

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

Tuesday, December 29, 2020

Miami Gardens, Florida, USA

## North Carolina Tar Heels

Hard Rock Stadium

## Jordan Tucker

Press Conference



**Q. Jordan, just curious, obviously with Javonte and Michael out, you've got some new running backs who are going to be stepping in and being relied on pretty heavily. What are some of the strengths that British Brooks or Josh Henderson or Elijah that they bring to the table?**

JORDAN TUCKER: I think some of the strengths are just being new backs. A lot of people are watching film, watching the backs that we did have that made the decision to opt out and better themselves, and I'm all for that, and just the backs that we've got, we see them every day in practice, all of them got speed, they got power and they've all been learning from Javonte and Mike, as well. So as an O-line and offense we've got as much faith in them as we did in our backs before.

**Q. I just wanted to get your opinion on DeMarvin Leal. He's one of the top defensive players in the country. How are you looking to limit him and how do you work on that in practice?**

JORDAN TUCKER: If you could give me a number. I don't really know who that is. Like Dazz said, I'm a ball player. Like I just go out there every day, play football. I'm not really worried about who is lined up across from me. I know they have some talent on the D-line, but as an O-line we've been playing together this whole year. We've showed some highs and some lows but we're ready to show out and put this team on our back.

**Q. Some of the guys and also Coach Brown yesterday talked about the chip on the shoulder that you guys have with the opt-outs people are saying you guys don't have a chance, all your starters are gone. Maybe the team should opt out. What are your thoughts on that, and have you guys talked much about it, and is there a real chip? Can a chip actually be a real thing going into a game like this?**

JORDAN TUCKER: I don't really know much about like a chip on a shoulder, but I know like Dazz just said before, all of us are football players and everyone is going to make the best decision for them, and everybody else really doesn't have a decision in what somebody else does. We've just got to move forward, next man up, and I know every single person goes out there to practice and goes out there ready to play in a game. So if that's a chip on your shoulder, then yeah, we do have one.

**Q. The next-man-up thing, is it maybe they got hurt in practice, they're not just available, you guys just move forward? Is that sort of the mentality you have when you get into the grind of the season that whoever is ready to be there is there? That's kind of the mentality?**

JORDAN TUCKER: Yeah, I do, and I think a lot of teams do preach this next-man-up mentality, but I think here at North Carolina we really do enforce that because your next play could be your last play. You never do know. We try and instill in the ones, twos and threes that y'all got to be ready to go on game day, and if you're not, then you're going to get exposed for that.

As far as how we work at North Carolina, I know that everybody is ready to go.

**Q. You guys are coming off such a high after the Miami game and then certainly learning about the Orange Bowl bid. Then it seems like the opt-outs maybe kind of took some wind out of the sail. Where would you say the confidence level of this team is right now?**

JORDAN TUCKER: Higher.

**Q. How so?**

JORDAN TUCKER: Because a lot of people think that we can't do it, and I mean, I've been here four years now. We've been through this. A lot of people have doubted us in the past. We've been the underdog going in and out, so there's nothing really new to me. Might got to instill it in the younger guys but a lot of the older guys it's nothing new. We are ready to go. We are just ready to play ball.

**Q. And is that something that over the past -- the**



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**course of the past season has changed? Like do you think this team would have been -- a year ago this team still would have had this amount of confidence?**

JORDAN TUCKER: In all honesty, I think after the first two games last season, we really saw what we could do on a national rank, and we've been playing locally really, and Mack tries to instill that in us, that we're trying to be a national team. Especially after the first two games in Miami and South Carolina last year, I think our team saw that, and I think recruits saw that and staff, everybody bought in, so I think our confidence level rises with each game we play.

**Q. I wanted to ask you, how much are you looking forward to the opportunity to opening up those same type of holes that you opened up for Michael and Javonte throughout the season and doing it for backs that nobody has heard of up until this point?**

JORDAN TUCKER: Yeah, agreed. In an interview earlier this year I mentioned most of the time the O-line doesn't even know who's in until they run past us, and I think that's a good thing because with the backs that we've got now, same thing in practice, we don't even know who is back there but when they run past us we know. We're excited just to score, to move people, to take the line of scrimmage, all of that. Like we're just excited for everything.

**Q. Can you put in perspective what this program has done in just a few years? You guys are heading into a big-time bowl game this weekend.**

JORDAN TUCKER: Yeah, perspective, like I said, being here four years, these last two years have been incredible, with Coach Brown and bringing the staff in and everybody really buying in, it's definitely made a change on how I see football and how I see life. It's just been great. All positives from my end. Mack really came in, made a difference on and off the field. He's trying to make our future better, and that's what we love.

As soon as we all bought in, this family just became closer and closer, and just the perspective of that, I don't know if people can see it from outside, but this is a close unit, we're all for each other regardless of personal decisions, like this is a family.

**Q. What advice could you give as a veteran to some of these younger guys to kind of help keep their emotions in check, where you're going up against a top-five opponent in a major game like the Orange Bowl?**

JORDAN TUCKER: To be honest, my biggest piece of advice was we'll probably be practice how you want to play just because, in my opinion, practice is way harder than a game. Once I get in a game I can just go out and do what I do best and that's just compete. It's really the emphasis on competing, that's half the battle. Just going out there to fight and knowing that you've got 10 other brothers, really 100 other brothers out there that got your back. That's what I would preach to the young guys.

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