



Team Selection Press Conference

No. 7 Baylor vs. No. 8 Ole Miss

December 5, 2021



JOHN SUDSBURY: Yes. Congratulations on being selected to the Allstate Sugar Bowl. We are looking forward to hosting you here in New Orleans.

COACH ARANDA: Well, I appreciate that.

So appreciative of you and your team there for having me at this moment. You know, I look back at just the last two years and the learning that has taken place and the growth that's taken place, both off the field and on the field. And to see people not have to cover themselves up but leave themselves open to trust again and to try to achieve things that are bigger than just a solo pursuit to achieve things for other people, and to be a part of a team. And so just to see that kind of come together and to be a part of that is very strong for me, and it's inspiring.

We're blessed to be in this position and to play in such a great bowl game and in such a great venue in such a great city, a city that has a lot of meaning for me. And then to play an opponent like Mississippi with Coach [Lane] Kiffin and just his track record and his expertise. And just the eyes that are on him and the program, I know we'll bring a big viewership to the game. And I think it's a good contrast in styles. So we're also looking forward to that challenge.

Q. Just in terms of that Ole Miss offense, a lot of what they talk about is that quick a lot of plays in a short amount of time, not a lot of time in between plays, how do you think what you faced in the Big 12 this year offensively will help prepare you guys for what you're about to see in that offense?

COACH ARANDA: Appreciate the question. I think it is different what Ole Miss does than what we see. I think we have seen teams that have the ability to go tempo and can sporadically kind of go fast, you know, maybe after an earned first down or maybe after just a general big play.

But I think what Ole Miss does, it's more of a way of doing things. That combined with big splits by receivers and their ability to make mismatches and create positive plays for them and really negate negative ones, I think, is a big strength. And something that makes them unique. So I think for us the ability to get lined up to have real simple communication. And we have on-the-ball calls, and we have got the ability to pressure when stuff's moving fast. So we're not too basic and too predictable. I think are all challenges that are inherent in playing an offense like Ole Miss.

Q. Dave [Aranda], a couple of things that you were saying this morning, you're off recruiting. Where are you? And what kind of reception are you getting? And secondly, the trend has been for teams not in the playoffs to have a few players, sometimes several players, opt out of playing in the bowl. How do you plan to address that with your players? And what do you see happening along that line?

COACH ARANDA: I appreciate the question. I'm in Dallas right now. I'm in a parking lot of a Burger King (laughter). I pulled off the freeway so could be in one spot for this call with you guys. I'm thankful for it.



Team Selection Press Conference

No. 7 Baylor vs. No. 8 Ole Miss

December 5, 2021



But the reception has been really good. I think families were at our game yesterday, and so a lot of good memories from that. And just have been to the games there in Waco at McLane [Stadium]. And just excited, like I am, to just see the growth of the team. And I think it's one thing to always kind of -- the feeling that you get when you're on campus and the feeling that you get when you're visiting, an unofficial visit and all of it. I think that's one thing, the connection and the transparency and the honesty.

It's another to can you win doing all that? Can you win like this? And I think to have that piece I'm sure helps.

But then I think for the, you know, the opting out, that is something that I hope that our team just through our day-to-day and just through our preparation going all the way back to winter, to spring, to summer, to fall camp, and just how everything counts, everything matters, and team unit, I hope there's an understanding of kind of where I'm going to come from in that regard prior to even kind of starting, you know?

And so I think the more you're at a place and the more that you've got a culture that's set, I think that's the case. I'm hopeful it is with us. I think there's probably a question with all of it. Right now, you know, in terms of where that is, in terms of what their expectation is of me with that.

But when I do get back with the team, I'll address it and just talk about what an opportunity it is for us to finish what we started. And if there are instances where there needs to be discussions on just personal things and what's best for you as an individual, then I would love to have those.

And so I think it's the sign of the times. I can definitely understand it. You know, I'm hopeful that they have an idea of where I'm coming from.

Q. Would you expect there to be a pretty good chance Gary Bohanon would play, considering it's a few weeks away?

COACH ARANDA: I would. If he continues with the improvement that he has made, I would think that he would play.

