

Rose Bowl Game: Georgia vs Oklahoma

Thursday, December 28, 2017

Mike Stoops Steven Parker Emmanuel Beal Oklahoma Sooners

THE MODERATOR: On my far right is safety Steven Parker, in the middle is linebacker Emmanuel Beal, and right next to me is defensive coordinator Mike Stoops. We'll get started with an opening statement from Coach Stoops.

MIKE STOOPS: Thank you. Obviously very excited to be here. It's been an interesting journey getting to this point, but really proud of these guys, proud of the way we've handled things throughout the course of the year to get to this point.

This is a unique experience, being our second time in three years. I feel like we're a little more prepared for what's about to happen. I think I could see that just in the 24 hours, 48 hours we've been here and the preparation for this game. I think we've learned a little bit through that experience a few years ago, the importance of what we're about to embark on.

So that part, I think, has really helped us to where we're at.

Georgia presents some unique challenges in a lot of different ways. Couldn't be more impressed with the entirety of their offense, what they do. I think it's well conceived. They have very talented players at all 11 positions.

It will be a unique challenge, and one that we're certainly looking forward to. We're going to have to play awfully well across the board defensively. But when you get to this point, they're all going to be big challenges.

I think our players are excited about the opportunity to present our statement defensively of who we are at Oklahoma and how we play. So we're looking forward to it.

Q. Emmanuel, when you have a team that you're facing that's known to be physical, has a lot of good running backs, does that make practices



leading up to that more chippy? Do you guys tend to be more physical in practice to react to that?

EMMANUEL BEAL: Honestly, we've been physical and chippy all year. We're just going out there and doing what we normally do. We're not going to change up what we do just because we're playing an SEC team, more physical, faster, stronger, we've been doing that all year, so we're going to continue doing what we're doing.

Q. You talk about Georgia's offense providing a unique challenge. Could you be more specific on exactly what you're talking about there?

MIKE STOOPS: Well, obviously you've got to start with their ability to run the football. They have three, four different change of pace backs, all unique in their own right. When you rush for that many yards, the way they attack you is unique. Very well conceived.

The biggest improvement I've seen is their offensive line and what they've been able to do up front with those guys. And then giving those running backs a little bit of space, they don't need much. Great players, you get them, they do a good job not letting you penetrate too much and giving those guys opportunities.

To me, I think their most underrated players are their wide receivers. I think they're all tremendous players. They could stretch the field vertically. They get in and out of breaks extremely well. So they present 11 guys every time you step on the field.

Defensively, they're going to make all 11 of our guys play with can great discipline. Gap control becomes very important, your gap integrity, your ability to tackle. They get small guys doing big things. They know how to get edges, get the ball to the perimeter. So they make you defend a lot of space, even though it seems like it's a condensed field when you play them.

Q. Can you talk about their pass game and how it's different from what you've routinely seen from the Big 12, whether it's play action or whatever he does, any of you?

MIKE STOOPS: Go ahead, Steven. Steven's watched it as much as I have.

STEVEN PARKER: I mean, with their passing game,

there are some similarities, but like Coach said, their receivers can stretch out the field a lot, especially with they've got a 6'4" receiver and some nice receivers to add on to it in the slot, No. 4 and No. 5. So we're going to have our hands full right there.

With the route combination and the things that we're going to see, like I said, there are some things that we get in the Big 12, but it's just kind of unique how they window dress and show everything as far as -- or hide everything as far as the routes that they're going to give us.

EMMANUEL BEAL: I like their receivers. I mean, they're big, they're fast. They like to go up and get the ball, so I believe that's going to be a good test to our secondary.

MIKE STOOPS: Anytime you run the ball as effectively as they do, you've got to commit guys to the line of scrimmage. When that happens, obviously they get a lot of one-on-one match-ups. I think they've done a great job helping their quarterback really go up for contested balls. I think you really see them shine in the red zone. A lot of back shoulder fades. They do a good job.

I've been probably -- I didn't realize how good they really are out there on the perimeter. You know, they do a great job and they know how to attack each concept that you want to put out on the field. So just very well conceived.

Q. Steven, you're a veteran on this team, but you're going to have a lot of young guys playing key roles in this game. Do you have to say anything to them heading into this game?

