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OSU – 24

An Interview With:

**LSU  
COACH LES MILES  
MATT FLYNN  
RICKY JEAN-FRANCOIS**

THE MODERATOR: We have with us LSU's head coach Les Miles, most outstanding offensive player Matt Flynn and most outstanding defensive player Ricky Jean-Francois. We'll ask Coach Miles to give us an opening statement on tonight's game and then we'll take questions for the players only, let them go back to the locker room and continue on with Coach Miles.

Coach.

COACH LES MILES: I first want to commend the Ohio State Buckeyes, very quality football team. Coach Tressel has done a great job with them.

We certainly respected that opponent, knew we'd have to play well to win. And feel very fortunate to have played as well as we have.

I can also tell you that it's the first time that a two-loss team has played for a national title and won, certainly. And I have to give great credit to some divine intervention and some grace that allows us to be in this position.

And a great group of young men. I think the guys that were sitting to my left, our senior class, Glenn Dorsey, just a number of men, just understand how to really commit to a team, to fight like hell, and not let an obstacle stand in the way. Just find a way to overcome.

Whether it be injury or shuffling the starting lineup or a devastating loss in the back end of a season that we just have to overcome.

And I couldn't be more proud of this team and so fortunate to be the coach here. So fortunate to represent LSU. And, excuse me, Wahoo! (Laughter.) Just kind of had to do that. (Laughter) just one of those things.

THE MODERATOR: Please raise your hands for questions for players only.

**Q. Matt, can you talk about benefitting from the personal foul penalties, seemed to give you momentum especially on that first touchdown drive?**

MATT FLYNN: Yeah, we got some penalties against them that really gave us some extra yardage and really helped us with some drives to stay alive. I felt confident our offense was moving well. We were clicking, were in rhythm. So those penalties definitely did help us a little bit. But the offense played really well. And I think we would have made those yards.

**Q. Can both of you guys comment on maybe being a healthier team than you were down the stretch and how much of a difference it made on the field tonight?**

MATT FLYNN: Me personally, it was good for me to get this rest and get healthy again. And for this team, we've had such a tough schedule, week in, week out, teams have been playing their best football against us, and just really, you know, the SEC, there's hard hitting every week. We got banged up a little bit and it was very helpful for this team to get this opportunity to be healthy and get back to where we were at the beginning.

RICKY JEAN-FRANCOIS: Just to go off of what Matt said, we were the freshest team, then people was saying we were getting banged up and bruised and everything. But these weeks in between the national championship, it helped people getting into condition. People was losing weight and doing everything they can, stretch, put some ice on everything. Especially like Glenn Dorsey, Tyson, Kirston, people on our offense.

They were just icing everything down. Coach Miles told us every day if you're going to go inside the training room, super set everything. Go get double heavy mat, icing, tub, everything. It really helped us down here because we actually showed -- we actually showed you all we can actually play four quarters if we was healthy, when we're healthy.

**Q. Ricky, talk about what you've been through this year. You know, obviously not being able to play in the regular season, then coming back just two games, now you're the defensive MVP of the national championship game?**

RICKY JEAN-FRANCOIS: My coaches told me to keep my head up from day one. I felt down and I felt like I wanted to leave school and everything. But all my coaches told me at the end, something is going to come through for you. I just leaned on my players. My players told me anything you need, I'll help you out. And at that point it just made me appreciate everything in life, and I took school to the point that I wanted to graduate this -- next semester, and it actually made me appreciate everything in life now.

It made me appreciate school. It made me appreciate my mom, my dad, what they did for me. Made me appreciate Coach Miles, Matt, all my team members, even trainers to equipment managers. Made me appreciate everybody around me, because I seen when I was down, they helped me out to get me back up. Once I lifted my head up, I felt like I was on top of the world to go out and play in the national championship game. It was a great thing.

