

Rose Bowl Game: Georgia vs Oklahoma

Saturday, December 30, 2017

Lincoln Riley

Oklahoma Sooners



Q. What happened to Baker Mayfield?

LINCOLN RILEY: He's sick. We're trying to push him to get better. Trying to just get over the hump. Haven't been able to get over the hump.

Q. (Question regarding Baker Mayfield.)

LINCOLN RILEY: He was pretty sick on the trip out. Got a little worse there for a couple of days, and hopefully starting to level off now.

Q. (Question regarding Baker Mayfield.)

LINCOLN RILEY: We've limited him in some areas. Energy level is not normal for him right now. But nothing major as far as having to remove him or him just not physically being able to do anything.

Q. (Question regarding Baker Mayfield.)

LINCOLN RILEY: No, I think he'll be ready to play. He'll be ready to play. Will he be at 100% physically? We'll see. But he's not going to miss this one.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, yeah, we've practiced well. Our guys have been tuned in. I feel like we've found a good balance between enjoying the bowl and enjoying all the events, but also guys being ready and understanding what we've got at stake, so, workouts have been great.

Q. (Question regarding Baker Mayfield.)

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, his spirits have been good. He understands it's a part of it. Pushing through it like any of our guys would. I wouldn't say he's down about it. He's just battling through it, and just trying to turn the corner.

I don't think he's far away from turning the corner, but still hasn't done it yet.

Q. What is the biggest thing (indiscernible)?

LINCOLN RILEY: Oh, there's a lot. Just the -- there's just not many holes. Great defenses I believe make you earn every single yard. They don't give you anything. To play well offensively against a group like them, you've got to be razor sharp, and if you're not, they can expose you in a heartbeat.

So just they've got great players across the board. They've got a great leader in the middle. Really, really good depth, a great scheme. So, I mean, they're as good as we've faced in a long time.

Q. Coach, you get a month off, how much do you worry about unscouted looks you could see from the other team? How much are you working on stuff they've never seen before?

LINCOLN RILEY: I'm not going to tell you that (laughing).

Q. But is it a focus of you when you worry about them?

LINCOLN RILEY: Oh, I don't know. I don't know if you say "worry." I mean, I'm sure both teams will do a few things new. That normally happens in these bowls. That's part of it. And that's part of the guessing game. That's part of the fun of it.

So you just hope you've done enough for your group that you're ready to be sharp, because we know we'll have to be to play the way we want to play against them.

Q. With that month off, are you worried about the rhythm of your guys, especially with Baker being sick and in practice and stuff?

LINCOLN RILEY: No, not really. We've had good work. We'll give him a few days off after the end of the season. After that, we've had good work. I think we'll be ready to play well.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: A little bit, a little bit.

Q. Is it something that started back home and it didn't get better when he got here?

LINCOLN RILEY: He was starting to get sick when we returned back to Norman, which we were only there a few hours before we flew out here. So, then it progressed a little bit here earlier in the week.

Q. Is that just unfortunate from being on planes and having to shake hands and doing all that? Do you think that's part of it?

LINCOLN RILEY: Maybe. I don't know if it's that or just went home and just happened to get sick. It's just one of those deals. He'll deal with it, we'll deal with it. I

don't think it will be a big factor in this game.

Q. Is he staying at the hotel instead of practicing?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, pretty much. Pretty much. He's been pretty limited. Just trying to get him through practice, and I'm trying to let him rest and, like I said, trying to get on top of it.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: I wouldn't say any more than normal. We've repped him a lot this year. I haven't gone into a game where I felt like if the situation called for it that he couldn't come in and play very well. And I feel the same way this week.

Q. Is there any sense of panic or concern with your team or players about how well he's going to be able to perform?

LINCOLN RILEY: No.

Q. You're not concerned how limited he might be?

LINCOLN RILEY: No.

Q. Other than that, how's the week been going?

LINCOLN RILEY: The week's been good. It's kind of everything you hoped and felt like the Rose Bowl would be. We've been taken care of. It's been a great venue, the events have been great. I'm happy with the way our guys have handled everything that comes with the Rose Bowl, all the attention of the College Football Playoff.

I think we've prepped well, and I think we're ready to play well.

Q. What impresses you about your opponent?

What have you been most impressed about watching Georgia?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, I'd just say as a team I've been asked a lot about them defensively. But as a team, there are very few weaknesses. They're good everywhere. They've played really well offensively. They're very strong on special teams.

We all know how good they are defensively, so they just -- a lot of teams you'd say, well, maybe they're not as good here or as good there. You find more holes and weaknesses that you feel like you can expose.

But these guys are really, really good all the way around. You're going to have to play really well on all three sides of the ball to beat them.

Q. Did anybody else catch the strain or anything?

LINCOLN RILEY: We've got a few guys here and there that have been a little sick. But I don't know that anybody's had exactly what he's had. Yeah, I think his

deal is a little more isolated.

Q. Is it food, is it a stomach bug?

LINCOLN RILEY: I'm not going to get too specific. He's just sick right now.

Q. (Indiscernible) has his maturity level really helped him?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, I think so. He's done this a lot. He's probably been the most interviewed player. And we've given him a lot of access here over the last couple years.

So he's been there. He's been through all of this. I think he understands how to handle it as well as anybody.

Q. You have such a high-scoring team with such a low-scoring defensive team, how do you see this game playing out? You're used to playing in big high-scoring affairs?

LINCOLN RILEY: Some games we are. I think Columbus it was 3-3 at halftime. Some games have been. I think nobody knows how this one's going to play out. The great teams find a way to win it regardless if it's low-scoring, high-scoring or whatever it is. So we've got to find a way to get it done either way.

Q. (Question regarding Baker Mayfield.)

LINCOLN RILEY: I think he understands it's the best thing for him right now. His attitude has been fine. He's pushing hard to get past it. But other than his energy level and all that being a little down, I haven't really seen any differences in him.

Q. Is he just practicing and back to the hotel?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, pretty much, pretty much.

Q. Is today's workout (indiscernible)?

LINCOLN RILEY: It is, it is. We're on kind of our normal game-week type routine right now. So this is our Thursday, yes?

Q. Is this kind of like the scenario for a young head coach? This is something nobody ever anticipated, having the starting quarterback having some turmoil here Rose Bowl week?

LINCOLN RILEY: No, shoot, we're at the Rose Bowl. We're in the national semifinal, we've got a good team. He's going to be ready to play. It's a great scenario.

Q. Throughout the year you've talked about opposing team and staying out on defense. Where does (indiscernible) stand out?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, he's the best player we've played against, no doubt. We've played against some really good ones, but he's special. The things he does

for that defense, the plays that he makes, how consistent he is, he jumps off the tape every single game.

Q. Is it speed?

LINCOLN RILEY: It's everything. He looks like he has great instincts and great command of what they're doing schematically. He plays hard, he's physical, and he can get sideline to sideline. He is a complete player.

Q. With their offense, what is it going to be like game planning for that running attack?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, they do a great job. They put you in some tough situations defensively, and they do it with really good players. They complement each other well. The backs obviously are good. They're strong up front. The young quarterbacks play well, and they've got some guys on the edge that can beat you.

So they put you in some tough situations, like you'd expect a good team would.

Q. I remember talking with you back in July at Media Day, and you weren't surprised at the talent that you guys have. The question is what has been the biggest surprise to you about this team?

LINCOLN RILEY: I would say how our young players have played, how they've handled all this. We've just got so many guys that weren't even a part of this program last year that have been big-time key contributors -- Tre Norwood, Tre Brown, CeeDee, Trey Sermon, Marquise Brown, Jeff Badet. I mean, there's -- we've got a lot. Kenneth Murray, obviously. We've got a lot that have played really well. Grant Calcaterra.

So that group came in ready to play and had a good mindset about them.

Q. You've been asked this all year, it seems like it's gotten old, but (indiscernible)?

LINCOLN RILEY: No, not yet. It's just locked in. Again, doing my part, doing my job for this team, and trying to get us ready to play.

Q. You mentioned Baker being down but you're not worried about it. Do you miss him at all for the young guys?

LINCOLN RILEY: I think it would be a bigger deal if he was our only leader. We're lucky we've got pretty strong leadership on both sides of the ball.

So I don't think it's affected our group. Our energy level and intensity has been really good.

Q. Can you talk about your support staff? How do they treat you?

LINCOLN RILEY: Well dressed. There you go.

Q. Can you quantify what Baker has?

LINCOLN RILEY: I don't go in depth, I'm sorry, with that. He's sick, and that's as far as we're going to go with it. I'm sorry.

Q. Are you confident he'll play?

LINCOLN RILEY: Oh, he'll play. He'll play, yeah.

Q. I'm curious, of the four coaches that are in the Playoff (indiscernible), and that seems pretty common in sports. It's not necessarily that great players bring great coaches (indiscernible). Do you have a theory for why that is? Have you ever thought about that?

LINCOLN RILEY: No, not much, honestly. It's interesting. Yeah, maybe there is something to it. The guys that have had to in a way come up the hard way in this business. I think if you weren't an elite player at the college or pro level, you had to really love the game to stay with it.

So maybe that's more where it lies, is that despite all that, we've all had a strong love and passion for this game, and that's helped us get to this point.

Q. Do you think you really have to maximize your talent if you want to succeed at all, that comes from having a good knowledge of the game?

LINCOLN RILEY: Sure, I think that definitely ties in. We all know how competitive this game is. Yeah, for all of us. Whether playing or coaching, if you're not at your best, it shows up pretty quickly.

Q. Do you think that you can relate to players who aren't (indiscernible)?

LINCOLN RILEY: Possibly. Possibly you've been in those shoes and you understand that. Yeah, I think it helps. But I think if you can relate to guys, you can do it regardless if it's a star player or not.

Q. How young were you when you realized you wanted to be a coach, like seriously?

LINCOLN RILEY: I would say in high school I felt like I wanted this game probably to be a part of my life.

But I don't know that you ever know until you actually do it. You think you know, but probably until I started as a student assistant at Tech after I got done playing, and then I got a taste of it. The second I got the taste of it, I knew that was going to be it.

Q. Did you have a back-up career plan?

LINCOLN RILEY: Not really, no. Good thing this one worked out.

Q. What do you remember about Trey's recruitment?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, it was a competitive recruitment. He's over here kind of in that part of the world, you know. Local to so many schools, ACC, SEC. And he was a great player. We didn't know how feasible it was. There was some strong interest, and the more we got to know the kid, we just felt really strongly that he was -- the player part was easy.

But we learned pretty quickly that he was the type of person that we wanted. So we pushed hard, and I give him a lot of credit. Even after he committed, everybody was knocking down his door, and he stood firm with us, just like we did with him.

Q. They say commitment only means they know who to beat now. Was Georgia the primary competition, do you remember?

LINCOLN RILEY: Oh, there was a lot. I mean, you name it, early, late. I remember the couple times I went to school to see him, it was me and ten other coaches it seemed like every single time.

But we had a great relationship. Jay Boulware did a great job recruiting him. Yeah, it worked. He came out that spring and fell in love with the place.

