



Georgia
Defense Press Conference
December 29, 2018



2019 Allstate Sugar Bowl – Georgia Defensive Coordinator
Dan Lanning Quotes - 12-29-18

DC DAN LANNING: We're really, really excited to be here. I know that our staff and players have really enjoyed the hospitality of the Sugar Bowl. I know a lot of coaches and players get to go their whole career and don't get an opportunity to play in this game. We're fortunate enough to have a little bit of both. Some guys that have had some experience in this venue as well as some guys that haven't. So I think we've really been impressed with the setup. Everything has been really first class.

Obviously, our number one goal is here to come take care of business when it comes to the game. But everything surrounding the game has been a lot of fun for us as a staff and as players as we move forward.

Q. Wonder if you can talk about how the dynamic, how it's been since Mel [Tucker] left for Colorado. And I know Kirby [Smart] has been working on the secondary. But, as far as play calling goes, how has that been going? How it will go for the ball game coming up?

DC DAN LANNING: I think a lot of people put a lot more into that than is probably the actual case. We make a lot of decisions during the week before you ever get to the game. So, when you look at a specific situation in the game, a lot of those decisions have already been made.

But I think the right answer is that everybody is going to be involved in that just like they have been all week. You know, a combination of Coach Smart, Coach [Glenn] Schumann, Coach [Tray] Scott, and myself are working really hard to put together a great plan and have a great plan for these guys. But, when we get into the game, a lot of times those decisions have already been made.

Q. Hey Dan, when did Kirby say, "Hey, we want you to go do the press conference in the big room?" And have you done a podium press conference before? What's going on with the play calling? How is that working out with the staff?

DC DAN LANNING: Like I just said, you know, we've been divvying stuff up as a staff. Everybody's kind of stepped up and done their part. The defense we run is the defense we run. And that's not necessarily going to change.

But everybody's been involved in how those pieces will be divided. Everybody will be involved in the game just like they are for every one of our games.

Coach [Mel] Tucker is, obviously, a phenomenal coach. We're all really, really excited for him and his opportunity. But just like, when he was here, a lot of those decisions were made before he stepped out on the field.

Coach Smart and I talked about it a little bit about it yesterday coming up here, doing the podium experience. Definitely, my first Sugar Bowl podium experience and a little different than being at Park Hill South High



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School when I was assistant coach. But the football field is still 100 yards last time I checked. We're going to be okay when we step out on there.

Q. As far as the Texas offense, can you talk about the problems that the Texas receiving corps presents? And have you seen a receiving corps that has this amount of weapons this deep this season?

DC DAN LANNING: Yeah. I think that's one of the things that's really, really exciting for our guys.

Obviously, Texas is really talent at wideout. And, when you look at it on paper, what sticks out most is their size. They're big guys, can really stretch the field, and have connected on a lot of explosive plays this year. You talk about plays over 20 yards. They've had a lot of those.

So for us it's a unique challenge. But I think that's something our players are really, really excited about. Obviously, Texas is a premiere program. They're a national brand. So this game for us is really exciting to go against a great opponent with those tools, with those weapons. I'm excited to see how our guys perform.

Q. Following up on that, are Lil'J [Humphrey] and Collin Johnson comparable to anyone y'all played this year?

DC DAN LANNING: Yeah. They're exceptional players. They're really, really talented guys. Immediately you turn on the film and they stick out. They create some matchup issues for our guys.

So, for us, like I said, I think our guys are really excited. Our last game was the 1st. Our next game is the 1st. So having that much time to be able to prepare and watch film, those are two guys you definitely have to focus on. And we've done that.

Q. What stands out about J.R.? What makes him such a good player, and what has he done to your defense?

DC DAN LANNING: J.R. Reed? He's kind of a veteran. Not kind of a veteran. He is a veteran. But he's way mature beyond his years, even though he's a little bit older guy in the room. He just has a calm and control when he steps on the field. I think our guys really trust him. Our defense really gravitates to him because he understands the communication. He understands all the pieces and elements of our defense and really does a great job getting our guys lined up when it comes to communication. And, obviously, he makes great plays.

Q. How does knowing that Deandre [Baker] is not going to play in this game altered the preparation and game plan itself? And who then, if anyone, can fill that void?

DC DAN LANNING: We have a lot of guys. We play a lot of personnel groups. We do a lot of different things with a lot of different players in our defense already. We've been fortunate enough to be in some situations this year where we've been able to play a lot of other players beyond Deandre when it comes to Tyson Campbell, Eric Stokes, Mark Webb that have played a lot of significant snaps for us.



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You don't replace Deandre Baker. He's a great player. We're really, really excited for him as he's moving forward, but we have a lot of guys that have gotten significant snaps this season. So I think that that piece -- that transition will be smooth.

Q. With a fresh set of eyes on Sam Ehlinger, I wonder what did you see as to why this guy did not throw an interception for as long as he did?

DC DAN LANNING: He appears as a guy that really has a great concept of their offense and what Coach [Tom] Herman and their staff are trying to get done. He's a good decision maker, and he's not careless with the ball.

I think the threat that probably shows up to us on film is when there isn't something there, he has the ability to run with his feet and take off and create plays, which he's done a great job with all year. So he's not a bad decision maker. He doesn't make a lot of bad decisions, protects the ball which obviously always gives you a chance.