**Q. Ricky, specifically you guys up front, after the long touchdown, how did you reestablish control at the line of scrimmage against a real good offensive line?**

RICKY JEAN-FRANCOIS: Pelini told us to just calm down, because we were ready to come out there, come off the ball at full speed, be aggressive. The coaches told us just to slow down for a minute. Coach Miles and Pelini just told us to slow down for a minute, just look at what we were doing, what was the mistake from the last play. And we just corrected from there.

**Q. Ricky, can you talk specifically about the field goal as well, what happened on that play and how did you get in the pressure and then to get the hand on the ball?**

RICKY JEAN-FRANCOIS: On the field goal, Coach told us to basically come out in the regular defense because he probably thought they was going to fake it. But everybody was just telling me with your quickness and size just using -- Coach told me to back up off the ball a little bit because their line wasn't trying to put their hands out or nothing, they were using their shoulders. So I backed up and just came off quick as possible trying to time the ball. When I got back there and I saw my hand, I was like, please, let this block this ball. When I finally blocked it, I was shocked (laughter).

It changed the momentum of the game, because at that point when they thought they were going to kick a field goal, they probably could have did it multiple times during the game. But once I blocked the field goal, it's like it just took them out of strategy. And any 4th down they had to go to, they probably just had to go for it.

**Q. Matt, can you talk about the offense, their feeling at the time? You were down 10-0. You hadn't done anything. Three out in the first draw. Can you talk about your feeling at that time?**

MATT FLYNN: Yeah, I think we had a feeling, you know, like we did at the beginning of the game. I think this team is full of grown men. Full of guys that have been there. Guys that never say quit. And we are very stubborn. So we're down. We just don't think twice about it. We go out there. We knew we could execute, and it was just like we got in rhythm.

We stayed in rhythm. We started and we ended in it. And I think we're down 10-0 and it's a pretty good team we're playing against. So we just knew we had to keep going. It was a four-quarter game and we had a lot of time, just keep playing and keep moving along, just like we've done all year. And it showed that it came out tonight.

**Q. Could you talk about that pretty touchdown pass to Brandon in the left corner of the end zone, I think it was five wides?**

MATT FLYNN: Yeah, we line up there, empty formation, five wide. And it was just -- it was kind of a check at the line of scrimmage. I saw that they were in zero coverage, which is no deep and strike man-to-man. So I called a play, a little roll-out to the left and get Brandon LaFell one-on-one on the corner out to the foul line and

just had some underneath routes underneath it. And as soon as I saw the corner back outside jump the short route to the outside guy, Brandon was one-on-one. I know 95 percent of the time he's going to win that match-up. I gave a little ground and threw it to the pylon. He made a great play and a great catch.

**Q. Matt, four different games this year. You fell behind by 10 points, all four you came back and won. When you all held Ohio State to the field goal to make it 10-0, how important do you think that stop was?**

MATT FLYNN: I think it was very important. And I think not only that drive but so many plays that our defense made this game gave us good field position. And just, you know, made it easier for the offense to keep momentum and keep the clock running and keep making some plays. But that field goal is -- keep them to a field goal out there was very big for us. I'm not going to say it's any bigger than any other big plays that the defense made because they played incredible tonight, made some big plays, made some big turnovers.

**Q. The fact you guys didn't panic when you got down and looked like they did kind of pressing when the momentum changed, can that be attributable to the fact that the conference you guys went through as tough as it was, as seasoned as you guys were?**

MATT FLYNN: I think so. This team has grown a lot this year. We've come together strong and we've had a lot of close games, a lot of tough games that went to the wire. And like I said, we're just stubborn. We don't know when to say quit. We don't know when to give up.

And this team, what I'm most proud of about this team is the ability to not focus on the things that are going on around it, whether it's good, whether it's bad.

We make a good play, we come out, and we just forget about it. We take it one play at a time. That's just one thing this team has done all year. We've proven it all year. We came out tonight and stepped up and showed it to everybody.