Q. How does he fit in with Rodney?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, it's been kind of a good tandem. Not just those two, but Abdul and Marcelias too. It's kind of been a really -- kind of the four-headed monster for us.

They've done a great job managing it. They're all very unselfish, all ready to go. They've had all been the feature guy at different times this year. They've been able to stay healthy, continue to push each other. So they've done a great job of handling it. They really have.

Q. How's Baker doing?

LINCOLN RILEY: He's good.

Q. What is the plan to get him ready for the next two days?

LINCOLN RILEY: Rest, hydrate, get some meds and try to get past it.

Q. Is it a voice thing with him more than anything else that you don't want him at these things?

LINCOLN RILEY: I don't know that I'd get that specific. I'd like him to be here. Again, he's had a lot of media access in his time. He's been interviewed by I think every single person in the world over the past few months. So we'd certainly like him to be here, but it's just not the best for him right now.

Q. Was he ready to come down here at the last second?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, we made the decision at the end. We tried to give him every opportunity to feel good enough to come to it. But we had a conversation before we left, and he is not in a place to be ready to come to it yet.

Q. So far in your experience, can you give us some highlights from the Rose Bowl so far? What have you enjoyed about your experience?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, there's been a lot of highlights. Getting to take the team to Disney, and my family as well, too. It was really, really special. Just the venue. Just being here in Southern California, the weather, obviously, is off the charts.

I would say probably the best thing, though, because all bowls have events, this and that, it's just how well we've been treated by everybody here. The Rose Bowl staff, everybody that we've been in contact, everybody at our hotel has just been very, very welcoming to us.

Q. Would you mind holding the mic and looking into the camera: Anything you want to tell people back home in Norman? Any shoutouts or New Year's resolutions you would like to share back home?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, I guess. Yeah, everybody, Coach Riley here at the Rose Bowl. Just want to let everybody back in Norman know that we're thinking about you here in sunny California, sunny, warm California.

Had a great week, and we're really looking forward to the game. Appreciate your support all year, and have a great New Year's.

Q. In terms of it being a traditional Big Ten/Pac-12 event, did you watch the Rose Bowl a lot growing up?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah.

Q. What was your perception of the Rose Bowl?

LINCOLN RILEY: Oh, it just always was a great game. I mean, you always -- you can still hear Keith Jackson announcing the game. Live from Pasadena. It was always the game I probably enjoyed watching the most, honestly.

But, yeah, kind of growing up in Big 12 country, it always seemed a little far out there as far as having an opportunity to play in it. And you knew it wouldn't come up often.

So it was always one we hoped to have a chance to be

a part of. When we found out this was the one, we were pretty excited.

Q. What was it like being here?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, it's great. I don't know that the first year at the helm really matters. I think I would love it if it was my last year too. So just trying to enjoy it and get our teams ready to go as much as possible.

Q. What's been your favorite part of the week so far?

LINCOLN RILEY: That would be hard to nail down. Everything has been great. The set-up has been great. Practices have been fun. Players have had a great attitude. Probably getting to just spend time with our players and see how much they're enjoying this experience.

Q. Have you ever bought roses for someone, and if so, when was the last time you bought them?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, I have, and that would be my wife. I don't remember what the last occasion was, but, yeah, definitely.

Q. Has Kirby reminded you a couple times about how you guys (indiscernible) when he was the Alabama coordinator?

LINCOLN RILEY: Oh, I wasn't here. No, yeah, I wasn't here. I know they did a good job offensively in that game, but I was still at East Carolina then.

Q. Does it say anything about the state of the game, or is it just a (indiscernible)?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, no, I think it is. I think I would give credit to both schools for having -- I don't know what the right word is, the confidence or being willing to give young guys like us a chance.

Does it matter at the end of the day? I don't know. I think if your energy level is high, it doesn't matter if you're 34 or 64. If you can relate to players, it doesn't matter. I think you either get it done or you don't.

I think people are more willing now than ever to give young guys opportunities, so you're seeing more of that now than you did 15 years ago.

Q. The narrative was always out there about Big 12 versus SEC, smash-mouth football. Do you guys still enjoy that now?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, we don't pay attention to it much, no.

Q. I wanted to ask about Erick. What can you say about Erick?

LINCOLN RILEY: Erick's done a great job for us. He's a great story being a walk-on out of a junior college.

Came here under scholarship. Yeah, it's a tough position. It's tough physically. That's a battle every single play. That guy is in the middle of it regardless of which way you run. He's always going to be an important factor.

Then just mentally what the guy has got to do. He kind of becomes the quarterback of the offensive line. So we're starting to rely on him a lot.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: I would just say for us being able to adjust as fast as we can. Being able to -- you've got to have somebody there that can control it, and he does a great job of it.

Q. What's it like to see him out here?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, I guess he's feeling a little bit better.

Q. I was going to ask, how has he been on the field?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, he's just been sick, but he's battling through it, yeah.

Q. Is it just like a flu?

LINCOLN RILEY: I mean, he's just sick, yeah.

Q. I was just going to say what's it like to have him drawing such attention like that?

LINCOLN RILEY: At these events it's part of it. At home he's just another player.

Q. To what extent is the offense you guys run? I know it's different, but you come out of the Mike Leach trade, we all know about that. So what extent is this offense not dissimilar to what was run in 1989 or 1999 at Oklahoma?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, it has evolved quite a bit. There's a lot more run game, a lot more play-action game. We've taken some of those concepts from the air raid, but we've really -- we're really a long ways from it, honestly, and from those roots.

But I think the mentality that came along with that offense is probably the biggest thing that we've carried through.

Q. Was there a point where (indiscernible)?

LINCOLN RILEY: No, not really. I think I felt like that the first day that I had the job. Our players accepted it, the support with the administration, and everybody was great, the staff was great. So I don't think there was ever a moment that I didn't feel like that.

Q. How did you handle it specifically and your goals and what you've learned?

LINCOLN RILEY: I learned a lot the previous few years about how Bob handled me. You know, was there for a suggestion here and there, but never took away my confidence or kind of the feeling. He wanted me to do what I thought was best, and that's why he hired me. He always kind of gave me that leeway and latitude. It helped me a lot as a coordinator.

So I've tried to do the same thing with our guys defensively. They know what they're doing. They're really good coaches. If I ever see something or have a suggestion, of course I'm going to say it. But I want them to have confidence to do what they believe is best.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: Not much less time offensively. Maybe a little bit. Maybe I've delegated a little bit more. But, no, I've just had to create more hours, honestly, more than anything.

Q. So what does that look like 3 a.m. to 2 a.m.?

LINCOLN RILEY: I get in earlier than I used to, for sure. It's good to kind of be there sometimes when nobody else is in there. I can get some things done. I get a lot of the head coaching-type stuff done then.

Q. What are you most concerned about Baker performing in this game, is it stamina, hydration?

LINCOLN RILEY: I don't know that I'm concerned. He'll be ready to play. His fire burns pretty hot, as we all know, so I wouldn't say I have a concern.

Q. Were you guys planning on bringing him? I mean, he just showed up. I wasn't sure if it was planned.

LINCOLN RILEY: No, told him if he was well enough to do it; if he wasn't, don't. So I guess he is.

Q. You can alleviate the fears in Norman, Oklahoma?

LINCOLN RILEY: I think so. I think the world's not going to come to an end. He'll be ready to play, and we'll be fine.

Q. Even if he was somewhat below a hundred percent, he seems like a guy who could be out there and do whatever anyway.

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, I think so. And the fact that just his experience is going to, I think, be a big factor in this one. He's been through a lot of big games. He's been in a College Football Playoff game. He understands what it's going to take to win a big game like this.

Q. Having been around Baker for so long, how tough do you think it is for opposing teams to find

a scout team quarterback in a couple of days?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, it's probably pretty tough. The guy does a lot. Brings a unique skill set to the position. So obviously has the ability to create too. So, yeah, there's not many like him, for sure.

Q. It's not something you can do in three or four days?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, that's always a challenge. It's a challenge on both sides of the ball. You just try to do the very best you can to expose guys to what people can do. But when you've got a great player, that's the hardest to replicate.

Q. You have a lot of walk-ons, transfers from Baker to Jeff Badet. Why do you think it's so easy for them?

LINCOLN RILEY: I think because guys understand here when they walk in the door that Oklahoma football is about winning. They understand that the best players are going to play, and if somebody can help us win, then they're going to get an opportunity.

It doesn't matter where you came from. It doesn't matter what you did last year or even last week for that matter. So the egos and all of that are put off to the side.

I think that's why you've seen the continued success of this program decades and decades. I think that's why young guys or new guys are able to fit in and have a role right off the top if they're the best players.

Q. What do you guys use (indiscernible)?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, he gives us a ton of versatility. At first he's -- mentally the kid is off the charts. He can handle so much. Then also physically. He's able to do so many things. He blocks well, he catches well, he runs with the ball well. There is just very little this kid can't do.

When you've got guys like that, it makes you a little tougher to defend, and you try to take advantage of all of those skill sets.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: Oh, it depends on the game plan. But, I mean, there's very little that he can't do. As a coach you appreciate somebody that gives you that kind of flexibility.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: Really tough, really tough. Because it's -- again, so much of it is mental. Are they capable of handling that much. For most guys just learning to play one position well is difficult. For him, you're really talking about playing three or four different positions,

really, and being able to do them at a high level.

Q. He's listed as a fullback?

LINCOLN RILEY: No, I would say more of an H-back. There's just -- fullback I think of just kind of the bruiser that's going to line up in the I-formation and come downhill. This guy's got a little bit more versatility to his game.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: I knew he might, yeah.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: At Ohio State.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: No. No, not really. Yeah, I've tried to remember which one it was. We had one early in the game. I think maybe the first drive of Ohio State I think we went for it. It was one that was going to be a really, really long field goal.

No, those are things that we went through as a staff and that I put a lot of time into thinking. So, you're not making big decisions without having a lot of thought ahead of time and some kind of a game plan that you're going to stick to.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: Good. I think some of it is analytics and some of it is feel. Some of it's how good you feel your partner is, how good you feel your field goal kicker is. What is the match-up like offensively and defensively. A lot goes into it.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: I did one with the first penalty in the UTEP game. The first one when there was actually a decision to be made to accept or decline it. I remember I was standing there and everybody was looking at me. And I realized, yeah, I'm the one that has to decline this. So there was like a five-second like --

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, better fourth down in Columbus, yeah.

Q. (Indiscernible) how's your office since July? Is it filled up?

LINCOLN RILEY: We've got a little more hardware in there. We've had a couple good things here throughout the year, and hopefully add a couple more.

Q. It's more decorated?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, it's a little more spiced up than the last time you were in there. Yeah, it looks good.

Q. Being named head coach and chasing the national title, do you remember what that was like?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, I think just to understand that we were going to continue to maintain the standard here. That's always been the standard at Oklahoma is winning championships, winning conference championships, and having a chance to compete for National Championships and win those. I wanted them to understand that that standard wasn't going anywhere, and they believed it.