Q. Now that you've been with Coach [Kirby] Smart for about a year or so, what do you feel like you've been able to learn from him with him being a former defensive coordinator and how would you describe him as Coach?

DC DAN LANNING: I think one thing that really sticks out to you about Coach Smart is he's what I would call -- obviously in coaching we all see ourselves as teachers, but Coach Smart is also a learner. If there's anybody he can absorb some knowledge from, soak up some information from even as a guy that's been as successful as he's been, he's looking for that opportunity to continue to learn and expand and adapt and change.

I think that's what really makes guys like Coach Smart unique, is they're looking for opportunities to improve themselves. And when you work for a guy that's looking for an opportunity to improve, it really makes it easy as an assistant coach or a player to say, dang, I've got to get better, there's something I can work on. There's something I can improve and that's something that really sticks out to me about Coach Smart.

Q. The departure of Roquan Smith left a big hole in the defense from last season. Can you talk about the way the linebacker group has developed, especially the guys on the inside?

DC DAN LANNING: Yeah, I think that's interesting. When you look at inside linebacker, that was obviously something that everybody talked about before this season started. And he's obviously playing pretty well right now in the NFL as well so we knew what we had with when we had Roquan.



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It's really exciting. It's really been a combination of a lot of players playing on those inside positions. I think we have four guys that have over 200 snaps at inside linebacker which is pretty impressive. But they've continued to grow and play really well throughout the year, stepping up. And Coach [Glenn] Schumann obviously does a really, really good job with the development of those guys. So it's exciting to see him step up and not have a big dropoff at that position.

Q. Did you have a chance to follow Mel [Tucker] to Colorado as defensive coordinator? And also what are the chances that you might be Mel's replacement at Georgia?

DC DAN LANNING: I don't really want to speak to that. Right now our focus is on this game. I have all the respect in the world for Mel Tucker. I love Mel Tucker. He's been a great mentor and friend in this business. But moving forward right now, our focus is on this game on the 1st.

Q. I just wondered, have you interviewed for the Georgia's defensive coordinator job or would that even be necessary?

DC DAN LANNING: Our complete focus has been this game. And leading up to this game, we had our signing day. So I think opportunities and decisions will be made. There's probably a ton of -- there is a ton of interest. This is a Georgia defensive coordinator job. There's a ton of interest in that job. We're going to be able to attract a lot of great candidates for that position, and we have a lot of great people on staff and in-house.

Like I said, I think people are taking a piece of the pie stepping forward and moving this game and what it will look like has a play caller, signal call caller standpoint in this game. And then after the game, I think there will be some decisions made as to what that looks like moving forward.

Q. One of the guys that stepped up in the middle has been Tae Crowder who has changed position from running back. Talk about his development.

DC DAN LANNING: I think it's really interesting you talked about a guy named Roquan [Smith] earlier. Roquan played running back in high school as well. And Tae Crowder played running back. That always seems to be a really smooth transition for players that have good vision. They can play the running back position and then turn.

And when we look for linebackers in our league and certainly like the Big 12, you're looking for guys that can run and Tae is one ever those guys that can run. And you don't create some of those same matchup issues that can happen on a backfield or a wide-out, that he might have to match up with or a tight end that he might have to match up. So that's something Tae has done a really good job with this year.

Q. How have you seen Monty Rice develop not just as a player but as a leader of that group?

DC DAN LANNING: Monty has got a great personality. I don't know if everybody knows, that that hasn't been around our program. He's a guy that's a lot of fun to be around, has a smile on his face, and works



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extremely hard at his craft. He's a smart guy, really intelligent and he's a heavy hitter. When he puts his pads on, I think guys feel it.

So it's exciting to see some of the things that Monty has been able to do this year and looking forward to the things he's going to do for this program for a long time to come.

Q. As far as your own particular position group, I know D'Andre Walker has provided a ton of leadership in that standpoint but it's a young position. Guys like D'Andre Walker, Adam Anderson. What were some of the challenges they faced this year, and how did they ultimately progress to your satisfaction?

DC DAN LANNING: D'Andre's role obviously shifted from last year to this year. He's done a phenomenal job for us. I think we're really excited about the things D'Andre has done this year and how he's kind of a dynamic player from a standpoint. He's the guy that can set the edge and have heavy hands and play the run but also has the ability to rush the passer. He's done a great job with that.

And Adam is a guy that you mentioned that has just continued to come along throughout the season, get a better concept of what we do defensively. And his athleticism really speaks for itself. He can run for days and it's always good whether you have guys who can run on the field.

But we got some other guys like Brenton Cox, Azeez Ojulari, Walter Grant that have all done a really good job this season, helping us in a number of ways.

Q. You talked earlier about the quarterback and his ability to run. When you think back to your team's game against LSU, Joe Burrow ran 13 times 60-some yards. Do you see any similarities or comparison to what they do with their quarterback and LSU and Joe Burrow in that game?

DC DAN LANNING: Offensively they're a lot different team than LSU. But, yeah, there's definitely some similarities between the two quarterbacks. They're both really good players. And both can hurt you with their feet if you don't do a good job being accountable for the quarterback. So I think that's something that we're prepared for. But as far as offenses go, they're two completely different offenses.