RICKY JEAN-FRANCOIS: Like Matt said, we are a stubborn team. For no reason, we can be down by any amount of points, just us inside won't let that happen. We catch up. Like Matt said, we're going to do anything if possible to catch back up with anybody. Like Coach Miles, he taught us

from day one we'll never give up. We'll never give up. If you had the most heart, you'd beat the man in front of you. If you have the most heart, you'll beat the team in front of you. Like Matt said, we're a stubborn team and we take no for an answer to be down by 10.

**Q. To all of you, considering how the regular season went, I was wondering where all the penalties went tonight?**

MATT FLYNN: Where they went? (Laughter) I think we, through the course of the year, we became a smarter team, and we just -- you know, we started out the season and we did have a lot of penalties, a lot of miscommunication. We had a lot of young guys in there that hadn't played a ton of football. And there's a learning period that they go through where they just have to get some experience and just kind of know what to do.

But when we go to bowl practice, you know we have a couple of weeks to prepare. So we really -- when we start, we get back to the basics. We get back to learning how to play smart and Coach Miles and the coaching staff, they just really drove it into our heads that we need to play smart. And it's just controlled rage. You go out there, playing tough, flying around, but doing it in a smart way. And I think we just did a really good job of that. And like I said, this team just played smart and I think they've grown every week.

**Q. The entire country is watching. Two football states that you came from, Texas and Florida, yet you chose Louisiana, Baton Rouge, could you each talk about the decision to go to that place and what the people have meant to you?**

RICKY JEAN-FRANCOIS: I made my decision. I sat down with my parents, I told my friends I want to go to LSU just feeling that LSU was a great thing. I felt like I was home, even though I was a long way from home. It just felt like and I told my mom and my dad I want to go to LSU. And I wasn't taking no for an answer. I'm a stubborn person, too.

But I wanted to go to LSU from day one. We got one of the best football programs, one of the best track programs. And things did change like going to Baton Rouge and leaving. You leave the fast life, you go the slow life. Once that happened, it made me start thinking, like what's

around me. I have football, I have friends and people like family to me. I have education. They drug it in my head that education was a good key. Coming from LSU, get a degree, you have a great job further down the line.

MATT FLYNN: Growing up in Texas, I grew up in old Southwest Conference and Big 12 fan, so when I got in high school I saw my first SEC game. And it's just a different ball game. It's incredible the fans around it and just the atmosphere about it. So I knew I wanted to go to an SEC school. And I took a visit to LSU and I got there at night and I just stepped in the parking lot, looked at the stadium, just kind of gave me chills. I just knew this was the place I wanted to be.

I knew it was a program on the rise, a program that was going to surround me with quality people, quality coaching staff and just guys that I can make life-long friends with and play some really great football and play against the best teams. I mean, that's why you come to college. You want to play against the best and you want to be the best team.

And that was just one of the things that drew me to LSU.

THE MODERATOR: Matt and Ricky, thank you.

We'll continue on with Coach.

**Q. Coach, not only with the victory, but the large margin of victory that you guys had tonight, you send a message to any doubter out there that you are number one, end of sentence?**

COACH LES MILES: Well, I can only thank college football for the opportunity for the two teams to square off and have a definitive national champion. And certainly there will be some argument as to who's the best team.

But I think the national champion's been crowned tonight. And it was certainly a great game and two quality opponents, two quality teams. And we're fortunate, fortunate to be the national champions.

**Q. It seems that you've been labeled as a riverboat gambler and things like that. And when the fourth quarter was winding down, you went for it on 4th and 1, obviously to secure the win. Can you just talk about maybe the media's perception of you, the fans' perception of you as this gambler?**

COACH LES MILES: I don't know that I'm any riverboat gambler. I think it's a pretty safe

opportunity to go for less than a foot on any down. And we felt like we had opportunities. We felt like we could control the line of scrimmage on that spot. And eating the clock up at that point was certainly key. And keeping the ball and winding it down was -- we wanted to finish this thing, and that was just an opportunity for us to do that.