Q. Just knowing your personality, I think I know the answer, but do you allow yourself time to reflect and appreciate where the team has come from? Or are you just kind of focused on the next thing?

COACH ARANDA: No, yeah, I appreciate that question. It's focusing on the next thing.

And recruiting -- so like last night, we get home, we take the bus. I think it was me and Vick Vioria and Dennis Polian the bus one. I don't know, there might have been someone else on there in the back. I didn't see. I think the majority of team went back with their parents, so it was just us three



Team Selection Press Conference

No. 7 Baylor vs. No. 8 Ole Miss

December 5, 2021



getting a police escort back into Waco and all of it. But appreciative of all that.

And we get back in town and family is back home. And stay up for a little bit, crash -- and don't stay up very long and then wake up this morning and we're off.

So it's, I think the advantage of playing in the championship game, I think, is pretty -- it can be obvious. I think one of the negatives is just not being on the road that week or just not as much as you would like to be. I think we were talking with Coach [Mike] Gundy prior to game. And he had asked what we were doing. And he described what they were doing. And I think both are pretty similar, in that you try to get out on the Sunday prior and then you try to get out after practice here or there as best you could. But it's nice to be able to connect with your people and let them know that you're thinking about them and that you're looking forward to them signing up with you pretty quick.

Q. I believe you've game planned against Lane Kiffin before in the past. How much does that benefit you going into this game? It is something that you can look back on and say Okay, we did this, this, and this? Is it a helpful thing?

COACH ARANDA: Appreciate the question. I think there are some different circumstances to that. I remember that was back in -- I want to say it was 2016. And so there are some things that have changed.

I think what you get, though, is just kind of how -- and I think he has this for me, too, is just how we think. Or like for me looking at him, how he thinks, right, his view of what openers are. His view of if things aren't working, what does he go to? His view of what third downs are or how to attack man coverage or how to attack drop-eight coverage.

I think those kind of -- those kind of foundational, simple, concise things are there if you know somebody to a degree. I think so the less specific, more general, more wide ranging, I think he definitely has those for me as well. And so it does add a layer to the game.

Q. Obviously with how successful this season has been, there's been interest around the country in you. I'm curious what conversations have you and Baylor had about your future there? And what's your process like for this?

COACH ARANDA: I appreciate the question. I think what Baylor represents to me is the value in that there's things bigger than football and that, you know, foundationally, to get wherever we're going, we've got to start with people and we've got to recognize people and truly care about people.

And I think whether it's Baylor University for sure, Baylor Athletics, I think that is the special sauce. I think that's what connects these teams that do all of this winning at Baylor. And I think that's what connects the University and the community.



Team Selection Press Conference

No. 7 Baylor vs. No. 8 Ole Miss

December 5, 2021



So just for me, it aligns to well, and it pushes me to be a better person. And I think like that growth and that ability to not be outwardly focused but to be more inwardly focused has always been a true belief of mine. And I think Baylor helps me in that pursuit.

So just in talking with Mack Rhoades and our administration, I try as best I can to convey that and this is where I want to be. This fits me. And I think never been really -- have never really looked on the outside, have always been very preoccupied with what's on the inside. And I think Mack sees that, and I think appreciates it, I hope. And I hope to be here for a very longtime.

JOHN SUDSBURY: Thank you very much for your time today, Coach Aranda. And we appreciate it and look forward to seeing you in a couple weeks down here in New Orleans.

At this time, we're going to go ahead to Ole Miss Head Coach Lane Kiffin. We would like to ask if you can start off with a brief opening statement, and then we'll go to questions.

COACH KIFFIN: Yeah, Dave's [Aranda] was easier, he's not on video.

So we're excited. This is an awesome opportunity. To play in a major bowl game, play in the Sugar Bowl. It's, to me, what I feel like is every kid when they come up living in the SEC areas to play in the Sugar Bowl.

And to think that we got here two years ago -- I just heard the end of Dave's, but maybe similar thing, to think that we would be in the Sugar Bowl this quickly, respect of how awesome it is. And we're very blessed to be in this position.