Q. Can you talk about (indiscernible)?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, we talked about it some, just because if I'm not addressing it, they're hearing it on TV. It's all anybody talks about is the College Football Playoff it seems like from week two on.

So, yeah, we talked about it as far as how to handle it and the steps you've got to take if you want to reach that goal.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, I think so. The few times I've been around him we've hit it off, enjoyed visiting with him. Always admired him and the job he's done.

Yeah, I think our career paths in a lot of ways are very similar. And both of us still being pretty involved on our respective sides of the ball and getting a chance to take over two great programs. So, yeah, there's a lot of connections there.

Q. They came to visit you guys in 2016?

LINCOLN RILEY: They came to visit us this spring.

Q. What do you remember from that visit with their staff?

LINCOLN RILEY: That was good. Yeah, Chaney and those guys came over, Pittman, I think some of their off-the-field staff, I think.

Yeah, it was good. They were a good group to visit with. We kicked some ideas around, talked ball for a few hours. So, yeah, it was a fun visit. Hopefully we didn't give them anything good.

Q. Talk about that chess match. You're calling plays, he's calling plays. Do you get as excited as a player would be on the field to have that interaction?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, I don't necessarily see it as anything like me versus him. I just see when you've got a group that you feel great about, it's fun to have great challenges. This is obviously going to be as good of a challenge as we've faced here in a long time. Yeah, to get to do it with this team in this venue with as

much riding on it as there is, I don't know what more you could ask for.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, we liked him a lot. We thought he was a really good player. Came down to us and Georgia there at the end.

You know, we thought he was going to be, honestly, what he's become. We thought he was going to be a big play down the field receiver. Had a lot of ability, and we really liked the kid. Thought he was a really good kid.

So, yeah, we fought hard, but I think in the end he wanted to stay back East.

Q. You've talked a lot about the fact that he's still learning. Did you see that time?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah.

Q. There was a lot of raw talent there?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, no question. He was raw. But a lot of guys his age in his situation are. But, no, you could see the ability, and you could see how much he was improving even in junior college.

Q. You've got a lot of guys on this team that walked on or were JUCO. Why do you think that is?

LINCOLN RILEY: I think first we've had an open mind enough to bring those guys in. Not everybody's going to be the five-star player. I think your team has to have a good mix. Having guys that want to be at OU. Having guys that are internally motivated at a high level is a big deal to us.

So, yeah, it's been a good mix of that, and something that our team has benefited from.

Q. Baker just said he literally watched you on TV at the beginning of this and decided to come. I mean, what does that say about him? He didn't have to be here.

LINCOLN RILEY: No, no, he didn't have to. But we're not trying to hide from anybody. He's not trying to hide from anybody. You know, the Rose Bowl has been good. They've understood all the events and all that that it was best for him to be back. So I think he wanted to throw everybody a bone.

Q. Yeah, that's basically it. Is your mindset these last three days he doesn't need to do media, he does need to practice, and that's not going to impact the game plan at all whether he talks?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, exactly, at the end of the day. And if he had been a guy that nobody had ever talked to, I would understand it. He's been interviewed by I

think every single reporter on the face of the earth over the past six months. I mean, he's not answering anything that he hasn't answered a hundred times before.

Q. Was he a full go this week?

LINCOLN RILEY: Pretty close. We monitored some things to try not to overwork him, but he didn't miss anything major.

Q. Is silent snap an option right now?

LINCOLN RILEY: I wouldn't talk about cadence. Sorry.

Q. You don't want to talk about it?

LINCOLN RILEY: That's right.

Q. To go along with the question, do you like the fact that your quarterback is that type of guy? He's an in-your-face, not prim and proper, all these different type of things?

LINCOLN RILEY: I'm fine with it. It's not a requirement. You have to be able to lead at that position. You've got to be able to rally the guys.

But some people do it in different ways. I've seen guys that were as effective as Baker doing it, but not in such a brash, kind of flamboyant way like he does.

So I think at the end of the day you've just got to be yourself. If you're not yourself, then people see through it pretty quickly.

Q. He was there at Tech with Coach Leach when you were there. What did Coach Leach think at that time?

LINCOLN RILEY: It's hard to describe what Coach Leach would be thinking. I think only he can do that. I need a cup of coffee up here and I can tell you. No, he would have liked him. There is no doubt. He would have liked him. There would have been some pretty funny conversations between those two.

Q. Do you think Baker has a little Leach in him?

LINCOLN RILEY: I don't know if anybody has a little Leach in them.

Q. What's been Bob's rollover the last couple of weeks?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, I would say it's been like it's been all year. He's certainly been around, been around us. We want him around. Love having him around. He's been there to answer questions or to give advice. Certainly just been somebody that I can lean on and use specifically like I have the rest of the year.

Q. Do you lean on your staff from top down?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, we lean on all our staff. I value

their opinions. A lot of these guys have been in big-time atmospheres, championship games, bowl games. We have a very experienced staff, so we meet often, and I certainly lean on all those guys.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: No, you can't. People have told me, and I've seen it now, you don't know what it's like until you actually sit in this chair. It's hard to describe. So guys that have been there, understand that, have certainly been helpful.

Q. How would you assess (indiscernible)?

LINCOLN RILEY: If you want to see who has the best O-line in the country, look at the numbers. The numbers tell you. If you're moving the ball and you're able to do both, you're probably pretty good up front. We've done a decent job of it. So I don't know how you rank O-lines or how you do all that. It's probably the toughest position to quantify how good they are. But there's nobody better than ours.

Q. Have you given Coach Stoops a hard time for speaking to (indiscernible)?

LINCOLN RILEY: No, we laughed about it. He spoke, and obviously we said earlier those guys came out to us. No, I just told him -- I can't remember. We had a laugh about it once they announced the pairings. So he told me that he didn't give them anything good, though, so we were all set.

Q. Are you a believer in right place right time? It's almost like you and Baker converged.

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, yeah, I am. I am. We all work hard and put a lot into this. But at the same time, I think he and I and really everybody in this program realize how fortunate we are that we kind of all ended up here together and have a chance to do something. We've already done a lot that's very special and will have a chance to do even more.

Q. It's almost like you guys helped each other and raised up together?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, that's how this game works. Nobody does it by themselves. We've helped each other. The team has been obviously big behind that. It's been a situation that's worked from all the different angles.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: Tyrece Lott has really done a nice job. Offensively Charleston Rambo has really had a nice opportunity. A.D. Miller who we red-shirted. Austin Kendall has done a nice job. That young offensive line has had a chance to be -- we've got some young guys there, Tyrese Robinson and Adrian Ealy, Marquis Hayes, those guys have a chance to be

pretty good as well.

It's been a good group. Isaiah Thomas has done some good things on the defensive side. Haven't had quite as many defensively. We've been a little more thin on that side of the ball. We've had good prep work, and that's key this time of the year.

Q. How do you feel about your assistant coaches and their jobs?

LINCOLN RILEY: Sure, sure. That's something we openly discuss. And when you've had the success we've had here, that's going to be part of it.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

LINCOLN RILEY: Oh, I think so. Absolutely. I think we've got a lot of guys on our staff that could be, and will be in the future. I want them to be. I said I was lucky to work for guys that helped me learn and helped me grow and helped prepare me. Hopefully I can do a little bit of the same for these guys.

Q. (Indiscernible). What do those mean to you?

LINCOLN RILEY: Yeah, I think it's the teams. It's just kind of the personality that we've taken on. Our team really that is us. That is us. That's the way that we approach every single day. So it's real.

Q. Your offensive line, a lot of those guys and maturity (indiscernible)?

LINCOLN RILEY: I don't think it's a surprise. A lot of times when you go through this, even though they're big bowl games that are not a part of the playoffs, it's just a lot different. There is a lot of attention on it, and you have to be ready to handle all that.

I think our guys are not surprised. A little bit, I think the mindset of the team is good going into this one right now.

Q. Your team was pretty young.

LINCOLN RILEY: It was, yeah. I think so. Again, I feel like we're settled very much as a team. We knew what we were getting ourselves into here, and have a good idea of the way we want to handle it all.

Q. How does playing in the Rose Bowl help with recruiting in California?

LINCOLN RILEY: Oh, it's very special to these guys. A lot of them came to Oklahoma knowing that they might not ever play a game on the West Coast. Although we do have UCLA back out here in a couple of years, but -- or would not get to very often.

But for them to come back here and their families to be able to drive to Pasadena, do it at the Rose Bowl, the national semifinal, we've got a group of guys that are

really excited about it.

Certainly it helps in California. We've had a great run of California players that have come to Oklahoma and done very, very well. You could feel -- when we were out here recruiting a few weeks ago, you could feel the energy around knowing we were coming back out here.

So it's great. We've got a national brand, and this does nothing but enhance it.

Rose Bowl Game: Georgia vs Oklahoma

Saturday, December 30, 2017

Baker Mayfield

Oklahoma Sooners



Q. How are you?

BAKER MAYFIELD: Been better.

Q. Why did you decide to come today?

BAKER MAYFIELD: So my teammates had to stop answering questions for you guys.

Q. What's it been like these last couple days? How have you been able to power through this?

BAKER MAYFIELD: It's easy going out there and practicing. You know, I'm playing football, and then going to a nice hotel, and then enjoying the process, been trying to.

Q. Are practices taking a lot out of you?

BAKER MAYFIELD: Yeah, a little bit. It's part of it. But I'd rather go out there and practice than have to go do other activities. I'd rather be with my teammates and working on our game plan.

Q. Is it a matter of being worn down after a month of activities, or what is it?

BAKER MAYFIELD: No, there was something going around. A couple other guys on the team have had it. It's flu-like. I wouldn't say it's the flu, but it's pretty much like that.

Q. With the voice you have now, can you direct the offense, or will you guys go to a sideline count?

BAKER MAYFIELD: You know, my voice sounds like this right now because I was yelling at practice yesterday. Yesterday was the best I've felt all week. But you know, taking a toll on me at practice means the next day I'm going to feel it. Yeah, I'll be all right.

Q. When was the last time you've played through an illness like this?

BAKER MAYFIELD: It's been a while. I had the flu back in 2013 my freshman year.

Q. When you're going through practice, are you going through your regular routine or are you kind of --

BAKER MAYFIELD: Done everything normal, the normal stuff. That's what we're sticking to, not treating it any differently. I'm out there with the guys, and like I said, I'm here, so they have to stop -- they're not

answering questions on my part anymore.

Q. Outside of being ill, how do you feel about the offense?

BAKER MAYFIELD: We look pretty good right now. I think we're practicing well. I think we're settling into the game plan. Been working on it for a while, and I'm confident where we're at right now.

Q. (Indiscernible) how much of a bummer is this for you personally that this is happening?

BAKER MAYFIELD: You know, obviously I'd like to be out there with my team doing all the fun activities that the Rose Bowl puts on, but when it comes down to it, it's not going to enter my play. I'll still be out there Monday for the most important thing.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: Yeah, I'm not dying.