**Q. Coach, could you talk about the performance of Matt Flynn tonight? Obviously couldn't play in the SEC title game, what that meant to him to come out and have the performance he did against the nation's top defense and get MVP honors?**

COACH LES MILES: Matt Flynn really was healthy probably for the first time, fully healthy, in this game. His ankle bothered him right on through. He certainly -- you didn't see it, but we probably threw his brace away for bowl practice. As the shoulder got comfortable and better, he came to speed quickly. And then he was without any incident of injury going into this game.

What Flynn's meant to this team is he's a great leader, unbelievably competitive quarterback. And the guys rallied behind him. They really enjoy him being their quarterback. When you look at a guy that's showed the patience that he has to compete very effectively with JaMarcus Russell, a great quarterback, but yet wait his turn to play so that he could play on the championship team and have an opportunity to win a national championship, you know what a -- him, Glenn Dorsey, the character of this football team, pretty special.

**Q. Did you feel like the field goal was the turning point at least the key play in the game and did you all have anything special on there?**

COACH LES MILES: We pointed all week, really last two weeks, on pressuring their extra point field goals, and they've been susceptible in the past to block and we really -- our special teams coach really pointed at that throughout the bowl preparation. And Ricky Jean-Francois is a very talented guy. And we got a good push and he got a hand up and we got a hand on it. To me, that was a definite turning point. And the pick. The interception the first -- that really what amounts to two turnovers that Ohio State gave us and that allows us to get back in the game and tie the score.



So that was key.

**Q. Seemed like they were still moving the ball pretty well against you, and after that like the momentum turned, they didn't get much movement for a good while after that?**

COACH LES MILES: The truth of the matter is they busted a couple of plays early in some unbalanced formation. And we misaligned and weren't really gapped out. We just had a need to settle down. It's a big game. Relax and play football. And we felt like they could not throw the football against us for -- well enough to win the game, that they'd have to run it. And we felt like we'd eventually be able to turn that down as well.

I really think that those pieces helped us, obviously, win the game.

**Q. What was more stressful? Dealing with this game or dealing with the Michigan issue before the SEC game and does that seem like about a thousand years ago?**

COACH LES MILES: That seems a thousand years ago, to be honest with you. I can tell you that this game -- it's an interesting schedule. You get done with the championship game. You play Tennessee and you have five weeks, and you're really confronted with how to use the time.

There's so much said over time, every article that's written about every player, every scrutiny of offensive line versus defensive line, secondary versus receivers. And there's so much spoken and so much -- such a great shine on the game that you almost just have to step back and say, okay, now, guys, this is just, simply put, a football game. Put 11 guys on the field and you have a responsibility to do your job and your role. And I think you saw a little bit the way we started on defense that we weren't really just emotionally there yet.

But once we got there, I felt like the team performed pretty well.

**Q. Is this easier than the Michigan --**

COACH LES MILES: The Michigan thing was, it really -- it didn't compare. There will always be a wonderful place in my heart for Michigan. It's just that simple. It will never change. But there will also be an extremely warm spot in my heart for LSU. This very special season, this very special team.

And the ability to enjoy the position we're in in college football here at LSU, standing atop a great sport, very fortunate.

**Q. Two-pronged question for you. The difference in the title game last year seemingly was the push that Florida got up front. You seemed to get similar push especially as the game went on. You thought coming in, your front four was probably one of the biggest advantages you had. Can you talk about that? And the second part being can you talk about this is a statement for the SEC to come to this game and win impressively for the second consecutive year?**

COACH LES MILES: Certainly the matchup up front certainly was key. They have a talented defensive line and in my opinion a very talented offensive line.

So there were matchup issues both sides. I think certainly they won their share of battles. But as the game wore on, our defensive line stopped their run. Our offensive line allowed us to pass the football and run the football. So maybe the big guys had more influence on this game than maybe other spots.

