

**September 3, 2013**

An interview with:

## **COACH MILES**

COACH MILES: Glad to be back in Tiger Stadium. Our guys played best Saturday night in Tiger Stadium. I can tell you, if I'm visiting or I'm going to be a ticket holder in that game, I would notice the new renovations. I think the place looks great.

It felt like a home game in Dallas. Our friends in our group traveled well. There was much more enthusiasm and noise in that stadium for the Tigers than the opponent. We enjoyed it greatly. Nice to walk into a facility where you've had success. It's nice to be 3-0 in any big-time venue.

TCU was a very good football team, well-coached. Certainly played well in the opener. Great showing for themselves. It felt like the offense certainly showed balance, and the ability to throw it. We threw for 250 and rushed it for 200. Had two receivers over 100 yards in receiving yards and two backs very close to a hundred yards in rushing. That's what we needed to see.

I was pleased with Zach Mettenberger. I felt like his decisions were very good. He threw several balls away. He was about 80% in his accuracy, and those balls that might well have been caught, and those balls that were thrown away were factored in. So certainly the thing that we've got to avoid is that turnover down deep in our own territory. If we don't do that, it makes that offensive day a very strong one.

Defensively, they gave up 249 yards that defense looked awfully physical to me, very fast to the ball. Looks like that defensive front will be very much what we're used to at LSU. It will be the same style of defense that we've had for years. Had a couple of missed tackles, but all in all, as an opener, I thought the defense played extremely well.

The special teams, Colby Delahoussaye, three for three in field goals in his opener and perfect in extra points. Nice return by Odell Beckham late in the game to give us a lift and to

assist in the final touchdown, but we need not to give up a kickoff for a touchdown and improve there.

If you look at our team, if we improve our tackling, we minimize some of the penalties. We don't turn the ball over. It could have been a much different game, and that's our push. The need to improve is the key to this football team, and really the key to any team that's ambitious about its future.

Our opponent that will open home play against UAB has had success in that stadium in the year 2000, they beat the Tigers, and we recognize that. They have a very quality coach in Garrick McGee. He's an offensive coordinator at Arkansas and very, very talented guy, so he'll certainly have them ready. They have the quarterback throw for 300 yards and three touchdowns. They play two quarterbacks, and we expect to see very good quarterback play.

They have a running back that got 110 yards in their opener, and a receiver, Jamarcus Nelson who caught ten balls for 200 yards against Troy. So they have a veteran defense. Eight juniors return, eight starters, and a very good scheme. They'll mix it up on you.

But we look forward to being in Tiger Stadium. We have the need to improve and I think his team is going to be ambitious. So, questions.

**Q. Noting the production from Landry and Beckham, also the need for a third and fourth receiver in this offense, do you feel that's key moving forward?**

COACH MILES: Yeah, I think that we'll have those guys step forward. I like Diarse, I like Boone, I like Travin Dural. I think those guys are guys that will step to the front several of those guys had catches on the day. I suspect that that will continue.

**Q. Along those same lines, getting tight ends more involved throwing the ball to the backs, is that another phase coming for this offense?**

COACH MILES: Eventually, you'll find that there will be a consciousness that our opponents will develop that will require us to hit balls in the

underneath coverage. That is certainly something that we're working on as we go.

**Q. Can you give us updates on Taj Jones and Travis Dickson?**

COACH MILES: Both guys would appear to be ready to play in this game, so we're looking forward to their return.

**Q. And the snaps that DeSean Smith was getting at tight end, are those Travis Dickson's snaps or do you think he continues to factor in as a freshman?**

COACH MILES: I think that he'll play some, but I think as Travis gets back in the groove, I think that some of those snaps will be his.

**Q. (Indiscernible)?**

COACH MILES: We had to get the ball on the 9 or the 10, and the opportunity to pick up first downs just didn't seem to materialize. We spent a lot of time in that tight red zone. We didn't execute that into the game plan. Certainly we'll spend more time on it and see if we can get it fixed.

**Q. Does Garrick McGee's offense at UAB look anything like when he was at Arkansas? Can you draw anything from game planning against him when he was there for this game?**

COACH MILES: Well, I think that he will do some of the same things that he did at Arkansas. Certainly it appears that way on film. The advantage that he has, he has some awareness having played against us before. I'm sure he'll do a great job game planning, and I think that we can look forward to being challenged that way.

**Q. I'm curious, what was Cam Cameron's reaction to the game? What was your conversation like following the next day when you went over things?**

COACH MILES: He certainly enjoyed the experience of taking the field with the Tigers. I can tell you that he expected the things that we did that we would do and kind of felt like you know maybe there are some things that we haven't quite accomplished yet that we're really just kind of getting started.

**Q. I keep following up questions with ones that fit. So as far as the offense, how much more do you want to see throwing the**

**ball on first down? How important do you think that's going to be moving forward?**

COACH MILES: Well, there is a very strong need to be balanced, and the balanced throws that are on neutral bounds puts a defense in a really difficult position. They have to defend both the run and the pass, which is really exactly what we want to have happen.