STEVEN PARKER: No, not at all. They know exactly what they came to Oklahoma for. You come to Oklahoma to win championships and play in big and huge games.

Like I said, these guys right here, they haven't shied away from the challenge at all throughout this season. I know that they'll be ready to go. They've been preparing just like we have, so they're going to be ready.

Q. Steven, from the second half of Oklahoma State to now, what changed defensively for this team?

STEVEN PARKER: I mean, I really just feel like there were some games that we, of course, didn't play like ourselves or we didn't play like we're capable of playing.

I feel like pride has really taken a toll on us. We really showed a lot of pride, and our practices have been

even more chipper. We've been even more locked into the meetings, and preparation has been even more key.

So I feel like with that and everybody just gluing together as a team and molding as a defense, I feel like that's been the biggest key for us.

EMMANUEL BEAL: I feel like our leaders really started to show after that second half. Dealing with college football, everyone wants to be a leader and whatnot. I think after while people start to get who the leaders were on the team. So after everyone followed, we started to become Oklahoma.

MIKE STOOPS: Well, that's an interesting question, Tom. You felt like after we played against Ohio State people tell you how great you are sometimes, pat you on the back. And we invested a great deal in that game because of what happened the year before. We were really ready to play. We were sharp. We did a lot of the things. Our preparation was on.

I think maybe towards the middle part of the year we got a little lapse in who we are and didn't do a lot of the little things that you need to do to play at this level that we're expected to play at and we should play at.

That was, I think, disheartening to all of us. That's not our style here at Oklahoma to rely on our offense and do our part defensively, and that really hurts, I think, our pride.

That's something that I appeal to them. We're fully capable of playing at a very high level. There are some unique challenges in our league that didn't present itself throughout other leagues, but still it got down to our disciplines. Not being complacent. Complacency will ruin your team, and that's something that sometimes, if you're not pushed, that can happen to players. And that's something we had to really push our players.

We started going better on better throughout the course of the year with our offense and the challenges they present every time they step on the field. So that helped us certainly get better.

Like Steven said, you better have some pride in who you are as a player or you're not going to amount to much in this game.

Q. Just curious, when you watch a quarterback like Jake Fromm on film, does he look like a freshman to you? Have you seen a freshman that has that kind of poise as a quarterback?

MIKE STOOPS: No, I think he's been fabulous for a freshman. You try to really dissect a quarterback and

what they do and what they don't do well. I thought maybe they schemed their offense. Obviously, they rely heavily on their run game, so that's going to -- that's a quarterback's best friend.

Whether it's Baker Mayfield, Jake Fromm, it really doesn't matter. Your ability to run the football sets up everything you do as a quarterback. They certainly excel at that.

But they put him in good positions to do what he does. We don't look at him as a game manager. How they set up their game plan week to week, they do an excellent job. They know how to get him in the situations they like.

That being said, they don't want to be 3rd and long all day. They do a good job keeping themselves in manageable situations. And their receivers have really stepped up and helped them as well.

Q. Talk a little bit about their one-two punch at running back, and do they compare to anything you've seen in the past?

MIKE STOOPS: Yeah, Mixon and Perine, that's what they look like. So we've seen that for years. No, just great, mature runners. When you think of two guys like that, who has guys like that? Then Swift comes in and he does an unbelievable job.

So we're used to seeing them because we had two of them for a long time. We know what having a one-two punch like that does for you. They're excellent players, excellent vision. You see their ability to be patient, let things develop, not rush the runs, trust their lines. So you see their experience, and they don't need much of a crease because their vision is so good.

Q. Mike, you touched on it a little bit, what's it like week to week in the Big 12 facing all those wide-open offenses? What's the mentality? Also, how do you judge statistically how well your defense does when you're faced with that every week?

MIKE STOOPS: Well, I've always told our players, we know what good defense is. Statistics can be misleading in a lot of ways, whatever. It doesn't matter. We're here, we're ready to play a great Georgia team.

But it's unique. The spread offenses that kind of took over our league. The pace of games is different. So, again, statistics don't really -- there is a standard I think you have to play at. There is an attitude that you have to play at, and there's technique that you have to play at. For us to be successful, I think all of those have to be the preparation -- the preparation all have to be critical to how you play.

