

Louisiana State University Media Conference

Monday, August 26, 2019

Ed Orgeron

ED ORGERON: Hello, everybody. What a great week. Excited to play in Tiger Stadium on Saturday night, 6:30 Central Standard Time.

We're excited about telling the truth Monday, about the process, talking about pre-season game number three, which was fantastic. It was a mock game. We split the teams up. Coaches did a tremendous job of organization. We went through every scenario we could imagine. We were in pregame, locker room stretch with Tommy Moffitt, pregame warmup, halftime made our adjustments, came out.

Our guys did a tremendous job. They're ready to go, attack the week and go through the process. We are playing a very good Georgia Southern team, a tough, hard-nosed football team that won 10 games last year. Plus 22 in the turnover margin. That's elite, number one in the country. That's a phenomenal stat.

This is a well-coached football team. I want to talk about the offense a little bit. Triple option. We worked a lot last week. We had a bonus week. Thank God we did. We got a little jump on them. Our guys are still working on the game plan on the triple option. It's going to pose problems for us. We got to be in the right place, tackle the dive, tackle the quarterback, tackle the pitch. If you make a mistake, it could be a big play.

They return five starters, average 30 points per game. 266 yards rushing, 79 passing. Their quarterback is their top player, dual-threat quarterback. He is very, very dangerous. He knows how to operate in this offense. He's a great runner. A good passer.

Two good runningbacks, Logan Wright and Wesley Kennedy. Wesley is very talented, he's fast, he can get on the edge, take the pitch, go to the house.

Their offensive line is tough and physical.

On defense they have a 3-4 team. They return seven starters. Only gave up 21 points per game. 357 yards. Very stout, play fundamentals, don't blitz a lot. They got a good, hard-nosed defensive line led by No. 92 Raymond Johnson and No. 96 Ty Phillips. The best



player on their team is Kindle Vildor, he's all-conference Sunbelt Conference, Defensive Player of the Year. This guy is a pro football player.

On special teams, punt coverage, 5.3 three yards per return, 24th in the country. Very solid across the board in kickoffs. Wesley is the kickoff returner. He's very, very dangerous. 22 yards per return.

This week is going to be about the LSU Tigers. Focusing in on the fundamentals. Focusing in on getting game ready. Ongoing skill development on a daily process. Our coaches are ready to go. Recruiting is going to rev up again. A lot of recruits at our game this week. We're going to start recruiting 2021 class hard. On Sunday is the first day we can call 2020. We can text 2021. So we got a lot of work to do this week.

We're excited. First day of school. Last Thursday night we had a practice underneath the lights, so our returners could catch underneath the lights, receivers could catch underneath the lights. The golden band from Tigerland came in and played for us. They played for about 40 minutes. I want to thank them. It made it game-like. You could see our guys were fired up, ready to go.

Any questions?

Q. What is the unique challenge of facing a triple option team in week one? What kind look at Jontre Kirklin given you?

ED ORGERON: Jontre has been the Player of the Week. He has done a tremendous game. Speed of the game, they're going to come out all fired up, we're going to have to adjust to the speed of the game. They'll have some kind of nuance we have to adjust to on the sideline. We are well equipped as a coaching staff to fix it.

Biggest things we watched on TV is tackling. We have to tackle in open space, got to be in the right place, get hats to the ball. We got to cause some turnovers. These guys don't give up the ball much.

Q. How far back does your staff start preparing for how to stop a triple option?

ED ORGERON: I would say we started breaking them down last February, started looking at them in the

spring. Analysts did a great job in recruiting, the recruiting period. We had extensive meetings on them, walk-throughs on them. Been preparing for them since the spring.

Q. Last week you were talking about questions you still had, one of them was tackling. Where is the team on with that?

ED ORGERON: We work on it. We working on tackling every single day. Obviously you don't tackle every single day in practice. We tackle in scrimmages. Last scrimmage was only helmets. You got to get in the first game. We're going to practice tackling every day this week. Got to get in the first game, see where we're at.

Q. Can you give a rundown of the offensive line, who you expect to start at each position?

ED ORGERON: Well, Saahdiq is going to start at left tackle. Left guard is going to be between Chasen Hines and Adrian Magee. Our center is going to be Lloyd. Right guard is going to be D-Lew. Right tackle is going to be Austin. Badara is a guy that can play at guard, he can play tackle. Those guys will be interchangeable.