Thank God for this opportunity to come here and the players and how it's all come together. I've kind of told them before, they're like this amazing blended family. We've got kids that have been here for six years that have talked about the pains that they went through. We have got kids that literally got here this fall, including a starter or two from the transfer portal. And they really are a unique family.

So awesome opportunity to play a great program in Baylor, one that's extremely well coached. Having played against Coach [Dave] Aranda's defenses before -- I think three different places now we've played against him. This will be four. So really great coach. Done an unbelievable job.

Saw the end of their game. We had recruits here, but saw the end of the game and saw his postgame on the field. And just how he speaks, you can tell his passion for his players and how it's about them and not himself. So this will be an awesome matchup.

Q. Hey, Lane [Kiffin], I know Alabama's win last night kind of took the drama out of today for y'all. How did you guys take in the news today? Was there a team celebration or a watch party or anything, or were out on the trail yourself?



Team Selection Press Conference

No. 7 Baylor vs. No. 8 Ole Miss

December 5, 2021



COACH KIFFIN: No, we've just been recruiting. And I think a lot of our players with a weekend finally to go home, have been different places and stuff, so we didn't do anything together.

I think that there was a lot of -- if you took guesses of where you were going, it was going to be the Sugar Bowl. So I think that, I don't think there was a whole lot of surprise there.

We're excited about it. Couldn't pick a better bowl to be in, one that I would certainly think that our fans will travel to. And we'll go. And much like, I said at the end of the season, come support the team. It's your last chance to see them together and to see Matt [Corral]. And now you got one more chance to do it in one of the biggest bowls in the world.

Q. You've coached in this bowl before, coached in a lot of bowls like this before. What do you say to the players about handling pressure for a lot of them who haven't played in a New Year's Six-type game before?

COACH KIFFIN: Haven't thought that far. Getting ready for talk for the game. Again, we've been recruiting. I haven't processed any of that. I haven't even thought about having been there before and the players not having been there. So I'll figure that out.

Q. Hey, Lane [Kiffin]. I just wanted to -- you've been at so many other -- not so many other but you've been at other programs in the past. So now obviously here at Ole Miss going to a game like this, like Nick just said, you've had experience going to games like this before. But this exact group, how does it compare to other groups that you've had in the past? And what makes them that unique family that you talked about?

COACH KIFFIN: Well, like I said before, we're still processing. Just came in, there's a lot of stuff going on. We've got recruits here and SEC championship game and the contract stuff, which is a lot of personal stuff involved with that. That is outside of myself and about our program when you get the details of it. And assistant coaches and administration, support staff, and the funding for them so that we can do this thing at a really high level is in there as well. So it wasn't just some personal contract that head coach gets paid. There was a lot of work into that.

So as far as like I've said, the players are a unique group. They've really come together from different age groups and how long they've been here and quarterback from California, all these different elements coming together and our staff too. And having some staff turnover just a year ago, it's just been a really neat story. And really neat to watch and just really excited to be a part of it.

As far as other groups, again, I hadn't thought about any of this until you just said it. This would be the first major game, you know, BCS Bowl, Sugar, Rose, Orange, been to these before, never as the head coach. That's pretty neat too. Just haven't thought of it that way. We're going to have a lot of time to figure this out with almost a month before the game.



Team Selection Press Conference

No. 7 Baylor vs. No. 8 Ole Miss

December 5, 2021



Q. What did it mean to get the contract extension done? And was there any doubt that you were going to stick around to stay as the Ole Miss head coach? And what does it mean to still be there and get it done and be there for years to come?

COACH KIFFIN: I think sometimes people don't understand. These things sometimes have been in the works for a while. And this had been a longtime, just happened to be finalized and announced yesterday. So like I said, this was not just about me, this was a lot of getting things in place. Which, you know, Keith [Carter] and the chancellor (Glenn Boyce) were all about. We just had to get it all talked about, and it takes time. And a big part of that is making sure all the things in place in the future for the players from a facilities standpoint, and for the coaches to make sure we're able to keep these guys around and compete at the highest level. Which we're trying to do, not just for one year. Like we did this year, have 10 wins and all these accomplishments, but to do this for a long period of time takes all those things in place. You don't continue to win at that level just because you hit one year and have a hot quarterback and different things. If you're going to do it for a long period of time, especially in SEC, you have to have everything else in place.

