

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

Tuesday, December 29, 2020

Miami Gardens, Florida, USA

## Texas A&M Aggies

Hard Rock Stadium

## DeMarvin Leal

Press Conference

**Q. I'm curious, I asked Jayden this, too, but was there sort of a point early in the season or in the off-season when you kind of realized that this defense potentially had the chance to be really special?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: Oh, no question. In the off-season definitely we were running and we were all working out together during the whole COVID situation we had. I just took a step back and just thought about like all the dominant players that we have and just was like, sheesh, this defense is about to be something else.

**Q. Obviously recruiting plays a part in it, but what do you guys do, especially in that front seven, to kind of just have so many guys have everybody always be ready and kind of have the performance that you guys have?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: We talk to each other. We encourage each other. We compete all the time during workouts, during practice, getting to the ball, stripping the ball, making turnovers during practice. We just come together. We've come a lot closer than the past years, and we decided like instead of just having the starters step up, why don't we have everybody. Why not have those that are behind us be prepared to play, because I was once in that situation, and those like Micheal Clemons, Jayden Peevy, Justin Madubuike, Bobby Brown helped me prepare during practice.

**Q. This is kind of along the lines of that question, but how do you think playing in the SEC and playing in very competitive games in the last two years have helped you kind of prepare for this game that's coming up on Saturday?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: It's definitely helped my experience, and it's been great. I just love being able to play in the SEC and playing against the level of competition, it just helps me raise my confidence and just everything that I



have to do with that football.

**Q. Before the season Jimbo praised you and a couple minutes ago your defensive coordinator praised you. Why do coaches seem to really like you a lot?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: I just try to do what they tell me to do, honestly. I just try to stay doing my 110 and at least make sure they don't yell at me all the time.

**Q. It's hard to find your value on a stat sheet. You put the film on, you can really see it, or just watch the games. What about your game adds so much value well beyond the stat sheet?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: I would say the love for football that I have. It drives me every single day. When I get on the field, it's like a click just goes off, and it's time. It's time to tune in. It's time to get after it.

**Q. What do you think -- I asked Peevy the same question: What do you think has been the No. 1 ingredient to A&M's consistency and slowing down and stopping the run over multiple years here under Elko?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: I would say it starts in practice. I'd say that going against offense good-on-good has definitely like -- iron sharpens iron, so that helped us. That helped them, and it was just that beneficial, like -- dang, I can't think of the word, but it definitely helped going good-on-good versus the offense. It helped us prepare. It helped us believe in ourselves.

**Q. With you guys coming into this game just missing out on the College Football Playoff, and I know with the All-SEC selections and stuff, it left quite a few players out. Do you guys feel like you have anything to prove coming into this bowl game?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: Oh, there's a lot to prove, but this is strictly about the game, and it's time to just show what we are, who we are and who we want to be looking forward.

**Q. When you guys come into a game like this against a team from another conference, do you feel like you're representing, I don't know, the SEC at all, or does that even come to mind?**



DeMARVIN LEAL: For me it didn't come to mind until you just said it, honestly. I'm just thinking about getting after it and definitely we as a team, we just want to -- like we have our chance to prove what everybody thinks we don't have.

**Q. The All-SEC Team, what was your reaction when that came out, and after having such a good year, when they snubbed you, your reaction?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: My reaction, I seen all my teammates on there and was just proud of them and I know all the hard work they've put in, and I was more excited for them than myself.

**Q. Were you mad at all?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: I mean, things happen. You know, I know that. I come from a place where everything isn't just given. It has to be taken. With that being said, I was just happy for my teammates and just congratulated them.

**Q. Your thoughts on Sam Howell, having watched tape of him play and if he reminds you of anybody else y'all have played?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: I wouldn't say he reminds me of anybody that we've played, but what I can say is that he is a unique QB and he does have a good arm. He does decide to run it when he has the chance, when it's given to him, so just being able to stop him is going to be a major key.

**Q. Not so much on your side of the ball, I know you've got more veterans on that side, but we are still today talking to you and Demani, sophomores, and we talked to Ainius and Isaiah yesterday. You're having a lot of success with sophomores contributing. How cool is that that you're stepping up already and the future is still bright for the Aggies?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: It's amazing, just being able to come in and being able to instantly put an impact on this program and continue it during the sophomore season is just fantastic. It just tells you how much they praise on the next man up, and it doesn't matter how old you are and if you're veteran or not, everybody is important and everybody can step up to help the program be better.

**Q. What do you attribute to making that freshman to sophomore jump and how do you make another jump, so to speak, next year?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: I'd just say continue doing what we're doing, continue communicating, continue competing with

each other, and everything else will just fall in line.

**Q. When you've looked at the North Carolina offense as a whole, what challenges will they present and what will you guys have to do to be able to slow them down?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: I would definitely say we're definitely going to have to stop the run. They do have big offensive linemen and definitely would have to stop that, and they do take their chances on the big plays, so just being able to stick to our keys is going to be major.

**Q. Coach Elko said that this could be a game where you have to win one-on-one battles. Has he expressed that to you and do you like that challenge?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: Yes, sir, I do.

**Q. Going back to your recruiting process, what was it that first stood out to you about Coach Elko where you said you wanted to play for him, and in the time you've been here, what's one or two of the main things you've learned from him in that time?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: Coach Elko, definitely he has showed me what he wanted the defense to be like and like what his plans for it was, and I knew that from talking to him that he was definitely going to challenge me mentally and physically, and he was definitely going to be one of those coaches that wants the best out of you every single day.

With that being said, I was just -- I actually fell in love with the way he had the defense set up, so I just went with it. I loved it, and I have since then.

**Q. Was there some example from that first couple of conversations or something where he was pointing that out that you remember and said that's what I want to be part of?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: Strong side end, when he had showed me his little tape up front when he was at Notre Dame and the weight and the size of the defensive end, like what they would be doing from play in, play out. I just loved the way that all sounded, and it definitely has shown off.

**Q. Kind of what people were asking about, but how do you guys as individuals measure success? You guys don't have a 15-sack guy, don't have a 100-tackle guy. How do you as an individual measure success?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: I measure success when my team has success, when we're able to stop the offense and the offense is able to get down there and score. I feel like

that's how I measure my success. When my team is successful I'm successful.

**Q. Especially for D-ends I know that sort of those big numbers are sometimes the things that people give attention to. Are you okay not getting the All-SECs if it means that your team performance has been that special?**

DeMARVIN LEAL: I mean, when it comes to that, I did have a problem with it, but at the same time I have to think about the big picture. It's more than just me. It's about the whole team. It's about everybody who comes together to make an impact on this program.

Just with that being what it is, I just have to go along with it.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.