Q. What did that game do for you guys' confidence level, and how much do you kind of need a performance like that?

SHEMAR JAMES: Yes. It allowed us to reset against that first week against Miami. That kind of left a bad taste in our mouth, just them coming into The Swamp and beating us.

But going into week 2, going against Samford, it kind of, the message for that was kind of reset. It's a new week, a new day. So just give it your all and go 110 percent.

Q. How much of the bad taste still lingers?

SHEMAR JAMES: It's gone. That was week 1, and we're going into week 3. Kind of leave the past in the past and prepare for Texas A&M.

Q. How is your relationship with Pup, as far as you talked about communication and just maybe somebody that came from another system, learning yours and learning to work off of each other?

SHEMAR JAMES: Yes, Pup has -- he's impressed me so far. Like you said, coming from South Carolina, coming here, and the communication has just been elite. We can fix some minor things, just like I said, double-check and make sure everybody has the call, but so far, he's been great. He's been a great mike linebacker, and he's great for the team.

Q. Has he brought anything that you're like, wow, I didn't think of that or something? Man, I'm glad you're here. Is there one moment where you were like, man, this is real?

SHEMAR JAMES: I would say he has -- he communicates at an elite level, very elite level. He makes sure that everybody has a call in, and he alerts what's about to come as well.

I'll say he's just a smart player, and that's what you want from your mike linebacker, somebody that's smart and vocal and can get everybody on the same page.

Q. Did you hear Tyreak talking about Gumbs?

SHEMAR JAMES: Yes, he called him an Avenger. I heard about that.

Q. He loves the guy. What have you seen from him? That was kind of a breakout performance from him. I



don't know that I was necessarily anticipating it.

SHEMAR JAMES: You know, when I first heard the news that Gumbs, this is his first couple years playing defense, I was kind of surprised as well. But Gumbs came in on Saturday and put on a show, like you seen.

He put on a show, and I expect him to get better and better as the year goes on. We've got SEC play this week, and I expect him to have a great game as well.

Q. What's something that stands out? He talked about his physique and his physicality, but what stands out in terms of his skill set and things that he does? Whether it's his bend or getting off line, what does he do that's special?

SHEMAR JAMES: I would say that Gumbs, his motor is very high. His number is always going 99 percent or 100, 110. That's what we need on defense, just guys that can't be denied. Guys that's always going to run to the ball and knock the ball down. I feel like that's what we've got in Gumbs.

Q. I know it was only a few series, but what did you see from Myles Graham and Aaron Chiles out there?

SHEMAR JAMES: That's my two young guys. Those guys, I'm excited for them. They're still kind of learning it, learning how to play the game, learning just like the small steps in communication of the game.

I was proud of them. They were out there making plays, out there running around, getting guys lined up. I was once in their shoes one time. I had vets like Ventrell and Burney that was there to guide me along the way, but I'm excited for their growth.

Q. Is there anything you gave them feedback on during the game or after you guys went back to watch the tape?

SHEMAR JAMES: One thing I told Myles, it's kind of like just be yourself. I told him act like you're back at Buchholz making plays. I told Myles just be loose. Be yourself and just go out there and play football. You've been playing it for a long time.

Q. You guys did a good job flushing Miami from week 1 to week 2. Is there part of you that thinks it's healthy to keep with you throughout the season, like that feeling of that loss or maybe a little piece of it?

SHEMAR JAMES: I would say yes and no. It depends on how you look at it. Yes, by knowing what that feels like

and not wanting to feel that again, but no, kind of dwelling on it, I would say. I would say yes, just knowing that feeling, how it felt to kind of be beat and not let that happen again.

Q. What have you seen from Elijah Badger in terms of just, once he gets the ball in his hands, what he's able to do and create once he has it?

SHEMAR JAMES: Yes, Badge, he's a playmaker, like you said. When he gets the ball in his hand, he's taking it for a couple more yards. I'm excited for him.

He just had a big game on Saturday, so I expect him -- I expect nothing but for him to get better and better each and every week.

Q. There's already been references to all the young talent in Florida's linebacker room this season. How have you and Derek and just some of the older guys, more experienced guys in that position, how have you adapted your mentality and just your approach to the season as you look to pass the torch?

SHEMAR JAMES: Yeah, that's actually a great question. I would say we're kind of taking this season week by week, day by day. We kind of just focus on each and every opponent because every week is a battle. That's kind of what we asked for coming into SEC and especially being a Florida Gator.

I would say just taking everything week by week, kind of mentoring the young guys just in case like a guy goes down, they're not a step behind. They're right there with us.

I would say kind of just mentoring and just making sure that they're getting in the same information that we are.

Q. We heard the goal before the season was three turnovers a game, which is a lot, but through two games, are you satisfied with that? How much do you want to create a little more going forward? And how important is that going to be going forward?

SHEMAR JAMES: Like I said, three turnovers a game, and that hasn't happened yet. We're trying to get there to have that standard on the defensive side of the ball. I feel like we can play a little better, take the ball away a little better, and kind of just be a better overall defense, I would say.

Yes, sir, I believe that we're going to get better each and every week.

Q. What's the feedback for you guys in coverage for the linebacker unit? How does this Texas A&M team challenge linebackers in coverage?

SHEMAR JAMES: Yeah, so this team that we're playing coming this Saturday, they challenge us in a lot, just getting it back out fast. They have some tight ends that can get out and go run a couple routes. We're kind of game planning for that today and the rest of the week. That's just a question I have to answer later.

Q. How much of previous experiences against teams with good tight ends, like Utah you faced now twice. How much does that come into mind this week when you're facing a team that does utilize that position a lot?

SHEMAR JAMES: Yes, sir. That's just something we have to prepare for during the week, during the game plan, certain adjustments, certain coverages to kind of get us out in coverage, kind of help us over the top or wherever that may be, yes, sir.

Q. You guys have more experience at going against Florida's offense than any other team obviously, two-quarterback system. In your mind, just how much more potent can that be rather than just solely going with one guy?

SHEMAR JAMES: Yeah, we got two great quarterbacks in Graham Mertz and DJ Lagway, pick your poison. Like they're both great quarterbacks, and they both have great attributes within themselves. I feel like the team is -- we're happy to have either one of them.

Just having both is even more dangerous. So I'm excited for them.

Q. You're the second guy to use that pick your poison line. Is that something you guys have discussed back at spring camp?

SHEMAR JAMES: No. I think we just think alike a little bit. That's all, yes, sir.

Q. What do you think when DJ's in there, and what do you think when Graham's in there? How do you view them?

SHEMAR JAMES: There's no worries for me when either Graham or DJ is in.

Q. What if you were facing them?

SHEMAR JAMES: If I was facing them? In practice, it's

like who's back there right now? They're both great quarterbacks, both great leaders, both great communicators. I feel like they just make -- both of them make our offense better. I'm confident in both of them.

Yeah, that's what I would say to that.

Q. When you poke your head up and see Lagway back there, what mindset do you have to get in?

SHEMAR JAMES: I would say just get ready to play ball. I would say that, yes, sir.

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