**Q. So concerns about the linebackers at all or did you think the scheme from TCU neutralized them and took them out of things a little bit?**

COACH MILES: No, I felt like our linebacking play was good. I think it will be better with Tajh back. I think that's a very, very talented group that will play for us, and they'll get nothing but better.

**Q. I know you don't put too much stock into rankings especially this early. But LSU back in the Top 10, number nine in the AP. Could you share some thoughts there?**

COACH MILES: Yeah, again, it's certainly a compliment to those things that have gone on here in the past. I can tell you that our football team, I haven't seen the ranking. I didn't know it existed. I didn't know what the ranking would be. I think that our guys understand that it's really just taking care of business.

We play the style of schedule that if we handle it one game at a time and just really kind of focus on improving and winning, that we can kind of put ourselves where we need to be.

But, yeah, I think our guys enjoy being ranked highly. I think that they aspire to finish that way, and that ranking would coincide with what is ourself image.

**Q. Coach, does Jeremy Hill figure in the game plan this week?**

COACH MILES: I will tell you that as he figures in or not really is kind of how the week unfolds. We look forward to playing him just as soon as he's ready.

**Q. Along those lines with the running backs, how do you assess blues rough start to the season? You just, going forward, you kind of go with the hottest back and give it to him or you kind of play with the depth chart a little bit?**

COACH MILES: Well, we really were

pleased by all three backs that played in the game, including Hilliard. But we're fortunate to have guys that can play and play at a very high level. You know, it's important that you're fresh. It's important that guys can get yards after contact.

Again, we're not making any determination of who starts and who doesn't at this point. I think Alfred Blue certainly would be deserving yet again. But, again, we'll -- the opportunity to play the best back in the best situation for us to have victory is really what we're going to do.

**Q. Coach, a win is a win is a win. But by your own admission, you made it harder for yourselves because roughing the passer would have been a punt and a fumble on the 6-yard line. I know for first game those things are to be expected, but would you comment on that?**

COACH MILES: Yeah, that drive, the roughing the passer happened to take place to extend a drive. It was a third down incompleteness, roughing the passer, and that extent cost us 7 points. If you talk about the kickoff return, frankly, that's something that our guys know better and we'll have corrected that very quickly. Really worked on it already on Monday. Then to fumble the football coming out of your own end zone, those are three things that you just can't have.

So, again, if you make that point and this team listens, which they will, that's 21 points or thereabouts. It's a very significant difference in that game.

**Q. When you talk about offensive line, you hear words like chemistry, cohesive, stuff like that. The fact that these guys have moved to different positions and it's kind of a brand-new combination, now that you've looked at the film, what did you see and how did each of the guys grade?**

COACH MILES: I was really pleased considering that I don't think a guy took -- except for Trai, Trai Turner was the guy that started some games at right guard. I don't think eight guys started for us a year ago besides Trai. And I really felt like they played well. I felt like the right side with Trai and Hawkins both gave us a tremendous strong side, if you will. I think that La'el Collins who incidentally was named the SEC offensive lineman of the week and moving the Sandolph into the guard, I really felt like those guys were really strong.

Then our center spot, Elliott Porter, is becoming a guy that really communicates, really

understands the scheme, and really does his job extremely well.

**Q. Did you give those guys a grade?**

COACH MILES: We really grade effort and those things. Nothing specific to be honest with you. I can tell you that La'el Collins had a very physical day. He was extremely good.

**Q. As you watch the game as it unfolded and you watched Mettenberger perform, what did you like about what he did specifically and in detail, what did you see him doing that really gladdened your heart?**

COACH MILES: Well, the first play he kind of makes a quick flip of the ball and get it's to Travin Dural. That was the first one that I really specifically noticed that was a third-down conversion. When you're a quarterback and your team, especially throwing the football, is, I want to say 13 -- excuse me -- 13 of 19 on third downs -- I think that is the statistic -- it just lets you know that the quarterback is understanding the calls and making the plays. Obviously, the receivers are getting open.

The one thing Zach appears to me to have is a greater tempo. Understands what he's responsible to do in terms of coordinating the style of play and the motion and the adjustment there after. Understands the cadence and really is getting to play faster.

I think his contribution is very significant and much improved.

**Q. Coach, you played eight true freshmen on Saturday, coming up these next two games, how many more could we see playing time, and who are some that didn't get in the game Saturday that you think can make an impact these next two games?**

COACH MILES: Well, I think Tre'Davious White will play, continue to play a significant role for us. I can see in the future Rickey Jefferson playing significant football. Lewis Neal, Bower, I think those guys will all be guys that you'll see on the field. So we're not done exposing our freshmen just yet. I think you can look forward to seeing Brazil and Anthony -- Anthony Jennings should certainly have played a little bit more than one snap, we think.

