

Capital One Orange Bowl: Texas A&M vs North Carolina

Monday, December 28, 2020

Miami Gardens, Florida, USA

North Carolina

Hard Rock Stadium

Jeremiah Gemmel

Press Conference

Q. I'll let somebody else ask about not having Chazz next to you, but given the physical nature of Texas A&M and what you faced against Notre Dame, is it more important defensively to be positionally sound or is this game going to be a lot more about kind of bowing up and making the plays that you need to play and standing in there against their physical attack?

JEREMIAH GEMMEL: I think it's a little bit of both. They're a really good offensive line, seeing them, they climb up to the next level, get up on to backers, but they also run a lot of formations. I think we need to be in check with all our formational calls to make sure we get into all our checks.

Q. You talked a little bit last week about Eugene, but I was wondering if you could give us a little bit more of a Eugene Asante scouting report from your perspective on how he will kind of work well with you out there, and how has he handled the last week of practice knowing he's going to be the starter?

JEREMIAH GEMMEL: I think he handled it really well. Yeah, actually I talked to Eugene yesterday. I think we're going in after this, and we're going to get some extra time in the film room since it's our day off. But looking at Eugene, he has great speed and he has great cover skills, and that's something you really need to have playing the Will position, especially this week with Texas A&M and how they run their route concepts.

But from the whole year, we've always had enough confidence in Eugene, and seeing the last two weeks of practice, he just closes space really good. He's been really good timing up on his blitz. I think everybody on the coaching staff and all the players are really confident seeing him go out there on January 2nd.

Q. Mack said a little while ago that some of the guys are adopting a chip on their shoulder, saying, hey wait



a minute, four guys are gone, but the rest of us can play too. We're here for a reason. Is that sort of a collective mindset you guys have adopted over the last week?

JEREMIAH GEMMEL: Absolutely. I mean, just seeing British in practice yesterday during fast ball and during our team periods, seeing how he runs the ball and seeing how he carries himself, just like Eugene, like what you said about Eugene, he's carrying himself with a chip on his shoulder. He's been here. He's played a lot of football for us. He's been on a lot of special teams. He's been our special teams captain for the last couple years, and I think he's ready to show he can also play running back too for what he came to college to play.

Q. Do you feel like you have more of a defensive responsibility on the field with Chazz not being alongside of you?

JEREMIAH GEMMEL: I don't think I would call it responsibility, but yeah, I know Eugene early in the game, he's going to be excited, so I guess you could say there's a responsibility, or in the game I think I just want to make sure I get him lined up and set up early in the game so he can calm down as the game goes.

But with Eugene, he actually -- I mean, he played some ball for us against Virginia Tech. He actually played a lot of snaps for us, and as the game went on he went along with it and he was able to pick up on the calls, and he was actually sitting us down coming to the sideline and telling us certain formations and some of their tendencies that they were doing.

I think early in the game he might be a little excited to get out there, but I think as the game goes on he'll be able to fit in.

Q. What kind of person is Eugene? What can you tell us about him as a person?

JEREMIAH GEMMEL: Well, the first thing I noticed about Eugene when he came, because he was my roommate here in fall camp, he's a very faithful man. Every morning and every night he'd grab his Bible and he would pray every morning and every night during fall camp, and that's the first thing I noticed about Eugene. I think that's just the



first to go with it. I think he has really good integrity. What are kids doing when they're not in the stadium or they're not in front of the coaches' eyes, and I've seen Eugene go out and run sprints when nobody is around. I've walked into the film room at times and Eugene is in there flipping around, looking at the other team and nobody is asking him to go do that.

I think he's a really prideful man and a really hard worker.

Q. With this defense, y'all have built a little momentum going into the Miami game and now heading into the Orange Bowl. What's kind of the mindset? What are you looking to get out of this week and get out of the Orange Bowl?

JEREMIAH GEMMEL: Well, I feel like the bowl games are always a stepping-stone for next year's team. Although we do have a lot of good players out, these players that are going to be playing in this game are going to be playing for us next year. Even though we have these players out, we're going in to compete, we're going in to win and we're going in to improve for next year.

Q. I asked Coach Bateman about what led to the defense kind of taking that next step, the latter quarter of the season, Notre Dame and Miami specifically. He noted that some of the veterans, yourself included, kind of were holding the other guys to a higher standard, if you will. Was that a conversation that was had? Was that more of just making sure everybody was kind of paying attention to what you were wanting to do? How would you describe that?

JEREMIAH GEMMEL: Yeah, it wasn't really like a conversation to the whole group. I think it was just word going around the defense, saying that like this needs to be our standard for the rest of the year. I mean, sometimes it's us just shooting ourselves in the foot getting a personal foul penalty and they're getting a 1st down off of that. Making sure you're in the right alignments, making sure you have a check in your corner, make sure the linebacker knows.

Yeah, I think early, mid-year we made that a standard for the defense, that we need to be technically sound on everything we do on defense.

Q. You mentioned this game being somewhat of a springboard for next season; what's the message this defense wants to send in this game to kind of set up things for next year?

JEREMIAH GEMMEL: We want to show that we're a physical style defense. We're going to be able to stop the

run. We're going to be able to blitz. We're going to be able to cover. With the players, the young guys that we've got going out there, the majority of the players are coming back. We're losing Tomon and obviously Chazz is out, but I feel like this is a challenge for our defense. We're facing a really good offense. They know how to throw the ball around the field. They know how to run the ball. They have good gap schemes. They have good inside zone like everybody else. So I think it's a good challenge for us.

I think this is a challenge that is what we're going to see coming out opening week first game next year.

Q. I was wondering when you look at Texas A&M's offensive line and running back Spiller, what jumps out about them to you? And does it compare to anyone you've played?

JEREMIAH GEMMEL: It's an SEC line and it's an SEC back. Big, physical offensive line. They're really good at doubling, knocking the three technique off, knocking the shade off and climbing up to the next level, so that's something we're going to have to be cautious of. And they have a big back. They have a bigger back that we haven't seen really this season. He's been 6'0", 6'1", 225 and we can really honestly say we haven't seen a back 6'1", 225 and he's an all-purpose back. He's coming out of the backfield, catching passes, he's not just running between the tackles.

Yeah, that's something I can definitely say we haven't seen from a back this year, someone with size who can run between the tackles, but he can also go out and space and catch the ball, make people miss.

Q. Coach Brown was telling us how sometimes after physical games he'd give Javonte and Michael Carter a break in practice, and British and Josh would get a lot of those reps. Since we haven't really seen them in game situations much. I was wondering if you could tell us what kind of backs both of those guys are. What can we expect on Saturday when they're in the game?

JEREMIAH GEMMEL: I think Javonte and Mike have set the standard. I think Mike, when we came in, when I came in with Mike in 2017 as a freshman, I think he changed the linebacker room and set a standard that's going to be present at UNC for a long time.

What I've seen from British is he's really good and really patient at finding the holes and finding -- fitting off the guard and knowing when to cut it up and when to bounce the ball, but he's also really good at his angle routes, running out of the backfield. Same with Josh Henderson.



They have very good speed just like Javonte and Mike, and I feel like what Mike has set in the running back room and what Javonte has set in the running back room, that's just a picture to show that UNC is going to have good backs for a long time.

Q. I didn't mean to leave out Elijah Green, too. Can you just expound on him a little bit, as well?

JEREMIAH GEMMEL: Yeah, I haven't been able to see much of Elijah throughout the year, but seeing him in practice, what I have noticed, he's really good in space. I didn't really see how elusive he was, but going through practice and watching practice, he's been able to make some people miss in space and he's shown that if you give him the ball in space he can be explosive.

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