Q. Besides come here, have you done anything else outside of practice?

BAKER MAYFIELD: Pretty much in my room. I've gotten a couple bites to eat around the hotel, but that's about it.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: They're very good. I mean, it just stands out to you on film. They've got playmakers. They play well as a unit. I think just how they call plays, they disguise their blitzes and their coverages very well. But they just have guys that pop out on film. Obviously No. 3 is the biggest one. But they play well as a unit.

Q. How much of a motivation is it (indiscernible)?

BAKER MAYFIELD: We're not an underdog. We're not an underdog.

Q. When did you start feeling like this?

BAKER MAYFIELD: Christmas back home. I went back home, and my mom was pretty worried to send me out like that.

Q. Usually getting to a bowl game means you've had a successful year, but (indiscernible) how do you temper the emotion knowing that winning the first one is not the end?

BAKER MAYFIELD: Because I came back to win a

national title, and our team, we've had our eyes set on that, and we know to get there we have to win this next one. That's been our mentality ever since the Iowa State loss is we have to play championship games every week, so for us we're not going to treat this one any differently.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: He's been huge. You know, and his growth has been even bigger. Maturity throughout the whole process. He's become a huge playmaker, obviously. His speed is elite. It's something that not many people can ever say they have, but he's just a special player, and we've been lucky to have him.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: Well, I thought we were close, but I guess he could actually tell you the truth. But I just know he's a good playmaker. That shows. The stuff that he's done for them, obviously, a talented guy that we wish we would have gotten, but right now he's happy with where he's at, and we're happy with where we're at, too.

Q. Where is the Heisman?

BAKER MAYFIELD: It's with the school in Norman.

Q. Where will it be?

BAKER MAYFIELD: It'll be with my parents.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: I wouldn't say there was turmoil from Stoops to Riley at all. It was about as smooth as it could have possibly have gone. The two of them are great people, great leaders, great role models for us, and how they handled it together really set the foundation for how the players should handle it, and kudos to our leadership group for letting all the young guys know that we're not going to let the standards drop at all. Coach Riley has been in the system and we're familiar with what he likes to do, so for us we just need to go out there and do our job.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: A little coffee and honey and lemon. I'm sick of drinking tea.

Q. If you were Coach Riley and just had the usual business relationship, coach-player, is he the (indiscernible)?

BAKER MAYFIELD: I'm not sure I understand.

Q. If you guys just had a pure football relationship, part of the reason he got the job is obviously because you guys mesh so well --

BAKER MAYFIELD: I wouldn't say it's just because of me. Oklahoma has had a lot of talented guys. He's

had talented coaches around him. But when it comes down to it, that's him. He's climbed the coaching ranks because of how special he is and how well he adapts to his players and the people around him. It's not the guys that make him, it's how he adapts to the players around him.

Q. Was it your choice to come today?

BAKER MAYFIELD: Yeah. I mean, obviously they would have liked to have had me here earlier, but when I realized that the players, my teammates and some of these coaches would have to answer questions on my behalf, I got sick of it, and I know they're tired of it, too. They know I'm out there at practice, and like I said, I'm not dying, but I don't feel 100 percent right now. But I'm here for them so they don't have to answer questions.

Q. Are you concerned about (indiscernible)?

BAKER MAYFIELD: No.

Q. Do you go out for coffee or have somebody bring it?

BAKER MAYFIELD: I had somebody at the hotel drive.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: Yeah, feeling a little bit better. You know, the biggest thing for me is just the energy level and my voice, as well. Yesterday I felt great, or the best I've felt in a while. But this morning, I think yelling at practice did not help.

Q. How much are you worried about your voice being loud enough?

BAKER MAYFIELD: It'll be all right.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: I hope I'm 100 percent by Monday. I think I will be.

Q. It's been since 2000 since this program has won a National Championship. You guys have positioned yourselves well. How much do you think (indiscernible)?

BAKER MAYFIELD: The tradition at OU is something that is special, so a national title is obviously the most important thing. It would be huge for our fan base. They've been talking about it. After our Big 12 game, they kept saying, two more, two more, and that's just the truth. We have our eyes set on the big one, but to get there we have to take care of business right now, and that's all that matters.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: I don't know if you watched Ohio State play last night, but yeah.

Q. With the voice, in today's game people can run a game with just hand signals and things like that?

BAKER MAYFIELD: Yeah, we could run a game based off of hand signals, but at the same time, you need to be able to communicate at the line. There's adjustments within plays when the clock is running down that you need to be able to make. But luckily our guys right now are locked into our game plan. They know exactly what we're going to execute.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: People always want to hate on the Big 12. They say that we don't play defense. But what they don't realize is we have the best offenses in the country. That shows in the bowl games. We've started out well. TCU played well, Oklahoma State. I mean, it's just showed. It's good for the conference.

Q. When you were at home were you kind of agonizing about whether you were going to be here?

BAKER MAYFIELD: When I turned on the TV and the first thing was that I was not going to be here, and then all of a sudden the first question asked to Coach Riley was about me, then I realized this whole thing is not about me. University of Oklahoma is here to play a playoff game. It's not about any sickness that I have. We're here to win a game, and that's what it needs to be about. My teammates don't need to answer questions on my behalf. I'm not dying. I'll be playing. We're focused on our goal.

Q. Literally a few minutes ago you watched him on TV answering questions about you --

BAKER MAYFIELD: Yep.

Q. And you decided to make an effort to come.

BAKER MAYFIELD: Yep.

Q. Who brought you over here?

BAKER MAYFIELD: They have a hotel driver, the team.

Q. What goes through your mind not just about being the best player in OU history but even that the discussion exists?

BAKER MAYFIELD: It's pretty crazy. The thing for me is we talk about it all the time, hanging up a banner in our indoor facility, and the big one would be a national title banner. I'm not worried about the statue. I came back to win the big banner.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: They have a lot more weapons than just me. They have a special team. We have a great offensive line, talented running backs, talented receivers. You know, I think that we've been able to exploit this season is what a team wants to focus on,

we go otherwise. We'll see. That's actually how they want to game plan us, but we'll be ready to adjust.

Q. What kind of treatment are you getting, and what's going to happen between now and Monday?

BAKER MAYFIELD: Lots of medicine that I'm sick of taking, and too much tea and honey.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: No, done the same routine. For me maybe the conditioning after, but that's about it.

Q. Have you ever been through anything like this where you've had to take medicine to try and get you healthy enough to play?

BAKER MAYFIELD: No, nothing that's been this rapid, but it is what it is.

Q. Have you been able to eat okay?

BAKER MAYFIELD: Yeah. No, I think the good sign has been I've been hungry, and keeping up with the fluids. But yeah, so the voice is the biggest problem now.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: No, they put me on an antibiotic, so I've been able to be around the team. The biggest thing would be not going to the events and having to get rest instead.

Q. What's your thought on Jake Fromm, a freshman being able to do what he's doing?

BAKER MAYFIELD: Talented guy, but the biggest thing for me that stands out is how he commands the huddle. Not normally do you see a true freshman take command of a huddle that has a lot of older guys, veterans in it, and then also lead them to the playoffs. It takes a special person. I have a lot of respect for Jake.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: That's happened a lot. You know, that's something that teams that have had a little bit of success, they've done that. You know, they drop into coverage and have a couple people for spies. Based on our scramble drill and what we like to execute when people aren't open. That's something we'll be ready for.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: I've heard nothing but great things about the Rose Bowl. I've heard that there's not a blade of grass out of place. There's nothing like it. People call it the Granddaddy of Them All, I think. Everybody talks about it, but until you're out there, it's not really a true thing for you.

Q. (Indiscernible). How much does you being under the weather, maybe not (indiscernible)?

BAKER MAYFIELD: I would say that I'm as involved in anything football-wise. I've been there for everything we're doing schematically and practice-wise. You know, yeah, like I said, I'd rather be there with my teammates on the events outside of practice. But we have a special team. There's a reason we're in the playoffs, and it's not solely based on me. They're not going to miss a beat without me. We also have a talented guy in Kyler Murray behind me. This team will be fine whether I'm 100 percent or not.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: Well, I'm able to get all my energy to practice, whatever we have planned for hours at a time, and then I'll need some rest after. But it's continuing to get stronger.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: No, he wanted me here, I think, so he had to stop answering questions, as well. He won't be mad.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: No, we stress about hydration all the time, whether you're sick or not. It's a huge thing to be able to have stamina throughout the whole game. You've got to be 100 percent for all four quarters or however long it takes. That's been a big thing for me, but being able to eat and keep up with my fluids and push that, that's been a positive.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: It's not over. You know, the best is yet to come.

Q. When did you start to feel bad?

BAKER MAYFIELD: Right around Christmas.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: They play well as a unit. They've got talented guys. There's not a weakness about them, and that's what you see week in and week out from them. There's a reason they're the SEC champs and there's a reason they're in the playoffs.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: Talented player. Obviously he wouldn't be starting there without that. That's the obvious. But his leadership, the way he takes command in the huddle, a lot of respect for a guy like that at a young age, to have the respect of veteran people that have been in the program for a while.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: No, you have to be aware of a

talented guy like that. You can't treat him like the others because he can make a lot of special plays that not many people can. Got to know where No. 3 is at all times.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: You know, that's just something that we've talked about, maybe trying to get me down here last night. We talked about that. But I woke up this morning not feeling too hot. Then I realized that everybody was going to have to answer questions on my behalf again, and I decided I needed to come.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: Flu-like, but I don't know, whatever you want to call it.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: Um, I think during our workouts, I realized the talent we had coming back, and then also some of the freshmen that we had coming in. I think for us we had a special group, but then it's the team chemistry was the biggest thing, how we handled certain things, and how we handled Coach Stoops stepping down I think was the biggest thing for me.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: It wasn't a distraction, the way we handled this and the way the guys handled it could have gone really bad, and instead it went really well. It was a positive for us.

Q. How much does this game (indiscernible)?

BAKER MAYFIELD: That was a bitter taste in the guys' mouths. I think obviously losing is not something you ever want to feel, but losing a playoff game when you're that close to finishing your ultimate goals hurts even worse. That's something we've talked about, the guys that were there for that, even the guys that redshirted and didn't necessarily play but they were there, as well, that's something you never want to feel again.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: Yeah, no, that was something that was on our shirts the whole time was ATL, we had it on the back. That was our ultimate goal and we knew we had to take care of business one week at a time to do that, and right now the focus is on the Rose Bowl, and then we'll talk about that after.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: No, but that might help, though.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BAKER MAYFIELD: Lots of medicine, lots of boxes of tea, a few things (indiscernible), and a few lemons. I've had to go down to the hotel to have a couple boxes of

Kleenex brought up.

Rose Bowl Game: Georgia vs Oklahoma

Saturday, December 30, 2017

Orlando Brown

Oklahoma Sooners



Q. How was Disneyland?

ORLANDO BROWN: It's fun, man. I rode two rides, didn't do more than that.

Q. Did you go on any of the rides?

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, yeah, I went on the cars ride and then I think it was Toy Story.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

Q. How has the bowl week been?

ORLANDO BROWN: It was good fun, man. I mean, we had the opportunity to go to Disneyland. We had the opportunity to go to The Improv, The Beef Bowl. We have had a lot of fun.