We just -- those are the things that are important to me. Again, we want to win by one. Winning is the only statistic that matters. But there is still a way that you need to play the game, the techniques you need to use to be successful, all those things are what's really -- as coaches, that we pride ourselves on. It's going to be a key part of this game.

Like I said, our schemes, our gap integrity, our ability to tackle, get off blocks, those are going to be the things that win us this game or not.

But it's a unique league. The quarterbacks, the offensive coordinators do a great job really scheming week to week and trying to pick at your weaknesses. I would imagine Georgia's had three or four weeks to do that. So we'll see.

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Caleb Kelly D.J. Ward Ogbonnia Okoronkwo Oklahoma Sooners

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with the Oklahoma defense. Ogbonnia will be with us shortly. On the end is linebacker Ogbonnia Okoronkwo, in the middle is linebacker Caleb Kelly, and on the end we have defensive end D.J. Ward.

Q. For both of you guys, and Caleb maybe start with you, could you talk about Mike Stoops and the preparation that goes into it? I know I'll see a lot of times he'll stop you guys and say, hey, have you watched this? What do you think about this? Could you talk about that relationship in terms of getting ready for a game like this and kind of how he kind of raises that expectation for you guys to kind of learn and know and figure everything out?

CALEB KELLY: Yeah, and especially being in his room, I think just him going every single day and him watching film with us, and him expecting us to watch film on our own, I think that's really important in how he coaches because he expects you to know what he's talking about.

So if you don't, you'll be lost and you'll kind of have to go back again and watch it again. He'll even pull up the plays and expect you to know it, and you have to know his terms. You have to know just his terminology. Going in, you just need to really pay attention to what he says, because he's going to give you the answer. He might only give it to you one time, so you just need to know for sure what he's talking about.

Q. D.J., for you, what's that like?

D.J. WARD: It's just amazing seeing coach Mike and how much information he can retain and regurgitate back out to you. Not even just on the practice field, sometimes it can be in the facility. After a workout, he can be walking out and he'll see you in the hallway and stop you: Hey, did you see this? What did you think about this? How does that work? Things like that.



So it keeps you on your toes at all times, just thinking about the defense and the schemes and something like that. So it gives you something to think about.

Q. Obo, could you talk about the run defense? Because when people talk about the match-up, they simplify it. It's Baker Mayfield's offense against -- and the strength of the Georgia team is defensively -- excuse me, offensively, and their run game against your run defense. Could you talk about that?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, I feel like run defense is something we do pretty well. It's something we've done well all year. I think it's one of our strengths, honestly, and I feel like we match up well against their offense.

Q. D.J. and Obo, how important is winning first and second down, kind of getting them in long yardage situations where you can pin your ears back?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, it's really important. We just want to get them in predictable situations. We want to try to get negative yardage on first and second down so we can just really tee off and get to put in the stuff that we've been working. First and second down will be really important in this game.

D.J. WARD: Percentage-wise, if teams are 3rd and long, 3rd and medium, that's one for the defense more than likely, just keep it simple.

Q. Caleb and D.J., from the second half of Oklahoma State forward, what changed defensively?

CALEB KELLY: From Oklahoma State?

Q. From the second half of that game through the rest of the season to now, what changed defensively?

CALEB KELLY: I think for me personally I think it was more just relaxing and having fun. I think we were too hard on ourselves sometimes, so we'd really be strict on ourselves. I think we'd go in the locker room, and we'd be yelling at each other. We'd be so hard on each other because we wanted to be perfect, and we knew we couldn't be perfect, but we should be as close to perfect as possible.

So whenever we messed up, I felt like we'd just be so

hard on each other and hard on ourselves that we wouldn't be having fun and we'd be trying too hard. We wouldn't let plays come to us. We'd be trying to make plays out of our positions, out of our jobs.

I think we just needed to relax. Once we started doing that, and everybody found once you do your job and your job only, then the whole team does their job, we can continue to do well and continue to have fun and just make plays together.

D.J. WARD: Yeah, Caleb said it perfectly. Things are just too tense. Guys are afraid to make mistakes, and you can't play football like that. We just wanted to have fun, and playing football and having fun, that's the best kind of football. I think it's shown over the past couple weeks.

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, I felt like there was just a lot of influence from the outside that we were letting get to us. Once we blocked all of that out and played together, we started playing really complementary football with the offense toward the end of the season.