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An Interview With:

COACH LES MILES

COACH MILES: 41 past LSU players that are on active rosters in the NFL. I happened to notice that Alfred Blue blocked a punt and scooped and scored and how wonderful that is.

So again, when went to Houston, Old Blue stopped by the hotel room in the stadium to see the coaches and the players. It's wonderful to see those guys having success. Saturday night in Tiger Stadium was very special. Felt like the crowd was just what we wanted it to be.

When you walk into that stadium, and now you enter it with two huge JumboTrons, the decibel level cranked up about ten notches. It's always been special and it's spectacular now. Again it's a magnificent site.

Sam Houston, we respected Sam Houston and we recognized that they had athletes and we recognized that they had guys that transferred in from very quality Division I schools. We recognized that they had the ability to play us in a very tight football game and our team came out and answered that and played with the style of enthusiasm and intensity that they needed to play in and play well.

So I thought all three phases at times played very dominant football. We played what was 16 true freshmen, four freshmen scored touchdowns, our top two rushers were freshmen, and the freshmen accounted for six passes and two sacks and 17 tackles.

So it was a productive night for the youth of our football team. Felt like the growth that needed to take place there certainly is being done.

As soon as you get a young guy on the field and you have him have on-field in-game experiences, it drives home the teaching point that you have in an every-week practice schedule. In other words, you teach to the specifics of alignment and assignment and all those things, but until they have to translate that on the field and into pressure in front of the stadium and a television audience, it takes some time.

This was a game where a lot of our youth came to grow up. So offensively, again, thought it was a very solid effort. You're looking at an offense that started the game with a 94-yard pass completion and I'm told that that is a record.

The Jennings to Darrel pass is the longest pass reception for a touchdown in Tiger Stadium, and really we scored the first five possessions, seven-pointers. And I really felt like Anthony Jennings managed the game well and did things. Still certainly is not perfect by any stretch. Has to continue to develop. Needs that approach. But he did a good job, and no turnovers, which to me is a key piece to the offense.

Offensive line played better. We played a number of guys. It was kind of nice to see young Andy Dodd play a very role to center spot. Our center, Ethan Pocic, got a little nicked, and good news is he will return this week. But Andy got a half and that was really good for him, certainly good for us to see him respond that way.

Running backs ran hard. We ran for 334 yards, four touchdowns and Darrel's three catches were all for touchdowns. A nice outing offensively. Defensively they came in averaging 43 points and 600 yards of total offense. They ended up leaving with 206 total yards, 50 rushing and 156 passing, seven sacks and three turnovers, a total of 206 yards. It was the first shutout since 2010 and it's a scoreless streak of 19 possessions in 85 minutes of game time.

So if we can maintain that defensive perspective as we go forward, that's certainly the goal.

Special teams, in my opinion has the ability to play elite, and Jamie Keehn is averaging 43.8 net. He had three inside the 20 down, and with Domingue and Gamble kicking off for us, I think it provides us with a different style and yet a challenge to any return team.

So ULM, they are 2-0. They played a very capable Wake Forest team and a very capable Idaho team. I watched that film when we got it and I can tell you that Todd Berry is doing a great job there. They are athletic. They are very capable.



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If you look back not too long ago, they beat our Arkansas team that was nationally ranked and several years ago, the Monroe team beat Alabama. We are so warned and we recognize and respect that opponent. We will prepare for their best efforts.

Centarius Donald is a running back that's averaging 114 yards a carry and looks to me to be very athletic. The quarterback is completing 55 percent of his passes for 575 yards and two touchdowns. They have two very talented receivers in Jackson and Holley. Again, guys that are catching and receiving balls at 180, 190 yards per contest.

So we recognize that they have the ability to score. They are allowing 20.5 points per game, 268 yards, a very talented defense, very athletic. They play a number of linebackers and they play them in a number of spots. They play over the top and they are a very quality secondary so that they are not giving up big plays. Very respectful of the defense.

The defense has played a lot of good football for years and we recognize and again need to prepare well. They have given up -- teams that have faced that defense have given up ten sacks and certainly that's something that we need to make sure that we are prepared to handle.

Again, quality opponent. We need to prepare well. We're not where we need to be. We have ambition. We're not there. We're not ready to play our best opponents, but this is a very quality one and it will be a great challenge for us. Hopefully we'll improve and play well in this one. Looking forward to getting back to Tiger Stadium, what a magnificent place to be.

Q. Seems like you've got a another good football team. However, trouble is, everybody else looks like they are pretty good, too. And as Shakespeare wrote in Hamlet, "Ah, there's the rub." Whatever team you play that you won on Saturday, some by large margins. Would you comment on that, please?

COACH MILES: I'm really not familiar with the team that Shakespeare coaches. I do know that he's a talented author and playwright, but I'm going to have to review back and see exactly where he comes on the schedule because I have concern.