Q. Is it a benefit?

ORLANDO BROWN: I don't know if it's a benefit. I think it may be makes it harder, man, because you've got to put a lot more focus into yourself and the team to make sure that you're continually getting better, and obviously I think that's one of the more difficult parts.

Q. What do you think about Georgia?

ORLANDO BROWN: Um, man, you know, they got a ton of great talent, a lot of depth. They play very hard, coached very well. Man, they're in the playoffs for a reason.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Uh-huh.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yep.

Q. What is your strategy?

ORLANDO BROWN: Um, just continue to do our jobs. It's not going to take anything extravagant. We have to do just continue to do our jobs and be aggressive.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah.

Q. (No microphone.)

Yeah, very important. Making sure that we get (Away from mic.) Linebacker, safety, whatever it might be, making sure that we're finishing our

blocks and getting guys on the ground, very important.

Q. Are you expecting them to bring their A game?

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, you know, we expect it. We expect them to bring the house. We understand the different blitz they have done throughout the year. Just like they understand the different things we have done throughout the year. We expect some new stuff and we're ready for it.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: A lot easier. When he's able to make guys miss and do what he does, man. It makes our job a lot easier. We understand we may have to block. I love it when he does his job consistently.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: A lot, man, a lot. You know what I mean? He's our guy, we run behind him, he understands that and he's been out there practicing and performing like he's -- (Away from mic.)

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: No problem.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: I'm good.

Q. How is getting ready for Georgia looking like?

ORLANDO BROWN: It's been long since the last time we kicked off a game. It's been a lot of film work, a lot of different film work getting into some other things. I think they're very talented as a defense, one of the best fronts in the country.

Q. In terms of what they bring to the table versus what you have seen, how different are they?

ORLANDO BROWN: You know, they do some things similar to some guys we've played. Schematically it's a little different honestly just because everyone has their own things that they do. I don't think schematically, you know, it's too much different from what we have seen already. We've seen a lot of similar things schematically from what they do.

Q. What do you think of them?

ORLANDO BROWN: Very talented, very fast, makes a lot of plays for them.

Q. How is Baker?

ORLANDO BROWN: He's good.

Q. As far as the run game, who are you using?

ORLANDO BROWN: I don't know, man, I couldn't tell you, I don't know, you have to ask Coach Riley that one.

Q. What were your perceptions about playing in the Rose Bowl? What do you think about it?

ORLANDO BROWN: Honestly coming to the game I didn't know how big of a deal it was. I wasn't a kid that grew up watching college football, so I looked at the Rose Bowl as any other bowl. I understood it was prestigious, but I haven't gotten into college football until I started getting recruited in high school. After being here for a few days and realizing how big it is, man, I'm excited.

Q. What has been your favorite part of the week?

ORLANDO BROWN: The Improv was really fun. They had some different comedians come up. We did some funny stuff. That was my favorite part.

Q. How was the Beef Bowl?

ORLANDO BROWN: It was cool, really cool.

Q. How much did you eat?

ORLANDO BROWN: Just one plate. In the Beef Bowl.

Q. Just one plate?!

ORLANDO BROWN: No, no, I just did one plate, yeah!

Q. You didn't have five plates?

ORLANDO BROWN: No, not at all. They cut that pretty big.

Q. Have you ever bought roses for somebody and if so when was that?

ORLANDO BROWN: I have not. I have never bought roses for somebody.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Absolutely, absolutely, man, hopefully we get one today! One!

Q. How is Baker?

ORLANDO BROWN: He'll be all right. He will be fine.

Q. What is the biggest thing that stands out on Georgia?

ORLANDO BROWN: They do some stuff schematically, that we haven't seen just because we haven't played Georgia, but other than that they've got a ton of talent, a lot of depth. It's taken a lot of film work to make sure we got our minds right and we are physically ready to play these guys.

Q. How has preparation changed when you are playing someone you haven't seen all year?

ORLANDO BROWN: You know, it really doesn't change much. The preparation doesn't change much. The only difference is you've got thirty days or however long it's been so I don't think it changes much.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yep.

Q. Are you guys worried about Baker?

ORLANDO BROWN: No, not at all. He'll be all right.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: No, man, he'll be all right. I'm sure he'll be okay.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Honestly can't. I think Georgia is in the playoffs for a reason and they are one of the top defenses in the country.

Q. Is there anything that is similar to another team you've faced this year?

ORLANDO BROWN: Probably so. Are you asking from, like, defensive perspective or offensive perspective?

Q. Their offense?

ORLANDO BROWN: I don't watch their offense. I didn't watch their offense. I couldn't tell you.

Q. Anything similar?

ORLANDO BROWN: You know, a little bit here and there schematically, things that they do, not too much of the same.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yep, yep.

Q. How has the week been?

ORLANDO BROWN: You know, just kind of been a long time. But we have had plenty of time to prepare, taking care of business some of these last few days and been staying in the film room.

Q. What do you think about Georgia?

ORLANDO BROWN: Like you said, a lot of speed defense, very physical, very strong, and they play hard.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, yeah, he's good, yeah.

Q. (No microphone.) (Laughter.)

ORLANDO BROWN: (Away from mic.)

Q. What do you do to prepare yourself before a game?

ORLANDO BROWN: Really just kind of stay to myself. I watch a lot of film so I do that normally. I really don't every really get nervous. It's not a thing for me. I love what I do. I believe and I have confidence in my game. It's not really a nervousness for me or anything like that it's making sure my mind is right, making sure my body is right and getting the proper rest.

Q. Are you nervous?

ORLANDO BROWN: You said like if I was nervous?

Q. Yeah.

ORLANDO BROWN: Not at all.

Q. Why is that?

ORLANDO BROWN: I think when you play this game it's important to be as calm as possible going into it and understanding what you're good at it; and like I said, confidence, and just going in there with the mentality that you're going to dominate the guy in be front of you regardless what happens. You've got to forgive and forget the plays that happen, the bad ones and the good ones and continue to the next play. That's how I approach the game. No reason for me to get nervous.

Q. What about others?

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, you know, it's a lot of people out here that do get nervous. I think when you get nervous, a lot of times people gravitate toward teammates or high-energy guys to bring 'em back or make sure that everything is okay. In these bigger games you've got guys like me that are pretty calm and a lot of people gravitate toward me to make sure things are going well.

Q. What do you think about the narrative that Big 12 is an underdog compared to the SEC?

ORLANDO BROWN: You know, man, we're taking it pretty personal. We're more concerned with coming out of here with a win. We understand it has to be physical and we approach every game with that mentality and we're going to be the more physical team and we're not going to worry about winning, just following the plan.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: No, we didn't, not at all, nope.

Q. How do you feel about the coaching games?

ORLANDO BROWN: You know, man, we were fortunate enough to keep Coach Riley and our offensive coaching staff. Usually staffs lose coaches, so we didn't have to lose much. Our chemistry was still

there and we had a bunch of guys stay and not many transfers. I don't think much changed, so that's probably the reason why.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, I mean, we play offense, man. We want to score as many points as possible and that's just the mentality we approach every game with.

Q. Are you going to try to save for the College Football Playoff championship game?

ORLANDO BROWN: No, not at all, man, you know what I mean? These next two games is laying it all on the line. Not too many get put in this position, only four teams every year, normally the same two of them are here every year, so really two new teams every year. But, um, man, you're going to lay it all on the line for what you want.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: I'm sure they'll be okay.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, he's been fine, yep.

Q. What's your week been like? The experiences?

ORLANDO BROWN: It's been fun, man. I think the most fun I had was at The Improv. I don't ride rides and the Beef Bowl was really cool, but The Improv was really fun.

Q. Who on Georgia's line stands out to you?

ORLANDO BROWN: I think 13, 15, 17, 7. All their linebackers are really good. They got a ton of talent, a ton of depth.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, yeah, I mean, like I said, he'll be fine. We're not worried.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: He hasn't but he probably will get some soon. (Chuckles.)

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: No, man, that's enough for me!

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: He's athletic, very long, strong guy, you know what I mean? He plays very hard.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: You know we was just making sure he's -- like I said, he's very athletic. He has got

great duration for a guy his size. Really just trying to better myself honestly when it comes to these type of games. It's not as much about them but more about me.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Oh, everything, everything. You know, I'm a lot faster and stronger now than I was in high school, a lot quicker. There is so much that's changed.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Not at all. Not at all.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, that's what we anticipated. We set this goal as leaders and as captains, man, and we have had others follow and it's a credit to Coach Riley and what he's able to do with his staff to continue to develop us, you know, Coach Schmidt and the strength staff, what they continue to do to develop us. This is what we expected. We expected to be here and we expect to be in the national championship. That's how we set our goals and that's what we want.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Absolutely, yeah. We play in the Big 12, you know, and a lot of people don't respect that football. It is what it is. You see our scores throughout the season, 50-40. You're quick to think the defenses aren't all that well so it leads you to think it's an air raiding league. But like I said, it is what it is.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, oh yeah, yep.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: They've got a lot of depth, a lot of talent. I think their linebacker core is really great as a whole. Defensively they play very hard. They're coached very well, too.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, yeah, they're definitely one of the best we've seen.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah. You know, man, I --

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, probably not close to Ohio State, man. They do a lot of different stuff schematically. I don't think they compare to any team we've really seen.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah. You know, not really.

We've taken care of business these last two weeks and we've continued to make sure our bodies are right, our minds are right to go out there and fight.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, absolutely, yeah! (Chuckles.)

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: I ain't going to say he got no Hollywood tattoo or something, but that's something he goes by.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: I think that's something he's done. I think he says he feels better when he wears it. He plays well when he wears it and I just hope he continues to have success.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: That's what he says.

Q. How is he personality wise?

ORLANDO BROWN: He's a fun guy, obviously from Florida, so he's different. But I mean, a lot of energy, a lot of swag, a lot of juice.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: You know, obviously it's tough. Regardless, man, whether it be me at home chilling. It doesn't have to be a game for me. I don't get nervous for these big games, man. It's football. I do what I do. I love what I do. I have a lot of confidence in myself and my game. Do I wish he was there to support me? Yeah, but when he was alive he was watching the game. He's a guy that watches back home on the couch. I do wish that I had the ability to call him after a game or something like that, man, but it's obviously something that I've been dealing with since I've been playing the game I feel like and you know man I'm not going to say I'm used to it but I understand.

Q. Do you find yourself watching film from back then?

ORLANDO BROWN: Obviously, it's hard. He played from '93 to '05. They threw elbows. They didn't pass as much then. My dad was a fundamental player. He was aggressive. His footwork was trash, but he do what he do. I'm not the same player, so it is what it is.

Q. Do you find yourself running across people, scouts at different places or as you go through the football journey that have had interactions with him?

ORLANDO BROWN: Absolutely, absolutely. I met a lot of people in this game, a lot of different coaches, Bill Belichick was his head coach, so they had a ton of

people underneath him that I've been able to meet, Marvin Lewis, Nick Saban, so many guys. I run into a lot of people.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, Nick Saban actually told me a story. I knew a little bit of it, when he was in high school when he was recruiting him. Nick was telling me that -- Coach Saban was telling me that when my dad got there he was an undrafted free agent and they didn't let him wear shoulder pads all year, just a helmet and a jersey.