Q. Hey, Lane [Kiffin], you mentioned coaching staff. I was curious how confident are you that you're going to be able to retain the staff that you've had? How much are you having to prepare for potential departures for people getting other jobs?

COACH KIFFIN: Well, I've said it before. This is when you win, and especially to me when you win with style that people watch, you know, they say, okay, I want to go by that system, that style. And I'm not saying we're Alabama, but a lot of times you see so many coaches leaving Alabama is people want to go get what they're doing. And so we lost coaches a year ago. When we first got at Alabama and last year to Texas, Oklahoma. So I don't take it personal. It's part of the business when you're doing really well. Because the players are playing really well, your assistant coaches, people want to come and get them. So like I said about the head coach, it's the same thing. If you're losing a lot of people aren't trying to come take your coaches. It's a good problem to have. One we have to deal with. We'll always find the best ones out there. And there's a good chance we may lose one this year. So there's all kinds of factors that go into why coaches leave. So I understand that.

Q. Lane, you mentioned about going up against Coach [Dave] Aranda before. It's been a few years, but how much does that benefit you as you begin to prepare for Baylor? Will you be able to look at some things you did before against him? And will it benefit you this time?

COACH KIFFIN: I don't think so. And I've not watched them yet, but I know our system is so much different than it was years ago. I believe even back to, I think it was at Utah State a long time ago. We played at USC or Wisconsin and Alabama, OSU-Alabama.

I remember a state in my head, one time we played them and it was five years in a row and they were the only defense to be in the top ten in the country in rush defense, if I remember right. And there was only one common thing in America and it was him, where he had been, the different schools. So just unbelievable job, and really gives you a lot of problems.



Team Selection Press Conference

No. 7 Baylor vs. No. 8 Ole Miss

December 5, 2021



Q. What does this mean to your program? Obviously, this is big-time for your program, especially for recruiting? But also, how do you use this in recruiting pitches, early signing days coming up? What do you say to the recruits in the living rooms to get them to come to Ole Miss?

COACH KIFFIN: You're referring to the game or in general?

Q. The game and in general how big the game is for your program going forward.

COACH KIFFIN: Well, it's huge. We knew that after winning the Egg Bowl that we were going to be in a major New Year's Six game. It was just a matter of which one. We were already recruiting that day and already doing that.

And just left a meeting right here with a recruit and I just say, Hey, this say slot easier than one year ago, especially two years ago sitting here, you know, on a Sunday after an official visit. And basically, we had to paint a picture and say, okay, here's the house you're going to buy. It's not built yet, but here's a drawing of it. And that's basically saying, We're going to win here. We're going to have a great offense. We're going to be explosive. We're going to get turnovers on defense. It's going to be really fun to play here. You're going to watch us on TV and see this style of play.

We had to paint that picture because there wasn't proof here of that. And now it's like, okay, they come now and they can see the house. If you want to buy it, at least you can walk through it because we're already doing it. So it does make it a lot easier.

Q. I remember you saying that people need to see Matt Corral while they still can. And it's my understanding he's going to be good to go for this game. What are your feelings on if he does play, coaching him in one last good game, in a bowl game, and just all that he's meant to the team this season and what your hopes are for him in this game.

COACH KIFFIN: Yeah, he's a special kid and a special relationship. I just watched him go over to the band and the fans after the Egg Bowl and almost got emotional. And had to remind myself, got one more with him. So that wasn't the last one.

But I don't know exactly why the bond is what it is. People have said it's the California thing or USC didn't want either of us. They got rid of him and me both.

I just love seeing how far he's come. I love stories. Just had a recruit also ask, what do you like most about coaching? It's when you see a transformation in a college kid, whether that's him or Sam Williams. Just really neat to see that and be a part of it. He's just such a great leader and such a great kid. Just really proud of him. And glad to be his coach.