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LSU – 38
OSU – 24

An Interview With:

**OHIO STATE
COACH JIM TRESSEL
BEANIE WELLS
VERNON GHOLSTON**

THE MODERATOR: We'll open the press conference from head Coach Jim Tressel, then we'd like to take your questions for the players. After the players finish answering questions, then you can ask Coach Tressel with questions.

COACH JIM TRESSEL: Hats off to LSU. They did a great job preparing for this game. We said all along they're a very tough football team, a very mature football team. That's why they're the SEC champions, they're very deserving national champions. It was a clean, hard, tough football game. Our kids played hard to the bitter end, and we just didn't do the things that you need to do to win a ball game of this nature.

But we're awfully proud of our 2007 Ohio State Buckeyes, and we are very aware that LSU is a deserving champion.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Vernon, what were they doing offensively, they were moving the ball at will, it seemed like. What were they able to do against you?

VERNON GHOLSTON: Nothing in particular, nothing we didn't prepare for or we didn't see. It was just a matter of us executing. Some days we do and today wasn't the day for us to execute well. We didn't execute well.

Q. Beanie, you ended up with the record for most yards by a sophomore running back in Ohio State history. Number one, does that mean anything to you at this point? And, number two, your opening run, 65 yards, what did you see there and did you think you guys were off to the races at that point?

BEANIE WELLS: First, to the first question, it doesn't mean anything to me. For that you have to give credit to the offensive line. But today's not the day to dwell on that.

As you can see, we took a loss today. It's unbelievable.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

BEANIE WELLS: Offensive line did a tremendous job blocking. I give them all the credit in the world. They make the holes. I just run through them.

Q. Vernon, all year you guys have been successful in getting guys 3 and out, and today you weren't successful doing that. LSU went through a stretch of eight and nine they converted eight of nine 3rd down conversions in the first half. Can you talk about what was different today against the rest of the season?

VERNON GHOLSTON: 3rd down is the biggest down in football to me. Biggest thing, they executed well. It always goes back to execution. It was situations where we had a chance to get off the field and we didn't do that, not because their scheme was great or they were faster, it was just simply execution.

Q. Vernon, this is the second year in a row that you guys got off to a quick start. Do you think it affects the way the defense plays, overconfident?

VERNON GHOLSTON: If anything we learned from last year that it was going to be a 60-minute game, but obviously that wasn't the case. But get off to a good start. Maybe LSU was

a little slow getting out of their start, but either way, we knew it was going to be a 60-minute ball game and we didn't carry out through the whole game.

Q. Beanie, you all got the lead early, thanks in part to a lot of big plays, but you were never able to really sustain long drives the way you all have most of the season, why was that?

BEANIE WELLS: The main thing today was we didn't execute. We talked about that all week, execution. When you make mistakes, you don't execute, it's going to be hard to win a football game.

Q. Jim, you guys had a couple of personal foul penalties, probably more penalties than you're used to. Do you think you guys lost your composure at any point today?

COACH JIM TRESSEL: I don't know about that. I think one of the ones over on the sidelines was just guys running hard to the ball and maybe one of those -- I think the other one was -- I don't know if it was any vicious thing or loss of composure or anything like that.

That was a tough football game and it was very demanding and I'm sure there were moments where we weren't perfectly on cue as we should be and I'm sure there were moments that LSU felt like they lost their equilibrium, if you will.

But, no, I don't think we ever lost our composure.

Q. Chris, you talked all season like a rallying cry to get back to this point and prove to the country that what happened last year was a fluke. Considering that and what happened tonight, how much does it hurt considering all those?

BEANIE WELLS: It hurt tremendously. I mean, the pain, you really can't compare it to anything. To go to the national championship twice and lose, I mean, it's incredible.

Q. Vernon, their tight end sneaked out wide open several times. Did you all talk about that at half time and stuff and it still bit you all in the second half? What were they getting done there?

VERNON GHOLSTON: I mean, I can't really explain it any more than execution. We have a defense call. 11 guys got assignments. And simply put somebody just didn't do their assignment.

Q. Did this feel any differently than last year, or does it feel just the same? Seemed like you guys obviously came out this year with a little more fire and intensity at least early?