Q. Really?

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: No.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah.

Q. You're going to have a much different journey next year. How do you expect that to go?

ORLANDO BROWN: If I decide to leave this year, hopefully I have that be opportunity to be a first-round pick, that's something he wanted, something I've always wanted and something I set my goals for.

Q. How has your game evolved?

ORLANDO BROWN: Man, really just fundamentally, you know what I mean? Footwork, timing, punching, understanding of certain looks and certain things, I think that's where my game has improved the most. Obviously that's taken a lot of time, a lot of hard work and man. I'm not there yet. I still got a lot to do, but it's been a long ride.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Oh, friends and --

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Absolutely I ran across him in Atlanta in the recruiting process, met him freshman year of high school. My dad was actually around, spoke at my dad's funeral, so him and Belichick. Yeah, man, I've ran into Kirk a lot.

Q. He's a great guy?

ORLANDO BROWN: Absolutely.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Basically they just told stories about some -- crazy stories that he had done, funny things about him and talked about how he was as a person, how he was as far as interactions with him and how he was in the locker room, a lot of different things.

Q. How do you feel about carrying on his legacy, carrying his name, literally? You talk to so many people and they remember him as a wonderful person. How gratifying is it to come and honor him?

ORLANDO BROWN: It's been very important, man, you know what I mean? I'm Brown, Junior, so I understand the responsibility that it comes with and I understand it's a privilege at the same time, man, and I'm hoping to continue to get better and reach the goals that I set, you know what I mean, that we both set. I reached the goals that he set and couldn't reach. So, yeah, man, I got a lot, man, that's why I play with a big chip on my shoulder for my mom and I'm continuing to carry on the legacy and make sure I reach the goals that I set.

Q. How have you evolved personally? If I remember right you were a late qualifier, Tennessee backed off. How do you and this Oklahoma program, how have you grown up?

ORLANDO BROWN: My mentor, Jammal Brown, he showed me something I haven't learned anywhere else, and that's treating life as a whole like the game, you know what I mean, with the approach that you want to be the best at everything you do and embodying that, whether it be a haircut or clothes or you know what I mean? The way that you approach a girl or the classroom, man, making sure that you take care of all those different things.

Q. When did he teach you that?

ORLANDO BROWN: After my dad passed he kinda came into my life more obviously because he understood that I didn't have that figure. Just over time.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: No, he played at OU. He played for the Saints and the Skins for a while.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: No, no, no, like he graduated in '05, '04 so --

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: I knew him through my dad, though.

Q. Was he one of the reasons you went to Oklahoma?

ORLANDO BROWN: Not at all.

Q. Where is he now?

ORLANDO BROWN: He's in Virginia. You can probably get his number from one of our media guys.

They have it.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely, absolutely.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Honestly, I have his number. I just don't want it put it on camera. (Away from mic.)

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yep, yep. I mean, he might know something, but --

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Coach knows me but I didn't really -- I only not spent basically a year and a half there.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Alabama, for high school.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: I'm solid! No!

Q. Did they make you wear this attire?

ORLANDO BROWN: Man, they made us wear this. If it was up to me I would probably have worn some type of different sweat suit, but it is what it is.

Q. What's it been like?

ORLANDO BROWN: It's been fun. For me the best fun was at the Improv last night, the comedians, all that stuff was fun. Disneyland was fun, but can't ride my rides so --

Q. Baker Mayfield, is he okay?

ORLANDO BROWN: What's wrong with him?

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: I don't know. He'll be fine though.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: He's been good, same 'ol, same 'ol.

Q. What's the biggest thing you're trying to key on?

ORLANDO BROWN: It's a lot, man, it's a lot. They've got plenty of time to prepare for us, great defense, great coaching staff. So I don't know if there is anything specifically we're keying on, but we're excited for the match-up.

Q. Outside of the X's and O's what's the extra motivation that you guys have right now?

ORLANDO BROWN: You know, man, the motivation of making it to a national championship, you know, man.

It is what it is. That's one of the goals we set as a team and, yeah, man, and that is the most important thing.

Q. How about your head coach, Coach Riley? (Laughter.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, yeah, Coach Riley, everything he's done to get us to this point, the coaching staff, obviously Coach Bedenbaugh and --

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Oh, just the consistency he's had with us. You know what I mean? He's not continued to, you know, stay with us and, you know, continue to understand us and all of those different things.

Q. You're one of the few guys on the O roster that -- (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Uh-huh.

Q. An hour, perhaps?

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, about an hour and 15. Yeah.

Q. Growing up were you an Oklahoma fan?

ORLANDO BROWN: I grew up in Baltimore, Maryland. I lived in Atlanta for two years. I lived there because my mom lived there, but I grew up a Terrapin fan. I couldn't tell you much about the SEC. I didn't know about it until I moved down there.

Q. What about your family coming out?

ORLANDO BROWN: They're excited. My mom loves when I play in these bigger games and being able to come to them so I look forward to them and look forward to seeing her.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, you know, man, it is what it is. We'll see on Monday.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, we set this goal every year. I'm pretty sure just like every team in the country you set the goal to make it to the national championship and that's where the focus goes. It goes to win your conference then to win the playoff and then to win the national championship. But for our biggest goal just like every team it's to win a national championship and that's what we worked for.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: You know just as much, I think. As far as us individuals, during the season, man, it's more, you know, one-week-at-a-time mentality. We may talk about it or as an offensive line or as a team, stuff like that.

Q. (No microphone.)

ORLANDO BROWN: Yeah, Tre has been a guy that --he's been an assistant for a while. He understands what he's doing, and he does it very well.

Rose Bowl Game: Georgia vs Oklahoma

Saturday, December 30, 2017

Ogbonnia Okoronkwo

Oklahoma Sooners

Q. How has the week been?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: It's been good. Pretty slow pace. Just been doing a lot of Georgia, just looking at their offense, preparing.

Q. In terms of what they do, how different is it?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: It's a lot different than the Big 12 for sure. Similarities can be (indiscernible) and Ohio State. Their running game and (indiscernible) O line, but nothing like the Big 12.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Towards the end of the year he started playing with a lot more confidence. I think he's a really good player.

Q. How's Baker?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: He's fine, just sniffles.

Q. This would be the fourth time there isn't a Big Ten or SEC, a Big Ten or Pac-12 team in it. This is kind of a unique experience having a team involved from the Big 12?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: It's been fun. But we've been enjoying it. It's a lot of work at practice but we're just taking it day-by-day.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: So far, just practice. Practice has been really competitive. I feel like our guys have really turned it up another notch and it's been really good out there.

Q. How was the Lawry's Beef Bowl?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: That was fun. It was fun just being around everybody. I love free prime rib. I can't complain about that. I cleaned my plate, every last bit to even the creamed corn, the mashed potatoes, everything.

Q. Did you get seconds?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I wish. I'm not sure, I didn't ask. I didn't want to be that guy.



Q. Almost like a competition between the two teams?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Oh really. Somebody should have told me that. I didn't even have to unbuckle my pants or anything.

Q. It's supposed to be a competition between the two teams.

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Oh, wow. I didn't know.

Q. Have you ever bought roses for anyone?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I brought roses for my girlfriend at the time and Sadie Grays (phonetic), Valentine's Day.

Q. Sadie Grays? You were ahead of the curve.

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, I was a little ladies' man. I'm not a rose guy anymore. I think roses are cliché. But don't quote me -- (laughter) -- I'm not really a rose guy anymore.

Q. I think you can make an exception.

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, for sure. For sure.

Q. How has the week been?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: It's been cool. We got to do a lot of things with the team. We went to Disneyland. I enjoyed that. Rode some rides. I haven't ridden a lot of rides in my life. That was my second time. I had fun. And then the Beef Bowl, they had a lot of fun with it. They had a little skit with two of our players. And free prime rib, I enjoyed it.

Most enjoyable moment? Getting on the ride for sure. I about had a heart attack on the ride.

Q. How about the weather?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: It's been cool. The weather's been real nice. I like it. It's like hot and cold at the same time, I don't know how to explain it. It feels good, though. It's real breezy.

Q. Does it make it easier?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I think it's easier. It's a business trip. Coach Riley really instilled that in us before we left that it's not a vacation. We have things to do and goals to accomplish. Everybody knows it.

Q. What do you think of Georgia?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Just a rough, physical team. Two NFL-caliber running backs. Just a very



solid O line. They're a really good team.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I mean, football is football. We feel like we're going to put our pads on just like they are, we're going to play football.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, I'm going for it. I hope so.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Every chance I get I have to make him feel pressure, to make him make a decision really quickly. Before that we have to get them into predictable situations on first and second down.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Our D line, everybody was ready to play. They've been getting a lot of scrutiny all year, saying that the pass rush has been this and that. But I told him not to worry about it. After this game nobody will have anything to say about them.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Just practicing lower, lower leverage, being more physical at the point of attack, just stuff like that at that practice.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Can't say. He doesn't need to be coached up. He's ready to go.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: It doesn't feel different, but my role is definitely different. But it's the same thing. Everybody was pumped for that game. Everybody was ready to go. It's the same thing now. It's a business trip. Everybody here is focusing, ready to play.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yes, sir. The difference, I think, us handling this trip is just, like, we can't expect to show up and win. There has to be extra work done, behind-the-scenes work. Has to be stuff that's done like in our free time. Even though there's not a lot of that, we still have to be able to put in that extra when it's just us in our hotel room.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Well, not really, just because after losing everybody counted us out. So we still feel like that, that we have the underdog mentality.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I think so. I would say Iowa State just because of how much they ran the ball.

Q. [Regarding the Big 12-SEC differences]

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I mean, we aren't an underdog, but people only say that because they're in the SEC and we're in the Big 12. So I think it's more just a narrative that they're following.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Not at all. I mean, we did it last year in the Sugar Bowl. That was just a year ago. I don't know how people forgot so fast.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Not saying that. You know, I just don't understand where that comes from. You know, like, it confuses me, honestly, when people say that we can't play physical football. It's like the Big 12, the offenses are different but at the end of the day football is still football.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, I love my equipment staff. Those guys are the best. They work overtime for us. They get us all the nice stuff. I mean, you all see our swag out here today (laughter).

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Just containing him. He's an explosive guy. He makes a lot of plays with his feet. We've just got to limit him. He's going to make plays. They're going to keep feeding him the ball but we just have to limit him.

Q. Have you been watching the Rose Bowl before?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: It's been really cool. Yeah, I grew up watching college football a lot. I remember the Rose Bowl, USC and Texas, I have it on DVD. I just watched it while I was home.

It's just really a dream come true being here. Just as a kid, like, always wanted to be here but never know until it's actually going to happen. It's just cool.