I can tell you that our football team -- Ted, you make a great observation, seemed to handle the challenge that's before them.

As we go forward, we're going to play very, very quality teams, including this Saturday and Tiger Stadium. We have to improve, and if there's any question about it, the youth of our team needs to grow up and they need to understand the things that they do in practice makes a difference in what they do on Saturdays. They have.

The one thing that's really interesting about this team, they practice well. They are improving daily and to me, that's the thing that I have to do is to make sure that that continues. That continues, we may be not only a pretty good team today but we may be good enough later, too.

So we'll find out, see how it goes this Saturday. Thanks, Ted.

Q. Who is going to start at center on Saturday?

COACH MILES: That would be Matt Elliot -- Matt Elliot. Matt Elliot is an old guy I coached. Porter.

Q. Porter will be back?

COACH MILES: Porter will be back.

Q. Darrel Williams, how much can he factor in and what are the advantages of playing him and Kenny down at fullback sometimes?

COACH MILES: Our four tailbacks are big, strong physical guys and they run hard. They are talented, and then we are going to have to find some athletic things for them to do at fullback, as well: Catch balls, some blocking assignments, as well as rushing the ball. Good group.

Q. I don't know anything about shakes peer, either. Ted is way deeper than the rest of us. Your defensive backs, it's a good problem to have in you're a coach, but Jefferson and Thomas, guys that are making plays, how tough is it to keep those guys off the field more? Like I said it's a good problem to have when you have too much back there.

COACH MILES: I think we're talented in the secondary. I think our guys, again, as talented as they are, as much as they need to learn. It's always that adjustment that needs to be perfected and always that technique that they need to improve upon, and as long as they are doing that, we won't have any problem playing the best players and getting them on the field. But again,

there's development that needs to take place there.

Q. With Gamble and Domingue, I don't know if you've had guys that consistently could kick the ball out of the end zone every time you wanted them to. How much does that effect or change the way you think about what you want to do on kickoffs?

COACH MILES: Well, I think it's certainly a good thing. I think it really takes the rhythm of return away from our opponent.

I also think that it's one of the things that we really enjoy doing. We like covering kicks and we like making tackles. So we're giving thought to, well, we'll kick it out some and when we don't want to kick it out, we'll drop it on the five-yard line with great hang time and we'll see if we can go down there and pin them inside the 20.

So it's, again, we have the ability to be elite there. We just need to make sure that we use all the strategy to our advantage.

Q. We didn't see Alexander very much, maybe played the first couple series. What's his status?

COACH MILES: He's going to be fine for this game. We didn't feel like we needed to play him. He got nicked early in the going, and we decided to keep him out. It's not an ankle, it's not this. He was bruised up a little bit and we feel like with some quiet time, he'll be fine.

Q. And Connor Neighbors seemed to be playing with a big club on his hand and maybe got hurt in the second quarter. Could you update us?

COACH MILES: Yeah, he had a very difficult time catching the ball with that club on his hand.

So I would think that -- what that was was a little wrist sprain. That will be replaced by very mobile and agile hand for this next Saturday. His injuries other than that are improved and we would expect him to play and start.

Q. You mentioned how well this team practices. How much of that is related to how competitive things are at so many positions across this team, and then specifically at wide receiver once you get past Darrel, what is the difference between all those other guys that seem to be moving up and down the depth chart and whether they get in?

COACH MILES: I think competition at positions really allow for the competitiveness and I think that everybody wants their opportunity. If you think of a very talented football team, the opportunity to be the 11th guy on that team and on that play, gets to experience some very special things.

He just has to live up to his end of the bargain and I think that's really part of the motivation, as well. In other words, everybody wants to add their skills and talents to this. I think that is creating, not only is competition an issue, but the want to add their talents to this team.

At wide receiver, I think you look at Darrel, Quinn and Diarse s maybe the three, and very quickly thereafter, Malachi Dupre, Chark, and others. So we're coming, again, it's one much those positions where age and experience is very significant.

Again, we have some guys -- we had a freshman quarterback throw to a freshman wide receiver for a touchdown; that's a good thing.

Q. There's a growing discussion in college football that maybe the schools in the big five conferences should just play non-conference games against each other and then you have a game like this where there's an in-state opponent and there's been a commitment to play at least one game against an in-state opponent. What's your feeling about that?

COACH MILES: I think any time you say yes and no to a question like that, yeah, we should only play those kind of teams, I think it's a mistake. Because what it does is it gives a college football reference a little variety and as an example, if you were to ask Arkansas and Alabama if they necessarily needed to play Monroe beyond having played them, I would guess both would say no, no, we need to play them again, because they got us that time.

And so the experience of a competitive game, it's not necessarily restricted to the Top-5 conferences. I think you find Wake Forest, a number of ballclubs, that are in a position to play a lot of real quality football in a -- I'd like to play LSU or I'd like to play one of the teams in the ACC or one of the teams in the Big Ten Conference.