VERNON GHOLSTON: I would say obviously we've been in this situation before. We know what it takes -- not necessarily what it takes, but what is going to be at stake with a national championship game. And going back to last year and with this year being -- having a chance to get back, we just simply didn't do what needed to be done to win the game.

THE MODERATOR: Yes, thank you very much for your time.

We'll take questions for Coach Tressel.

Q. Jim, following up what the guy asked earlier, they got the tight end open two or three times in the red zone, wide open, what did you see on those?

COACH JIM TRESSEL: I'm sure one of two things happened. One, it was a misdirection pass, I think, in both cases, reaction of the play. And our guys love to pursue to the ball. And the tight end leaked back away from it.

I can't tell you that I know if it was a man defense or a zone defense where backside zone defender was just pursuing what he thought was a run play. But in either case, those were well-conceived and well-executed. And those were good football plays and we didn't stop it.

Q. Coach, at the end of the first quarter, Austin Spitler, Spitler fell -- he seemed to fall on top of a muffed punt but he didn't come up with it and then the missed block punt later on, did you say anything to him after that, just maybe boost him around? What do you say to a guy after that?

COACH JIM TRESSEL: What we say to all of our guys that we're coaching them is you evaluate effort first and foremost, and Austin Spitler gives great effort. And those are the types of things that you're inches away from maybe turning a tide in a ball game, whether it's recovering a muffed punt or blocking a punt.

But we didn't do it. But what I appreciate is all of what we didn't do had nothing to do with effort. Our kids played hard. LSU played hard. LSU made less mistakes than we did. The one mistake we did force kind of got us back into the

flow of the game, but then we couldn't capitalize to bring it even closer. But our kids played hard. And pretty proud of what they did in 2007.

Q. What will you say to the team to turn this into a positive and how will it be different from last year at this point?

COACH JIM TRESSEL: Oh, you know, we talked to the team, of course, already. Told them we appreciated their effort and that just a difficult situation when you go into a ball game and you don't win it. But just like anything else, I'm sure there will be some X and O things that we learned from it.

There will be some things outside of Xs and Os that we'll learn from it. But just like any experience, you have to look at the facts so you've got to evaluate the film and all those things. But for the moment we probably won't jump right on that, quite honestly. These kids have been at it since August the 1st and given up a lot.

Time and effort and they're going to head back to campus and go to school and we'll figure out how we're going to use this to help us probably down the road.

Q. On the blocked field goal attempt, did it look like they just got good penetration there, or was the ball mis-hit?

COACH JIM TRESSEL: From my vantage point, looked like they penetrated well, got into our back field a little bit. And it was not a high kick. It wasn't -- so I would guess -- and I'd have to see the film, play it slow and all that stuff. But I would guess it would be a little bit of a combination of both. They did a good job pulling one of our linemen. And we always tell them you can't allow yourself to get pulled. But did a good job pulling a lineman and somebody penetrated and got their hand up. And those are big plays.

You saw in the bowl games all two or three weeks long that a blocked field goal here or a roughing the punter there or something like a penalty here or there, those are the things that separate the teams that win big games like bowl games and championship games and those that don't.

Q. Coach, what was your reaction to the penalties on your team tonight, especially the back-to-back penalties on that opening drive of the second half, with the roughing the kicker and then the personal foul?

COACH JIM TRESSEL: Well, roughing the kicker, you know, we were going after their punt. And our guy did a great job. He was right there.

You know, it was just one of those things. Kind of went right by the ball. And so how do you react to that? I guess the first thing as a coach, you think to yourself maybe we should have been in punt safe, maybe we shouldn't have been rushing. That's your first self-evaluation.

Then the personal foul a little bit later, you know, again, I didn't think it was an intentional loss of composure, those kinds of things. Although, I wasn't watching right on the spot. But how do you react to it? You get ready to play the next play.

Q. Your offense faced a lot of big plays by LSU's defense. Which among the big plays do you think was the biggest?

COACH JIM TRESSEL: Our offensive faced a lot of big plays? What do you mean by that?