Q. You being a defender, do you like watching Georgia?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, I really like the defense. They're really athletic. They're really fast and physical. I really enjoy watching their defense play.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I don't think we weren't prepared last time. It's just, you just gotta show up on game day. Last time I feel like the leaders, they had us prepared, the coaches had us prepared, we just didn't get it done. It wasn't due to lack of preparation or anything, just somebody has to lose; somebody has to win.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Well, we just control what we can control. And we control all the variables that we can control. So we have done everything that can be asked of us. So we're going to like the result, what we get, whatever it is. We've done everything we can.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I do. I definitely get tired of it, because it really just doesn't make any sense. Like people act like we haven't played SEC teams every single year that I've been here and won. We respect the SEC; they're a really talented conference and really explosive. It's just that I mean for people to just count us out because we're playing a team from the SEC, I think that's ridiculous.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I don't think it's possible. I don't think it's possible. I think he has eyes in the back of his head. He can run around and do all that, but it's nothing like the (inaudible) at all.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I don't have any of (inaudible) (laughter).

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Baker? I see him every day. (Inaudible) (laughter) There's nothing wrong with him. There's nothing wrong with that kid.

Q. Do you think he'll play?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, he's been at every practice. He's fine. They've only held him out of (inaudible) football, so he doesn't miss anything.

Q. Kind of wish (inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I mean, there's a lot more energy when Baker is not here (laughter).

Q. Is he coughing up anything? Is he really sick?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: No, not since the first day. The first day he was under the weather. But he's like way better since then. I'm wondering why he's not with us.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: For sure.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, for sure. Yeah, I would say Ohio State just for the title level.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, yes, sir. We've done it before. At this point we're just ready to play. We know they're going to run the ball. We've been working on it for a month. There's no surprises there. We're just ready to play.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I love this break. I love this break. We got a lot of guys back. A lot of guys are fresh. They're ready to go. A lot of guys had ample amount of time to watch film. We feel like with all this time it can only help us.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, he's been at every practice, taking all the first-team reps.

Q. Being a defensive end and linebacker, how do you (inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Just gotta tackle him. He's going to get the ball, you tackle him (laughter).

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I'm a senior. Senior.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, I mean, this is my goal since the summer started, since strength and conditioning started. ATL. We put it on our shirts. You can't go a day in the locker room without hearing someone saying ATL. That's been our motto, our slogan. That's what it's been about, the big was our first goal and now this is our second.

Q. You guys (inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: We gotta tackle well. We feel like we did that. We tackled a lot better at the end of the season. I'm pretty confident, we've just got to contain them.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: As far as what?

Q. Offense?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: From Georgia? No, we feel like we're definitely prepared. There's nothing more we can watch. We've had a month. We've seen everything. So we're just ready to play at this point.

Q. Do you feel like (inaudible) in the moment (indiscernible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: This is a business trip. Nobody is overwhelmed. We're ready to play.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: We've got to start with the

edge. If you want to win, win big games you've got to start fast and come out and (inaudible). These games are usually hard-fought games. And you want to give yourself every advantage.

Q. (Inaudible) is there anything (inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Well, maybe just at the end of the day you're going to win it. Just like, I don't know if they're really like just emotions, like that you're going to win it no matter what, because we definitely didn't have a doubt in our mind about losing until it happened.

Q. Anything different about (inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: For sure. Yeah, there's definitely things. But I don't really talk about stuff like that in interviews.

Q. Playing the SEC, there's much made about Oklahoma being the underdog?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I mean, I just feel like people like to hype it up. They want us to say something that's going to like become a headline, but it's not that big of a deal to us. We're just playing a team that we get scheduled to play. And when it's the SEC, we've been 4-0 in the past four years, so those are just facts.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Baker is practicing just fine. He hasn't missed a rep. I'm confident.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I can't tell. He's still talking crap to me (laughter).

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: No, not at all. He's just missing all the media stuff. And honestly that's hurting me too because I'm getting all these interviews now (laughter).

Q. Ready for Monday?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: He'll be fine.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: He'll tell you that. That's my right-hand man. He's out there making all the calls. He's out there really getting people lined up. He's just like -- it's like having another coach on the field.

He watches just as much film as me, knows what's going on before it happens. He's able to communicate it to everybody. He's been a real big help to me this year.

Q. What's it like (inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: His whole town is watching him. I think that's a lot of pressure to some people. Caleb, he loves like being in high-pressure situations. That's where he thrives.

Q. How was his performance (inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Caleb, if his game is -- I told him this is going to be his game, just like the Sugar Bowl last year. That was his coming-out party. I told him, like, we need another one like that one on Monday.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: No. Just because we're not done yet. You don't stop in the middle of the race and be, like, wow, I'm super ahead of everybody. You just keep going. You've got to win it before you start trying to jeopardize yourself.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: For sure. We're on the right track. But we're not really taking time to look back and reflect or anything. You can easily be reflecting on how you lost in the semifinals or you've just got to keep going.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I mean, I feel like Coach Riley did a really good job in this transition. It feels like normal. I've been here for the last four years. This year didn't feel any different.

Coach Riley stepped in. It was seamless. The transition didn't slow us down at all. So it was fine. I feel like this year like it went so smoothly just because of that.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, just because our last year we really stressed leadership. We felt like after the Texas Tech game last year, we made our biggest strides in leadership, but we didn't want to have another game like that this year so we tried to get on that early.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: He loves it. You see him? He probably has some (inaudible) right now, some shades. He loves that.

Q. What's (inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: He's just a real, like, confident dude. He believes in his ability. He knows he's the fastest guy on the field and he's going to let you hear it.

Q. What's it been like (inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: It should have already happened for him. If anything, it was late. We see him do it in practice, take the top off of the defense all the time at practice. The guy, you can't run with him stride for stride. Just happy to see him finally break out in Bedlam.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: (Laughter.) No, that's not my thing. No, it's just not my thing.

Q. How proud are you of Murray?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Oh, man, to be out there doing what he's doing at 18, you know, I don't think I could do that, you know? He's out there really making calls and being a Mike linebacker. He's a quarterback that (inaudible) us. That's a really big deal. A lot of people don't give him enough credit for that. He's really young and he's really controlling, like, 11 bodies on the field at once.

Just a testament to how good of a coach Coach Kish is. He develops players. He just moved to inside backer, never played it before and he got Freshman All-American. I'm just ready to see how good that guy can be because the sky's the limit for him.

Q. What have you done to help him out?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I can't take any credit for what he's done. Yeah, we've done extra workouts together. We watch film together. But that's all him. That's all his want, too. He's just a hard worker. He just wants to outwork everybody on the field.

Q. Was it a little overwhelming for him back in the season opener? (Inaudible) a young guy like?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: What I told him in the season opener, you won't know how it feels until you feel it. And he got to -- everybody has to go through the -- everybody that first time on the field, everybody goes through the jitters, but they're definitely gone now.

Q. (Inaudible) his role is important.

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, for sure. People aren't going to like mention him just because he's a freshman. But what Kenny [Mann] does for our defense is big. He's sideline to sideline, he's physical. He makes you feel him in the gaps. And he just brings a physical dimension to our defense. But he's definitely a big concern for -- he should be a big concern for Georgia.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I feel like getting there, from starting the season at 18, so happy to be there. I see what they're saying. We're here, we've been -- known we were going to be here the whole season. There was no doubt in our mind that we were going to

be in the front all season.

Right now we're at the point where we just want to continue, like, checking off our goal list -- semifinals, check; and then national championship, check. So I guess that's the difference. It's been on our to-do list. They're just another team to cross off.

Q. How does this translate to (inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: For sure, just because we've been here before. I haven't been out once compared to 2015, I know I went out a couple of times. It's like I don't really care about that stuff. I know what's in front of me. I know what possibly could be in front of me. We just want to handle business.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I see a lot on tape.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, there's definitely opportunities. Every time you have a guy with less experience, you want to just -- it's just smarter to try things on his side. But, I mean, I don't really talk much game plan in interviews. (Laughter) sorry.

Q. How does it feel (inaudible) and how has he been handling it?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: He's practicing fine. He's just been missing the media stuff. I'm pretty pissed off because without Baker everyone is at my table. I'm like, wow, come back.

Q. Is there a difference out in practice?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: No, he's fine. He's fine. It's just all precautionary.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I mean, we're looking at this as a business trip. We're not even really like trying to enjoy everything. We just want to get to the game and we want to win.

Q. How about Lincoln Riley becoming the head coach? What stands out most to you about him?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Just his confidence. The way he carries himself. Coach Riley, he's a guy you want to follow. You can see that there's no doubt in his mind that he believes that we can win this game. And when players see that, it's contagious.

Q. How about the rest time?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: It's been good for us. We've got a lot of guys back from injury. A lot of guys got to rest. I got to rest. My body feels great. I feel like I did at the beginning of the season.

being a sissy (laughter).

Q. Anybody else been sick? Is it stuff going around?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Just allergies, the changing weather. In Norman, it was like 25, 26, and then coming here and it's like in the 70s. Just a change of weather.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, I was feeling it a little bit like the first day, but I got over it.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Just how explosive they are. Nick Chubb, he's a guy you're not going to arm tackle, not just going to bring him down with one arm. You've got to really be physical when tackling him.

And (indiscernible), he's just a guy who can make some ridiculous cuts. I've seen him make some cuts, some video game cuts on film. They're just two NFL-caliber guys. We're excited for the challenge.

Q. Talk about how (indiscernible) has prepared you for those guys. (Inaudible) issues with the running back -- a year ago (inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, that's sort of what I've been saying in practice. We have Rodney [Anderson] back there. We have Abdul Adams back there. We have Trey Sermon back there. And I've been going against Samaje and (indiscernible) for years. We've seen really good backs.

We've seen really good backs, we've seen really great backs. We've seen really great backs and elusive backs. We've seen it all, so our defense, we're prepared to play against guys like that.

Q. (Inaudible) year ago and the Bulldogs (inaudible). How has it been for them (inaudible) do they handle it pretty well?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, they've been able to fully lock in, that's been good to see. They've been really taking advantage of the time off, really watching a lot of film. Everybody's locked in. They know what they're doing. They know they'll really have to play fast and there's going to have to be no hesitation on the field.

Q. (Inaudible) overly complicated. (Indiscernible) charged up for it, (indiscernible) confidence and being under control as much as possible.

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: For sure, because it's not rocket science what they're doing. When they line up, they might have a couple of variations, but they're

Q. For Georgia, the running back that you're up against, how does (inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: That's fair to say. Just tackle him. They have the ball, you tackle them, you know? You've just got to contain them. They're NFL-caliber running backs. We know that. They're really good. We believe we've prepared well enough that it's just going to come down to tackling.

Q. (Indiscernible) game plan (inaudible). What stands out and you were flat out on the ground after that game. How do you inspire yourself and everyone else to sell out like that?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Honestly, that's sort of been the motto, hold the rope. I know you watch -- I know you see like all these braces, a lot of people have braces, hold the rope. I don't have mine on today.

But that's been our motto since summer workouts, just hold the rope, don't let go. That's what's inspired us. We've all been working together. We didn't give up in the summer, don't give up now on the field.