**Q. Schematically, just what you were**

**doing on offense, a lot of people think of as dramatically different. Do you share that belief or do you think it was just different in the way that your guys just executed a lot of the same stuff with a lot more confidence?**

COACH MILES: No, I think that there are some similarities there to what we've done in the past. But I can tell you that the view of the call and the strategic timing of the call and the confidence of the offense to execute, I think all those things are much improved. I think Cam's done a great job to start.

Again, it's one game and we've got some work to do. But we'd like to think we can be better than that.

**Q. When you say you'd like to play Jeremy when he's ready, is that an indication the discipline is over and he's getting into game shape and getting ready?**

COACH MILES: We'll put him on the field, I guess I should say, when we're ready. I think he's coming. I think his time is in front of us.

**Q. Coach, you all ran an up-tempo offense early in the game. It kind of seemed to abandon it a little later. Was there any specific reason for that or is that something you look to do at different times in the game moving forward?**

COACH MILES: We had several up-tempo opportunities that you might not have even recognized in the fact that we snapped the ball just a little before the opponent was ready. So I think that's not something that we abandoned in anyway. I think again you use it to your advantage. I think you sprinkle it in.

The change of tempo, in my opinion, the change of pace is always much more effective than a constant, even faster pace.

**Q. Was Anthony Johnson shaken up in the game? Is he going to be all right?**

COACH MILES: Yeah, he's fine.

**Q. Just given Terrence performance, you mentioned it Saturday and him being a program guy and biding his time, what can you do Saturday to flush out a greater role here? I know in the past you typically ride the hot hand with running backs, but what can he do?**

COACH MILES: Which back are you talking about?

**Q. Terrence Magee?**

COACH MILES: Magee? I think he's, again, I think he's a talented guy. I think he's a guy that we look forward to expanding a role for. There is some style of things that he does. He does extremely well. We're going to continue to call his number for those. But, yeah, we're very pleased with his approach to football and how he performs on Saturday.

**Q. Micah Eugene and Dwight Thomas worked as your fifth and sixth DBs. What did you see from them and who are pushing them, freshmen or guys behind them?**

COACH MILES: I like both of those guys. I think Micah Eugene is one of those very physical guys that has real ability to play in a number of spots. I don't know that there's people pushing him necessarily as much that we're really kind of deciding where he needs to be for us. Dwight Thomas is coming. He's a young corner, but is a physical player and has confidence. So, again, I have no issues with those guys at all.

**Q. Going into the season there was a lot of stress among fans about the high number of underclassmen that entered the draft last year and how are these guys going to be replaced and the lack of experience supposedly of the players that were replacing them. How would you assess as a group the individuals, the players that replaced all of those underclassmen that left for the draft?**

COACH MILES: I like our team. I think there is a culture in that room of work ethic, and even though guys like Jordan Allen have not played very significantly to this point, he was constantly improving. He was getting bigger, faster and stronger. When you had the opportunity to call his name, he would be ready.

Jermauria Rasco played last year, certainly. Was not necessarily the starter, but a guy that knows how to play and is very functional in our scheme, ego. And Anthony Johnson were both guys that played a ton of football a year ago. I guess what I'm saying is I do understand the anxiety of graduating or losing, I should say, 11 guys that were starters to our team.

But this is LSU. We recruit quality players. We put them in a position that they can learn, learn quickly. If they're talented enough, we get them to the field. And those guys that are biding their time,

and not necessarily waiting, but developing, what ends up being a delayed approach to the field -- when they get to the field, they're ready to play. We have no problem with that. We look forward to those guys and those linebackers and those defensive ends that didn't quite know about. They're good players.

**Q. After you played Oregon two years ago, you talked about how it helped your focus playing such a good team to start. Obviously, there is a risk in playing ranked teams to start the season. Do you feel that playing, now that you're past them, it's worth the risk to play UAB at TCU? Do you feel like you see some benefits from having played a tough team to start the season?**

COACH MILES: Yeah, I think that any time you start the season with a very quality opponent, it requires your level of execution to step up. There is an immediate pressure, if you will, on the program to say, okay, it's not only get ready. It's get ready to play at a very high level. We've enjoyed it. It certainly has worked out for us, and we'll -- it's interesting with the scheduling the way it is and the conference the way that it's being maneuvered for TV, it will be interesting to see if anybody would want to take those games on with a nine-game SEC schedule. It just becomes a much lesser opportunity to do that.

**Q. What did you make of the performances of J.C. Copeland and Connor Neighbors?**

COACH MILES: I liked both my fullbacks. I thought both guys came in there and gave us what we needed. I think Connor Neighbors was in there for a couple of the key blocks in the game. Of course, J.C. scores a touchdown, so it's -- I like both of them. I think that they'll continue to play very significant football together.

**Q. Much has been made about you and Cam and calling the plays and everything. What was it like to go through the first game? Were there any awkward moments? Just give the fans some insight to that.**

COACH MILES: Any awkward moments (laughing)? There are always awkward moments. We're down in our own red zone and we decided to change personnel to make the call. That was an awkward moment, okay.

Those things happen. Those things are all part of it. There is no -- I enjoy the working relationship as well as the personal one.

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