

# University of Florida Football Media Conference

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## Elijah Badger

Press Conference



**Q. You had a great performance. What kind of went into that and the progression to get to this point in the off-season?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I feel like having a great practice all week and having a great off-season just coming in, because me hurting my back last year, had a big part in me coming in playing hard, playing hard through this off-season.

So I just take every day at practice with a mindset just to come in and play hard.

**Q. What about learning the offense? You came in kind of late obviously in the spring. What was that process like, and how much do you feel you have it down now?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Me coming in, I feel like it was going to be hard because me being at Arizona State since out of high school, I feel like it was going to be hard, but it was kind of easy. Me being a veteran, I feel like they kind of figured that I was going to know it easy, but I feel like me coming in, I kind of picked it up fast and easy.

**Q. Was there like kind of studying during nights and stuff like that, where you were doing some cramming on it?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Yeah, there was a lot of study, coming in in the morning with coaches and trying to figure it out as quick as I can.

**Q. Who helped you the most with the playbook?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: G and Brandon. Brandon, the receiver.

**Q. What was your first impression of DJ Lagway when you got here?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: He's a good dude, funny. He's just a good dude and just funny.

**Q. Have you ever played with anyone with an arm like that before?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Yeah, I have, but he got kind of hurt in the beginning of the season.

**Q. What's it been like for you having to play with so many different quarterbacks and trying to develop consistency? I think you've played with like eight different guys in the last three years.**

ELIJHAH BADGER: It was kind of hard. As a receiver, I've got to depend on somebody else. But me just playing with, like you said, eight different quarterbacks, I just try to focus on making myself better throughout these years and just trying to play with anybody the best I can.

**Q. Did last year kind of prepare you for a situation where you might catch passes from multiple guys? I think it was four quarterbacks last year at some point.**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Yeah, I feel like you've just got to catch for anybody. When you leave to the NFL, you're going to catch for whoever. You don't know. I just feel like me as a receiver, I just go out there and play and catch whatever ball comes my way.

**Q. It sounds like you put in a lot of research into where you were going to go, with your mom even. You identified Florida. What were the reasons?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Just a specific reason, I didn't want to regret nothing. Just being at Arizona State for all four years, I didn't want to regret nothing just leaving and coming into the portal.

Usually portal guys are not like -- they're in the portal for a reason, but I feel like my reason is a good reason. I feel like they just had a place for me, and just me coming on a visit, just the football community. I liked it. I loved it. My mom loved it also.

**Q. Graham was part of that decision too, and then he didn't play last week. How did he factor into it, and did you even know about DJ when you made the decision?**



ELIJHAH BADGER: No, I didn't know about DJ. I kept hearing everybody talk about this DJ kid. I didn't know about him when he came in. So I had to meet him and figure him out in practice.

Yeah, Graham did help me a lot with the decision when I came down on my visit.

**Q. Did you talk to Ricky at all during your visit?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Yeah, I did talk to Ricky. He sent me a text and just told me about the football community and how big of a stage it is and how he liked it when he came.

**Q. What did he tell you about the program and wanting to know how you'd be developed and things like that?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Just like how he liked the receiver coach, Coach G, and just like how he came in and did what he did. He just told me I could do the same, man, just go in there and do my job.

**Q. Florida developing him into a first round pick, did that kind of give you a proof of concept, something you could look at?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Yeah, for sure.

**Q. You were a running back until 12, 14, something like that?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I was a running back until high school.

**Q. How does that help play into your YAC ability?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I feel like people just can't tackle me. I'm hard to go down. I never let the first person tackle me for real. I feel like I've got a running back mentality when I run the ball.

**Q. We saw that on that 77-yard -- did you count up how many guys had a shot on you like that?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Like five. Four failed, two of the same guys failed.

**Q. Were you disappointed you didn't get in the end zone on that one?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Yeah, I was trying to. I was for sure trying to.

**Q. You had a few catches last week against Miami as**

**well. Has that early success and the 77-yarder kind of given you confidence, do you think?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I feel like last week was just a little taste, what I did with a couple catches. I feel like that gave me a little confidence of what I can do.

**Q. How was it catching a bomb in The Swamp?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: It was dope. It got loud.

**Q. Ricky talked about, when he transferred from Arizona State, the move to come to the SEC was almost like betting on himself to maybe come up a level in competition, things like that, and what that could do for him. Did that factor at all into coming to Florida and an SEC school as well?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I feel like it kind of puts a target on your back, but I feel like coming to the SEC, like all athletes are the same. I feel like whatever changes is just the trenches, inside the trenches, and that's about it.

I feel like all athletes are kind of about the same everywhere.

**Q. What's your relationship with Coach Napier, and what did he sell you on in terms of like the opportunity to come here and so forth?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Just the big stage I can play on and just the teams we play and just my decision on coming here, he sold me on that.

