

# Capital One Orange Bowl: Tennessee vs Clemson

Sunday, December 4, 2022

Miami Gardens, Florida, USA

Hard Rock Stadium

## Clemson Tigers

## Dabo Swinney

### Press Conference

MIKE LIOTTA: We are joined now by Clemson head coach Dabo Swinney. Thanks for joining us, coach. If you could start with a few opening remarks and then we'll open it up for questions.

DABO SWINNEY: We are super excited to be heading back to the Orange Bowl. We've got a team that's excited. Really proud of our guys, how they finished the season.

To have the opportunity to play in this game is something that you really dream of. Especially here at Clemson, took 30 years to get back there when we got there in '11, now to get back there for the fourth time in 12 years, I'm thankful that this team is going to get that experience, and our staff, because it is an iconic bowl experience, one that I know everyone will enjoy being a part of.

Eric Poms, the entire Orange Bowl staff, they do an amazing job, as does everybody that's affiliated with this bowl. Then you throw in the fact that you get a chance to compete against a team like Tennessee that may be the best team in the country this year. They are one of those teams that certainly can play with anybody. They showed that all year.

It's a great matchup. I know both teams, both fan bases, are super excited to see these teams compete on the field. But we're thankful for the opportunity and, again, really proud of our team for how they competed, to win this ACC championship, earn the right to get back to the Orange Bowl.

With that I'll take your questions, along with saying congratulations to Coach Heupel and Tennessee for them earning the right to be here as well. The job that they did this year was amazing. Got a chance to see them quite a bit. It will be a great matchup.

MIKE LIOTTA: Thank you, coach.



We'll open it up for questions.

**Q. We all know the times we're in in college football. We're going to see a lot of kids opting out. What do you do to convince your kids that the opportunity to play in a game like this doesn't come along every day and that should enter into their thinking?**

DABO SWINNEY: I mean, it's an opportunity to play, first of all. Not only play, but again to have an experience that is really special. It really is.

I mean, again, I got to go to the Orange Bowl in 1999 when I was coaching at Alabama. It was Tom Brady's last game at Michigan there. That was special. That was the Y2K days. That was an unbelievable experience for me as a young coach.

Obviously to get back a few times here at Clemson, to know those memories that have been built throughout our teams over the years, you share those things and all that.

At the end of the day, I mean, I don't think you really should have to convince someone. At the end of the day if somebody doesn't want to play, you respect their decision to keep moving.

**Q. You got a head start on your preparation for Tennessee as you prepared for the Gamecocks. Wondering what you were able to glean from watching the film on them? Your last meeting against Tennessee was in the 2003 Peach Bowl, first year on staff at Clemson. What do you remember about that night?**

DABO SWINNEY: I remember first of all it was a great finish to our season. We went from 5-4, to probably getting ready to be shown the door, to 9-4. Coach Bowden got Coach of the Year. I got to stay at Clemson longer than 10 months or whatever (smiling). I remember that very well. It was a great finish to our season, the way we finished.

I remember Tennessee was a very good team, a very talented team. But we were really playing our best ball there. Charlie Whitehurst was hot, the receivers. Chad



Jasmin I think was the MVP of that game. It was just an electric atmosphere in the Peach Bowl there. A fun way to finish the year.

It was a big win for us, huge win for sure. Tennessee I think was a highly ranked team, maybe a top 10 team, in that game. It was special 'cause, again, it was a good way to start off my first year there at Clemson I guess 20 years ago now.

That's what I remember.

**Q. You talked about your history at Alabama and Clemson playing the Orange Bowl. What are you going to tell your players about the history and what it means to be a part of this game? There was a time a couple weeks ago when you looked like a possible Playoff team. How do you respond to some of the fans who might not be as hyped up about coming to a non-Playoff game?**

DABO SWINNEY: Well, first of all, the history of the Orange Bowl is amazing. I mean, some of the greatest games ever in college football have taken place at the Orange Bowl. It's a big-time experience, it's a big-time bowl.

As far as the other part of your question, I mean, both of these teams are Playoff-caliber teams. There's four spots. It's really, really hard to be in the final four. We're fortunate we've been there a few times and have had some success there. It's really hard and you don't control that. Technically you could have the same record as someone else, someone not put you in there.