Q. Obviously goal number one is to win. Goal number two, how much do you want to prove to yourselves you can execute this offense for the first time?

ED ORGERON: Yeah, our guys are excited about it. I know offensively they've been working very hard. We're looking forward to putting this spread offense on the field against a good Georgia Southern defense.

I want to see speed, we'll give the receivers the ball in space, let them make plays. But we want to be 50/50 with the run game. We still want to be physical. We want to control the clock. Be interested to see how we do. I think we'll do very well.

Q. With the exception of Chaisson and Thomas, you'd have an injury-free pre-season. How much does that reflect your attitude about how much get guys to practice, hold them off? Do you have to sometimes tell them, Son, sit down, we'll use you later?

ED ORGERON: Sure. Justin Jefferson last scrimmage, we didn't practice him. He wanted to play. I wanted to see the young receivers of Clyde Edwards-Helaire and Lanard Fournette, didn't play in the last scrimmage. I wanted to see the young runningbacks run the football. They have kind of understood. Missed them once we got out there.

You know what, the way our practice is structured, a lot of walk-throughs, a lot of times we're hitting, a lot of times we do it. I think Jack Marucci does a tremendous job of gauging everything. Tommy measures how hard

we're working. We talk about that all the time. It's a tribute to those guys.

Q. You also have had, knock on wood, you see problems with players getting in trouble everywhere else; you haven't had anything like that. How much does that reflect the attitude of this team?

ED ORGERON: I do believe the culture has changed. It's not all the way where we want it. In recruiting, we recruit character. We tell our team that character counts. Do the right thing, protect the team. So far it's been really good.

Q. The nose tackle battle is going to be pretty fluid. Has Tyler Shelvin officially taken that spot?

ED ORGERON: He and Apu (Ika) are listed right there. They are starters for me.

The guy coming along is Joe Evans. He's proven he can play for LSU, ready to play as a freshman. He can play at nose tackle, can play end. We're very pleased with his play so far.

Q. From the depth chart, it looks like you have a chance for about 18 of your 22 starters to be juniors or seniors. How does it translate? What do you see from a group that is veteran?

ED ORGERON: Confident, leadership. We've thrown a lot at them. Execution, discipline out there. I expect them to play like that. These guys are rearing to go. They've done it before. They are playing as a cohesive team right now. We'll see.

First game is going to tell you a lot about your football team.

Q. Your impressions of John Emery? You have a lot of tailbacks. How do you keep all those guys healthy? Does that stuff sort itself out? How do you think that works to figure out what's going to go on back there during the season?

ED ORGERON: First of all, John Emery is everything and more that we thought about in recruiting. He and Ty were the two best backs in the country. In our opinion, they're different. He can make you miss. He has tremendous feet, tremendous vision. He needs to get a little bit stronger in the weight room. Get more comfortable in the offense.

There were a lot of times in practice where he broke outside, we didn't catch him. He had some explosive runs, very explosive runs.

Tommie Robinson has done a good job with our runningbacks. Clyde Edwards-Helaire is our starter. Lanard Fournette going to go in there. Chris Curry is

going to play, a lot of young guys. It will be running back by committee. As you know, when you are playing, we need all those guys. We tell them all to stay healthy and all to stay positive.

Q. Your depth at corner, you saw that through the camp with Christian out for a little bit. What do you see behind them going into the year?

ED ORGERON: We're really, really impressed with Cordale Flott. I think Cordale Flott has separated himself. If he had to start for us right now, we feel comfortable putting him in.

Jay Ward is a good tackler. He's very strong. Raydarius has had a couple injuries, so he's not ready to go right now. We really like those young guys. We think it's an excellent class. Christian is going to be ready to go, Derrick is going to be ready to go. We feel strong at corner.

Q. The linebacker you mentioned some of the battle through there with Jacob Phillips and those guys. What is it looking like? Could come down to game day.

ED ORGERON: They are battling, man. It's very close between him and Patrick. That's going to be a game time decision. Again, Damone Clark has had an excellent camp, you're going to see him a lot. He's going to play a lot. I expect him to be an excellent LSU linebacker.

Q. Playing a triple option team like Georgia Southern, how does that speak to the value of having analysts as part of your staff? What role has Dennis Johnson played in that?