**Q. Coach Napier talked about the mental process of going out there and playing 40 plays and you may only be targeted a handful of times. How important is it to stay confident even when the ball is not coming your way a majority of the time?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Sometimes it's kind of fun to play without the ball in your hands, kind of block for your teammates. I think it's kind of fun. That's just football. Everybody's not going to get the ball every play.

**Q. Billy G. is big on blocking here. What was that like for you to learn how much he emphasizes that and how much he cares about it?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: You can tell he cares about it a lot (laughter). But it's fun. I feel like everybody, all receivers aren't blockers, like everybody aren't blockers, so when he teaches it and emphasizes it, I feel like it makes the run game way more better for the second level.

**Q. Does your running back background help you embrace blocking maybe more than most receivers?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Yeah, I think so. I think the aggressiveness and how I come down for blocking.

**Q. How do you like Florida so far?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I like it. I like it a lot.

**Q. Told us about you having to adjust to the humidity.**

ELIJHAH BADGER: That's probably the only thing. The heat don't bother me. I came from Arizona State. It's just the humid. I don't know, I feel like I'm breathing water. That's about it.

(Laughter).

**Q. That Arizona heat, though, can cook your brain?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: It's like dry heat.

**Q. It's pretty hot.**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Yeah.

**Q. You didn't come here with the starting job basically promised to you. You had to earn it, and there was a lot of competition. Did you know that coming in, or is that something you wanted or obviously didn't shy away from?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Yeah, kind of. Coming in, I knew that, like I said, there was going to be a target on my back of me playing in the Pac-12 if I was going to be good or not. I don't think none of that mattered.

Just me coming in with a mindset that just need to go in and play and do what I need to do, I feel like that's going to be enough.

**Q. What kind of camaraderie are you developing with the others in the room, like Tre Wilson and Dike and Marcus Burke and those guys?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I feel like we're all building a relationship. We all help each other. It's fun to play with those guys.

**Q. Cam Ward was saying The Swamp -- he didn't think The Swamp was all that loud compared with some Pac-12 stadiums. What's your take on that?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I don't think he's telling the truth.

(Laughter).

It's way more. The Swamp is way louder. There wasn't really no Pac-12 games that was really like that. Washington State wasn't really like that either.

**Q. Did you ever go to Berkeley?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Yeah, I went to Cal.

**Q. It's real quiet there.**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Real quiet. Stanford real quiet. A whole bunch of teams real quiet in the Pac.

**Q. He said Oregon and Washington.**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Yeah, I feel like SEC is a more football community.

**Q. I know it's not your primary focus right now, but do you plan to reach out to some former teammates and ask them about Mississippi State next week?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: No, I never ask them about it. I kind of go off the score, what it's looking like.

**Q. Which of the guys are you closest with on the team?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I'm kind of getting close to a lot of people. I'm close with Trell, Tre, DJ, Graham, Chim. I'm close with a bunch of people. All the Cali dudes, the three Cali dudes we got.

**Q. I know it's still early in the season, but how do you feel about the decision you've made and where you ended up and what your life is like right now?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I feel good about it. I feel like I just need to keep working and the job's not done. I'm not satisfied yet. I need to keep working.

**Q. Get in that end zone?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I'll get in that end zone for sure next time. That will not happen again.

**Q. How much have you developed as a route runner just in the last couple years? You always had that deep ball ability, but how much have you worked on the precision of routes underneath and being able to do that kind of stuff?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I feel like I've been working on that for a long time actually. Just getting better every year at route running. I'm going to keep working on that. I feel like everything is there. I just need to keep working on the route running and the specifics.

**Q. You mentioned that Tre and Chim are two of the guys that you've gotten close with since arriving here. How would you say that, between the chemistry and the talent the three of you guys have across the board, how has that translated both into practice and on the field so far this season?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I feel like, when we line up, DBs, the way we run off the ball, I feel like DBs are going to have to respect all of us, all three of us on the field when we're together. Even our other receivers as well in the room, we all can run.

I feel like we all can run, we all can go, and they're going to have to respect everybody in the room.

**Q. Chim was saying Tre's acceleration is insane.**

ELIJHAH BADGER: It's crazy.

**Q. Had you seen anything like that?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I seen it on Saturday.

**Q. I've been saying it. I was wondering about you.**

ELIJHAH BADGER: When he makes a move and goes, he's gone unless you get him. Get him right then and there, or he might be gone.

**Q. As a blocker, how much fun is it to delect somebody? Have you had a chance to do that in this offense?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: No, I haven't had a chance to delect somebody. I've been blocking. I say, okay, it's going to get way better. I can do way better.

**Q. What do you like about Billy G as a coach, and what are some of the things he's worked with you on?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: I like how hyper he is and how he gets on your head about things in practice. Just working on finishing, route running, a lot of things.

**Q. Do you feel like he's going to help you take your game to another level this year?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: Yeah, for sure.

**Q. Did you get to work with Hines Ward at all?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: No. I would say for probably a couple days.

**Q. Did he give you anything before you got out of there?**

ELIJHAH BADGER: No.

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