I think the biggest thing is if 11-2, being your league champion, going to the Orange Bowl, if you're not happy with that, I don't really know what to say to you. It's really hard to win. Man, the players and the staff work extremely hard. There's not many teams out there that have 10-plus wins. Tennessee, the season they've had, unbelievable. Then for our team as well.

Both of these teams, even though we're not in the final four, we're both teams that certainly for 12 to 13 weeks were one of those few teams that had the opportunity. We both had opportunities to kind of play our way in there. We didn't get that done. But you got to give the opponent credit.

Again, that's football. Both teams had an amazing season. This will be an exciting opportunity to finish our year again with a Playoff-caliber game. That's what this is. Next year is one more year of the final four, then it's going to 12.

I think this is a great experience for our team, the staff, both teams, then also our fans. It's Miami. It's the Orange Bowl. You're playing Tennessee. I think any time you get a chance if you're a fan of your team, any time you get a chance to see them play, it ought to be exciting.

At most if the whole world goes perfect, you get 15 games, 15 days to play this game, be a fan of your team on the field that day. We're here. We're going to have 14. I'm thankful we got one more game to play.

Hopefully we'll have a great crowd. I don't doubt that we will, great environment. Two regional fan bases that I'm sure will support each team.

**Q. You mentioned two previous games, 2003 against Tennessee in the Peach Bowl. Did you have any input on the fumblerooski? Back to 2000 Orange Bowl, Alex Zow was your quarterback for the special year, how special is it to have him part of your program now?**

DABO SWINNEY: Yeah, that was Brad Scott there who was our offensive coordinator. I think it was Kyle Browning, No. 28, that we headed that ball to. Everybody kind of comes out, puts it under his legs, goes out the backdoor. That was a great play in that game. I know we hit the trap a couple times with Chad Jasmin, heck of a game, Derrick Hamilton. Kevin young blood. The head coach at Virginia, Tony Elliott, was playing in this game. There was a lot of great moments for sure.

Yeah, I was talking about that with Andrew Zow the other day. When you're in the moment of things, you don't really know. I just remember that game. We had the lead, a minute something left. There's this long gangly guy out there at quarterback for Michigan. Oh, we're in pretty good shape here. All of a sudden this guy Tom Brady takes it right down the field, ties it up, we go to overtime. We missed the extra point in overtime. That's how we lost that game. I'll never forget that either.

You go on about your business. Next thing you know 60 years later Tom Brady is still doing that (laughter). He's making a living doing it.

**Q. What do you expect out of Cade Klubnik in a top-seven matchup in the Orange Bowl in his first career start as quarterback?**

DABO SWINNEY: Hopefully first of all great preparation like he's been having, but playing within the system, being smart with the ball, doing what he's coached to do. I thought he did an amazing job of that last night. Really just hopefully pick up where he left off. He was accurate, made good decisions outside of maybe one or two in the run



game. He extended some plays. He did some things with his legs.

Just continue to, again, play within the system, bring that great energy, and protect the football.

**Q. Curious what you saw from Tennessee in preparing for the Gamecocks. Obviously Hooker went out in that game unfortunately. Your impressions of their offense, defense, schematically?**

DABO SWINNEY: Not just the Gamecocks. I got to see them several times this year. I mean, they're unbelievable. I mean, I haven't obviously got into really breaking them down, game planning, but I would imagine they got to lead the country in scoring or offense. I can't imagine they don't.

As explosive of an offense as I've seen in a long, long time. Unbelievable tempo. Incredibly fast. Receivers making plays. This is a team that you can tell just has fun playing. You can tell that they're very connected.

Coach Heupel and his staff, they've done an unbelievable job of building this culture and really putting it together right out of the gate. It's not easy to do. I know they missed some plays against South Carolina, and South Carolina hit some amazing plays. But, man, they bounced right back the very next week, got back on track, shut out Vanderbilt, scored a million points and a bunch of yards.

They'll be a handful, for sure. I'm glad we don't play them this week. Hopefully we can find a way to make 'em punt a couple times because they don't punt very often.

MIKE LIOTTA: Thank you, coach. Appreciate your time. We look forward to seeing you down in South Florida.

DABO SWINNEY: Thank y'all. It's an honor to be there. Congratulations to Tennessee. Look forward to spending a great week with you guys in Miami. Go Tigers.

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