In any event, I think the freedom there is a quality thing for college football. If you're a Troy State fan and alumnus, how wonderful would it be

to see them play some other clubs. I tell you, Troy came into our stadium as you remember not too long ago, and we had to come roaring from behind to get victory.

The point that I'm making to you is, don't be so limited in scope that you just say, no, this is the only way it should go. I promise you, the youth in football in America, they are a lot more talented than you think.

Q. Malachi Dupre, is he completely healthy? I know he had been having a nagging hamstring or a sprained ankle. You've developed three pretty good receivers in the first couple games. Where does he fit in with his skill set and how you guys can use him going into SEC play?

COACH MILES: Well, I think there's no question that his skill set fits in very well, tall, athletic, explosive, great ball skills. We're going to have to get him on to the field. And he feels much healthier than he's felt.

Q. ULM's quarterback has bounced around a lot. How much of that previous tape do you go after to find out what that guy can do, and do you have a good handle of what their offense is capable of, since they switched over from a really talented quarterback just four years ago for the last four years?

COACH MILES: Yeah, we think that there's a very quality skill set there. We think that they are very athletic and have good speed. So, yeah, we're preparing for their best. Again, we're going to respect this opponent and play them with our best efforts.

Q. You had talked about Clifton Garrett being somebody that would play as a freshman and we haven't seen him in a couple of games. Does he have an injury?

COACH MILES: We expect that he'll play a good portion the remainder of the time. We think that -- he came in a little bit -- needed an adjustment period with the weather and the heat here, and once he got his feet underneath him, he's really improved and we would expect that he play not only this Saturday but Saturdays as we go forward.

Q. I know it's only been two games, but Anthony Jennings -- what do you think of the job he's done?

COACH MILES: Well, I think he's done the things that we would expect him to do. I think he can play better. I think to compare him with other quarterbacks is certainly not fair. It's really the things that we're going to ask him to do and he needs to do those. I think his focus is that. That's what we want it to be. We continuously make the point that the opinion that's worthwhile is the opinion that's derived from that building that we live and work in.

I think that he's done a great job to this point and I think he needs to continue to improve.

Q. Being from Breaux Bridge, do you think that Darrel feels a responsibility to live up to the expectations?

COACH MILES: Yeah, I hope not. I personally just want him to go run the routes that he can run and go make those catches and just do the things that we ask him to do and not put a pretense that he needs this or he needs that. To win, we need to improve to do so on a regular basis and as long as we take that attitude, we'll be fine.

Q. A couple of times Daneil (ph) looked like he shifted inside and Debo (ph) played a little outside. Is that something you guys want to keep doing or are you kind of tinkering with as many different looks as you can up front?

COACH MILES: We like a defensive group that has real speed to the passer and a team that can handle inside run, as well as handle screens and draws and all those things as they go up the field. It's a pretty diverse group. But you're looking at a group has real speed, height and athleticism and I think it's a great opportunity to give an offense, an opponent's offense, a very difficult time in match up, because our guys there all have real great speed.

Q. Colin Jeter played a good bit Saturday. What is his role moving forward and what does he bring to the team?

COACH MILES: He's a big, tall athletic receiving kind of look initially, and if you watch him block, he has a nice set pro, he comes off the ball and he's really probably one of our better blockers.

So I think long-term, I think for the next three years, I think you can look forward to seeing No. 44 do a lot of things.

Q. That's 16 true freshmen so far through would weeks and it's been trending up over the last couple of years; have you seen the residuals on the back end? And is the exodus from juniors, has it made it common sense for you to not worry about red shirts anymore?

COACH MILES: The exodus of the junior class really has changed the view of redshirt. I think there are certain guys that will need four years, and I think those guys that redshirt are guys that you would like to look at them being there for the entire time.

But those guys that are talented, if you look at Michael Brockers, Michael Brockers, we red-shirted him, he played two years and was gone as a first-round draft pick. We would like to have similar experiences.

But if that guy were to exit as a third round or fourth round or a fifth round, we would like to keep those lads and not necessarily lose the junior class, eight guys each of the last two years that would have played very significant football in their senior year.

You have to recruit a freshman class that allows for the flexibility of that junior class to leave, because you must have quality men at each position. Then, if you can keep that junior class, the opportunity to be a little bit deeper and a little bit more successful is there.

Q. The old cliché is that football teams improve the most from game one to game two, not necessarily the whole team, but is there a position that improved the most from game one to game two and where would the offensive line rank in that discussion?

COACH MILES: I think the offensive line is improving continuously. I think what we need to have is another game one to game two improvement.

I would like to -- considering the youth of the team, I think we should drop back the coaching axiom that it's not necessarily game one two game two but that, in fact, this particular instance we might take from that game two to game three an opportunity to improve, because if we do that, we'll down the road be where we need to be. But I think that there was some improvement, really I think the defensive line played well and I think the offensive line played well, and we need the team to do so.

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