ED ORGERON: Funny you mention that. I was just talking about that this morning. I got to work about 5:30 this morning. There were about eight coaches there already. I get in there, doing things I need to do, and I walk down the hall. Kevin Cole has a tip sheet to give to the quarterbacks. It has pictures on it about splits and certain routes, all the routes that they run. That's just another tool for us that two years ago we didn't have. That's going on all over at every position.

We have Kevin Cosgrove that was a defensive coordinator at Wisconsin who played against them. He was at New Mexico State last year, played against these guys. Excellent at defending the option. Those guys are in the room.

We have Bill Johnson, played at Texas A&M, played against the offense. We have a lot of knowledge. We have a lot of guys that have a lot of great suggestions.

I think Dave has put it all together, is going to have a great plan.

Q. (Question about the return game.)

ED ORGERON: I think Clyde is going to do a good job for us. We have a couple of guys that we would like to get in there. Clyde is going to hold onto the football and get positive yards for us.

Q. You talked about triple option, they don't turn the ball over very much. They won the rushing battle. What else are they doing those games that gets them the edge?

ED ORGERON: They run that wheel route and that rail route. All of a sudden it's wide open. You get your safeties to pop up, got another guy in the box. They do a great job of calling plays. Go play-action pass, throw the ball right behind your head, a guy wide open. Typical option team.

The thing that happens, when this quarterback gets on the edge, he's very dangerous. He can make you miss. He'll pitch it at any time. That's where they make their big plays.

Q. Tigers are ranked No. 6 this season. Last year at the beginning of the season, they weren't ranked nearly as high. I felt like last season they loved being the underdog. Does being ranked No. 6 change their mindset at all?

ED ORGERON: It better not. Better not. None of those rankings matter to me till the season is over. That's when you look at it. That has never been mentioned by me in a meeting. Never been mentioned by any of the coaches. That's just something that's out there that's called noise, in my opinion.

We got to focus in on the task at hand. We got to be hungry. I appreciate your complimenting the team last year, they had character and grit. It was an internal motivation for everybody. We have to have that same internal motivation to take it to the next step this year.

Q. (Question about nose tackle.)

^ Jaime start ED ORGERON: I think we look at this week. It would be easy to name a starter today. But I like to have the competition. I like to see how they're going to practice this week, how they're going to act. Then on Friday night, I like to talk to the coaches about what kind of week they had.

This is going to motivate those guys to have a great week, to keep competing all week. Then we'll make a decision Friday or Saturday.

Q. (Question about tempo.)

ED ORGERON: I do believe we have several different tempos. We are strictly spread, first time LSU has been strictly spread. We have the talent to be a spread

offense. We can go five receivers at any time, four receivers. We're mainly going to be out of 11 personnel. One tight end, three receivers, one back. Coach Enslinger has a tremendous plan.

Offensive line has to improve. Five-man protection a lot. Get a lot of people out. Throwing our backs the ball in the backfield, still run the ball.

I do believe we're going to be great because of our quarterback. Our quarterback can handle most situations. I think he's a game changer.

Q. (No microphone.)

ED ORGERON: You bring up a good point. Obviously we watch games. There's a lot of learning that we do. We teach our guys in a positive way what we're teaching them. We work on game management a bunch. We call it the winning edge. We've had about five or six of them. We go through different type of scenarios. Hopefully that doesn't happen to us.

We want to be a disciplined football team. We want to tackle well, play hard. We did learn a lot of things from that game.

Q. A lot of the off-season talk at tight end has been about Stephen Sullivan. How has Thaddeus Moss taken to the new offense and performed in it so far?

ED ORGERON: Thaddeus has had a great camp. I do believe he and Stephen are considered starters now. Thaddeus can block. He's big and physical. Catches the ball well, is very mature. He and Joe have a tremendous combination. He's made some tremendous catches. He has great hands. That's why I recruited him, because of his catching ability.

Stephen is a difference maker. Obviously he's not the big blocker like Thaddeus would be. Can stretch the field. We can flex him out, do a lot of things with him. Stephen has proven to us he can make big plays in big games.

Q. You changed on the defensive line to more of an aggressive nature. Does that present issues against Georgia Southern, the kind of offense that likes to get people out of position? How do you counter that?