Q. Well, LSU made a lot of big plays on defense.

COACH JIM TRESSEL: Any time we turn it over, that's a big play for LSU's defense. So I'd say those are the biggest ones, when we turn the football over, because obviously whether it was a fumble or an interception or whatever it happens to be, those are the biggest detrimental plays to your offense and the biggest big plays for your defense.

Q. There was a time in the game when Craig Steltz, all-American safety, goes out of the game. They bring the back-up in, and he turns two blitzes into big plays for them. Is that something you as a coach you even kind of think about or prepare for?

COACH JIM TRESSEL: Well, it wasn't any different blitzes than Craig runs. He runs the same schemes. And I don't know if Bo ran those blitzes because Craig was out, or I doubt it. But they have good players. Their top back-ups are very, very good players, too.

Q. Looked like your quarterback had to stand up through a lot of tough shots. I wonder if you could talk about that. Took a lot of big hits on those blitzes, too?

COACH JIM TRESSEL: Our quarterback, I don't know how many times he went back to pass

and that type of thing. But LSU is a good pressure defense. If you watch the film all year long, they did a good job putting pressure on quarterbacks, and that's why they won the SEC and were here. But Todd's a tough kid. And he had a couple of throws I'm sure he wishes he had back and maybe held onto the ball once or twice when maybe he needed to throw it away.

But a young guy, you know, in his first prime time championship or bowl game or whatever. Todd hung in there.

Q. Coach, a lot's already been said about the defense maybe not executing as well as you would have liked. On the flip side, and I know sometimes you have to go back and evaluate that, when LSU was on offense, was there anything that you thought that they did that was especially effective against you guys and what did you think about their running game? I know they kind of spread it a little bit. It wasn't just Hester. Was there anything that you thought was especially effective that they did?

COACH JIM TRESSEL: Well, what I liked all along studying LSU is the fact that they can hit you in so many different ways. They can spray it out to their receivers. They throw it to their tight ends. They run speed sweeps. They run the option a little bit.

You know, they give you so much to prepare for, and were a mature group in that they could execute all of those various things that they give you. Lots of different formations and sets. And Gary does a great job with that stuff. And they give you a lot of problems.

Q. Jim, I want to take you back to the second quarter. Did that just seem like a quarter that was a nightmare, a bad dream that wasn't going to end, didn't seem like you guys had anything to go right in that quarter?

COACH JIM TRESSEL: You know, we got off to that lead and then they fought back, which you knew they would. But then still we were hanging in there. Drove it right down and I think the field goal block was when it was 10-10. And we could have -- you're not always going to get touchdowns in the red zone. If we could have attacked on another field goal, that type of thing.

But as you say, that was a quarter where we certainly won't make a highlight reel of. We didn't do the things that we would sure like to think we could do. But, you know, again, your opponent

has something to do with it when you don't execute.

I hope no one gets the idea that I'm discounting the fact that LSU played very well and deserves their recognition.

Q. Could you talk about Beanie's start and did you guys have to at any time get away from the game plan of running him?

COACH JIM TRESSEL: You know, I thought that Beanie is the kind of guy that he loves to pound it in there. And he can really seize the tempo of a game.

I think where we did lose a little bit was LSU did such a nice job of keeping the football and didn't seem like we had as many possessions as you'd like to have in that first half, especially.

So when you get behind, it does change your game plan a little. Not dramatically. But they did a good job of playing with their front and bringing people on blitzes and so forth, which sometimes when you overload the box it's tough, I don't care how good your back is. You're not going to be able to gain yards if there's more people than you can block.

But Beanie Wells is a special player and I'd like to think he's one of the best backs in the country.

Q. Jim, your team endured a tremendous amount of backlash from last year's title game loss. With so many of these guys coming back for next season, how concerned are you about possibly having to go through that again for another 12 months?

COACH JIM TRESSEL: Backlash meaning? You mean the disappointment of a loss? I worry about disappointment because I know how hard these kids work. I don't worry too much about criticism because if you're not tough enough to handle criticism, then you better get out of this game, because there's a whole lot of people that have interest in this game. And there's a whole lot of people that don't really have much understanding of what it takes to be good at this game but yet love to have opinions.

If you struggle taking criticism, then you need to not be at Ohio State or not be playing the game of football.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you for your time.

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