But I can tell you this, the SEC is a very competitive league. It's not a league where you're just going to go into the league and have dominant games week after week after week, you're going to have play competitively, play from behind and take risks.

I think if that puts the SEC champion in a game like this with some comfort, down 10 -- like down 10, Matt Flynn, there's no panic in this team. Are you kidding me? We've been down 10 before. We understand how to play. This football team just finds a way and keeps on -- just like Ricky said, if you had been down 13, it wouldn't have made a difference. We would have got back in the game. It would have been that view. There was never a point in time were we felt like, one, that we couldn't throw the football to get back in the game, had they extended their lead, and then, two, we just knew we were going to hold their offense.

I mean, at some point in time they were not going to be able to throw the football effectively and/or rush the football well enough to beat us.

**Q. (Question off microphone)?**

COACH LES MILES: I can surely say that there are some great teams in college football.

Certainly there's great teams in the Big 12. Great teams in the Pac-10. Great teams in the Big Ten. But the way ACC, certainly any those conferences I have yet to mention -- don't want to get anybody mad at me already -- but the point is that in this conference, week after week, you're going to play quality coached, very talented teams and you're going to have to play your best.

And so I think it puts the champion of this conference in position to compete in a very competitive game like this with advantage.

**Q. When Coleman comes in and takes over for Steltz, he comes up with a huge hit on Chevis's interception then recovers a fumble. Is his play tonight a kind of microcosm on the season of how your second- and third-teamers have come in and contributed?**

COACH LES MILES: We're fortunate, when a guy gets injured we turn to the next guy in that room and expect him to go in there and uphold his responsibility to the team. It's what we expect from the position. And we've had that in a number of ways in this year, certainly at quarterback, Matt injured, replaced by Ryan Perrilloux. Really week after week when Early Doucet goes down, Early Doucet is not part of our team for about three or four weeks in the center of our season. It allows those young receivers to come on and play better and we win with those young receivers.

Yeah, it is. It's a great example of having a team that we play young players and we put them on the field and we put them on the field and they're coached and we expect them to win and they're talented. And that's the fortunate position to be in certainly at LSU. We have talented guys. Our team moves, if we lose a guy, we put the next guy in. We expect him to play well and he does.

**Q. Coach, this is sort of a follow-up on what you just talked about. Early in the year you're really growing people with your team healthy, Virginia Tech, Mississippi State, then you got banged up as the year went along. How much of today was kind of the result of you being able to get a little bit healthier and getting back to where you were close to the same team that played Virginia Tech early?**

COACH LES MILES: We really lost one guy for the year, and that was Charles Alexander. But, you're right, really considering after the Virginia Tech game, this was the healthiest we've been. And Ricky Jean-Francois really shows up the back end of the season in the Tennessee

game and then the national championship game. So that was an important acquisition to get him back in the back end of the season.

When you look at Glenn Dorsey playing fresh, he made a heck of a difference. He didn't come out of the game. He was in the game the whole time. He made big play after big play. If you look at Darry Beckwith, who was injured at times during the season -- if you look at our team, probably fastest and healthiest and most ready to play in this game.

**Q. Just to talk more about Ricky Jean, is what he's been able to overcome this year and being able to battle back from what he went through this regular season to be the MVP of the national title game?**

COACH LES MILES: We certainly knew he was coming back, ready to play for the SEC championship game. And certainly enjoyed that addition. I don't know that we would have had the success that we did in the championship game if he hadn't been a part of us.

And then with a game under his belt, he played in the title game in the conference with a game under his belt. He got in some shape finally and played extremely well in the national championship game against a very formidable opponent in Ohio State.

I can tell you this, Ricky Jean-Francois is an example of a guy that's going to do it right. He's going to get his degree. He's going to play great football, play championship football and he's got a lot of character and a lot of -- he's got a lot of the right stuff.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.

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