ED ORGERON: Tackles for loss is going to be a premium for us. Sacks are going to be a premium for us. It's hard to sack them when they don't throw the ball a lot. They do have some play-action passes, throw the football.

I do believe in this game plan that we need to play assignment football. Tackle for a loss or not is not the

premium, it's who got the dive, who got the quarterback, who got the pitch. We have to tackle the guy when we get there.

There's going to be a lot of one-on-one tackles in space that we have to make. If we don't make them, it will be a big play.

Q. In general terms, talk about the first game for you personally, the anticipation of seeing what your team is going to be like, running out of the tunnel for the first time?

ED ORGERON: Well, it's about them always. I'm excited. I see how hard our staff works. I see our guys coming together. First game, there's always some questions in your mind. What about this? Talked about game management, make sure everything is clean.

I tell our guys we put 11 men on the field and fight like Tigers. Substitution is critical. Running on and off the field. Looking sharp, tackling hard, blocking, playing like Tigers.

Q. You've coached at a lot of great places, a lot of great players. How unusual is a Derek Stingley to come in and do what he's done in a short period of time?

ED ORGERON: He's special. He's special. Great character. Dad is a coach. Great mom. Doesn't say a word. Has tremendous ball skills. Has tremendous awareness. Wants to be great. Always working on Saturday and Sunday.

Nothing has been too big for him yet. So I'm sure he's going to get challenged this year. He will. Everyone does. I do believe he has a chance to be a great player. He hasn't done it yet, but he has a chance to do it.

Q. You had an exceptional kicker last year. How do you feel about that position now? Who is going to be doing the kicking for you?

ED ORGERON: Cade York has had a great camp. Kicked two 51-yard field goals. One scrimmage he was eight out of ten, the next one close to eight out of ten, seven to nine. When the band played, it was a little wet on Thursday night, he missed two kicks, which would be a game-type situation.

We believe in Cade, but we have to put him underneath the pressure underneath the lights. I do believe he has a stronger leg than our kicker last year. The ball gets up higher. He's very fast with his kicks. I think this guy has a bigger upside. We need to see, though.

Q. You talked about first game substitutions. What will the tempo of this offense look like? What kind of tempo does Georgia Southern play with?

ED ORGERON: Yeah, our tempo will be fast. We will slow it down if we need to slow it, but we want to go fast, especially in certain situations.

We're going to be no-huddle. I told the guys to get in the huddle the other day. They don't know what that is any more.

Georgia Southern does use some tempo. More or less they like to get on the line of scrimmage. They like to look at what defense you're in, call the plays.

I don't expect a hurry up from them. We will be in some hurry up.

Q. The organization, who is in the booth, who is on the sideline?

ED ORGERON: Dave is on the sideline, obviously. Bill Busch will be on the sideline this year because we lost Dennis Johnson. Dennis did a great job on the sideline. Christian LaCouture will be signaling in. Also Bill Busch will be helping. All our defense will be on the sideline this year. That's because of Dennis' injury.

On offense, Steve and Joe will be up in the booth. Obviously Steve is calling the plays. Joe is up there making suggestions. The rest of the guys on the sideline.

Q. We've almost gone the entire press conference and nobody has asked about your quarterback. Does that speak to what he brings to this year this, team?

ED ORGERON: About Joe?

Q. Yes.

ED ORGERON: Yes. Joe has been stellar since he got here. He's quiet, unassuming. I know sometimes in his interviews he's not. But he is very professional when he comes to work. He's into it. Wants to win. Wants to get better every day. He's had an excellent camp. He thrives in this offense. This is his type of offense.

He's excited to go out there and have a lot of success.

Q. Joe told us once in the pre-season he wants to block like on a reverse or something like that. When he says that, do y'all ignore him?

ED ORGERON: I tell him he can't. But he would. He would. He'd go in there and be a lead blocker if you needed him to.

Q. Obviously a team like Georgia Southern gives you a lot to prepare for. Does that take away from any kind of mention or distraction of the team you got to play in Austin next week?

ED ORGERON: No question. No question. First game,

we wanted to do well. We're going out there and prove what we've been doing in camp. All of a sudden a triple option team comes in. All your time is looking at the triple option, how we're going to defend it. There's been no other distractions.

We're in good shape.

Thank you, guys.