Q. There's been a lot made about the SEC (inaudible) yesterday, saying (inaudible). Where do you land on it?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: The Big 12 doesn't get enough respect. We have one of the most competitive conferences. I think the Big 12 is 4-0 in bowl games, is that right? Do you know what the Big 12 record is now for bowl games?

Q. 4-2.

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: 4-2. And what's the SEC record, do you know that?

Q. 0-2, I think.

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Okay. I'm just saying, like, the SEC this and that. But look at what's on paper. We're 4-0 against the SEC. I'm not saying that they're a bad conference. We respect that. They have a great conference. But I just feel like a lot of people just get caught up in all that stuff.

Q. (Inaudible) a lot made of OU's defense (inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: It's fair to say, I guess. Sort of the first half of the season we weren't playing our best football. But we really started clicking, and we started playing like complementary football with the offense until the end of the season.

Q. Any doubt about Baker? He just walked in a few minutes ago for interviews. Did you ever worry about him being able to play in this game?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: No, I told him to stop

trying to outwill you. They're trying to just run over you. It's a mano-a-mano type of game. You've just gotta win your matchup.

Q. How do you feel?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: We feel great.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: He's passionate. He cares. He cares so much. He's the first guy there and the last guy there. The guy like -- he's really a genius. He can retain so much information.

Everything I get, like, he'll text me sometimes and be like, hey, did you watch this game? Did you see them do that? There's just so many things that he's shown me about different offenses just through the course of this year has helped me be successful.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Oh, yeah. It's just when your coach is putting that much effort in and he's not even playing, it makes you, like, question what you're doing and it makes you check your stuff up.

Q. Highlight of the trip?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Highlight, I would say Disneyland. Yeah, Disneyland, just riding all those rides. That was fun.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I just want to shout out to my brother right here, Caleb Kelly. That's my little bro (laughter). That's my boy. New Year's resolutions, I just want to get closer to God and just take care of my family.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Love you all, watch the game. I'm going to try to put on a show. I'm going to try.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I feel good. I feel good. Got a couple of days before the game (laughter). Got a couple of days before the game, just resting, kicking my feet up, tipping off some Propel. (Laughter).

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: You mean first game, personally? I don't know. I don't think about stuff like that. Best game of our defense -- hold on, hold on. The playoff -- (laughter) the best game for the whole defense, I would say the Big 12 Championship.

We started off the first game with a touchdown. I don't know who scored it. What was his name? (Laughter)

We started the game with a touchdown. It was 17-17 at halftime -- 17-14. They didn't score again in the second half. I feel another dominant game by our defense.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: I would just say it's experience. There's nothing that I haven't been through. And I feel like that just helps. A moment is never going to be too big for me. You're never going to see me, like, just waver when it's crunch time because I've been here. I'm old. I've been here for 10 years (laughter). I always say that. Like there's nothing that can surprise me at this point.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Yeah, I mean, I got all my brothers. They still love the game. Whenever I get an off week I'm definitely going to come down.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Let me see, I gotta think about this one. (Laughter) they got -- (laughter). If I'm watching the Sooners I'm going to be watching Caleb Kelly.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Oh, yeah, and Kenneth Murray for sure.

Q. (Inaudible)?

OGBONNIA OKORONKWO: Hey, he can really do this. Yeah.

Rose Bowl Game: Georgia vs Oklahoma

Saturday, December 30, 2017

Steven Parker

Oklahoma Sooners



Q. Can you talk about the challenge that Georgia presents?

STEVEN PARKER: I mean, they present a lot of challenges, especially in the defensive end. You know, just with how they, you know, how they get into formations and how they lock everything up. You know, everything is going to be kind of a challenge as far as stopping the running game and that's going to be the biggest key of this game.

Q. Is there anything that you're impressed by?

STEVEN PARKER: Definitely. Actually one thing I'm really impressed by is player play-action pass and their receiving core. Their receiving core isn't really talked about a whole lot but they actually have some pretty nice receivers.

Q. And the running backs?

STEVEN PARKER: Definitely, the running backs, they have three versatile guys that can go, so we're going to have be ready to stop them.

Q. How would you sum up your season, not just as a team, but for yourself, personally?

STEVEN PARKER: The team is as close as it's ever been in my four-year journey. We've had a lot, a lot of success as far as in practice and in getting everybody right as far as preparation goes, and to get us ready for each and every game.

So that includes scouts; that includes second team, third team, first team. You know, everybody. Everybody on this team. Everybody is growing closer together and everybody has been practicing hard and preparing hard.

Q. As captain, what is your job?

STEVEN PARKER: My job is to be in the film room, basically putting this defense together, helping this defense together. So really molding everybody and being the grew to the defense as far as communication and making sure everybody gets the call.

Q. Have you seen anything close this season?

STEVEN PARKER: I wouldn't say. So I feel like Georgia kind of has their own unique type of offense. It's similar to Ohio State but I wouldn't stay it's Ohio

State.

I feel like they have their own brand which is more of an SEC-type of brand. It's kind of what we faced last year a little bit versus Auburn. You know they are going to try to come at you, and they are basically going to try to run the ball and establish the run.

Q. What would you say you do to prepare mentally and physically to prepare for games?

STEVEN PARKER: I'm sorry, what do I do? Mentally and physically, I just try to make sure that I'm prepared as far as a captain goes. You know, making sure that I can call out some of the things that they are going to do or run on particular formations and being ready to go.

Q. What do you think about the activities you guys have done this week?

STEVEN PARKER: I love kind of what the Rose Bowl does. They really make sure we get the football side of it but yet we get to interact a little bit amongst each other. It makes the game a lot easier to come by, and the week easier, you know, just because you have different events to kind of glue the team together a little bit, especially since we're not together around the Holiday season.

Q. Do you worry about your teammates being overwhelmed?

STEVEN PARKER: No, not at all. I feel like this is a special group right here, and I feel like everyone on that field, I know every one of us is ready for this game. This game right here, we've been talking about this since, you know, last winter workouts. You know, it started in there, and then it came on to be, you know, in summer that we really started to mold together closer and closer and then fall camp, as you know, went by smooth.

So I feel like each and every season, this is what we've been talking about, and this is what we made it.

Q. What's it mean to play in the Rose Bowl game?

STEVEN PARKER: It's a blessing. I've grown up watching the Rose Bowl my whole life. One of my favorite games, actually, was the USC-Texas game and that right there, it still gets me till today. I'm like, man, I was going for USC that game or that day. It was a

great game. Vince Young put together a great drive at the end to finish it out but that's one of my favorite all-time games.

Q. Does Baker Mayfield remind you of --

STEVEN PARKER: I would say you could say that, but then again, Baker is Baker. I feel Baker is his own unique brand. He's going to be remembered in college football for a long time.

Q. In the off-season, was there anything --

STEVEN PARKER: I feel like everything was pretty smooth, the transition between players and coaches, really adjusting to it on the fly. I feel like everything was smooth and it went as far as it should have went.

Q. Has anything changed or --

STEVEN PARKER: I feel like he tried to keep everything the same. We have a rhythm here at the University of Oklahoma already. He didn't want to change that. He basically wanted to make ongoing and making sure we keep ON setting the standard.

Q. They have a really deep running back rotation. What are differences --

STEVEN PARKER: They are physical, so on defense we are all going to have to show our physicality. I would say there's one or two running backs that are a little bit more versatile than the others as far as getting a chance to split them out wide and basically the running style in general. I feel they have three unique backs that are going to be some hogs and ready to go.

Q. How difficult is it to keep up the physical mentality, coming into a game like this, when you have three talented running backs, and the expectations?

STEVEN PARKER: It's our expectation. It's our expectations, that's what we're practicing each every day, thudding up and if we're not thudding up, we're going live as far as one or two periods and that's just to get you go ready for the game and that's what we did last year versus Auburn, so there's a lot of similarities.

Q. What can you say about the support staff?

STEVEN PARKER: Support staff and equipment staff, they are awesome. They make sure that we are all dressed and ready to go and make sure we have the freshest gear, and we love them for it.

Q. What about their offensive line, you're going against one of the best teams in the country at home.

STEVEN PARKER: You know, that's the thing, we have a physical offensive line. So we get a lot of great looks, even if it's not first team, but -- second team rather than first team. We're getting a great look from those guys

right there, even our scout team.

We have a lot of great guys that are going to be up-and-coming as great players. So they are really giving us a great look as far as what we're going to see on a Georgia offensive line with all the push and the physical activity.

Q. Talk about the young guys in the secondary, how they prepare. They were only playing high school football a year ago.

STEVEN PARKER: All of our young guys are ready to go. Each person that we put in there, they already know the situation that we're in. They know how to play. They know how to go out there and compete. I feel like with our young guys, we go out there and we have fun together.

That's one thing right there; if they are having fun, they are not thinking how big the game. Is they are just thinking about, you know, the situation that they get to be in and how blessed that they are.

Q. Will this game be a chance for redemption for you guys from two years ago?

STEVEN PARKER: You could say it was like a redemption. I feel like that game right there it was more of us learning from our mistakes and it's kind of what we did. We got to that situation two years ago against a great Clemson team. We beat ourselves in a way but they also came ready to play and this is going to be, you know, another opportunity right here that we get to take.

Q. Are you surprised that you're here --

STEVEN PARKER: I wouldn't say that it's surreal or surprising to us. We already know that we had a special group and we've been running with it all season. A lot of people haven't believed in us but we wanted to instill that belief in other people. We always say, but we're all that we got. I really strongly believe that.

Q. Been a crazy week, I'm sure, but what have you enjoyed most so far?

STEVEN PARKER: Honestly, I love Disneyland but the stand-up comedy was actually pretty funny yesterday. We got to see some great guys right there live and that's something new that I've never got to experience. I had a ball.

Q. You've accomplished a lot, and you obviously want to get a win, is that your wish for the new year?

STEVEN PARKER: Definitely to go ahead and get a win. I would say, you know, just for my family and other families around the world to be blessed and be safe for

the new year and just bring in the new year as far as a whole.

Q. Do you want to give a shout-out to friend and families back home?

STEVEN PARKER: Oh, yeah, shout-out to my mom and dad, my sister, my brother. Shout out to just all the fans.

Q. Do you have any concerns about Baker ready to go?

STEVEN PARKER: No, not at all. We're just basically making sure that he gets what he actually needs. He's fine. Baker's fine.

Q. Has he been able to go 100 percent in practice?

STEVEN PARKER: Yes, sir. Baker has been able to go 100 percent in practice. He's still been interacting with us outside of football. We all know Baker. He's doing fine.

Q. Do you guys give him a hard time about being sick?

STEVEN PARKER: We always give him a hard time, so it's nothing new.

Q. What's it been like this week?

STEVEN PARKER: It's really just been a great week of practice. You know, we've been running and gunning as far as practice goes, and on top of that, we've gotten a chance to go to some crazy events like Disneyland, the stand-up comedy. Those two right there probably highlight the most in my mind, but those were great days right there.

Q. In such a busy week, how do you focus?

STEVEN PARKER: It's beneficial. It gives us a chance to get away from football a little bit. We're practicing, you know, all morning for the most part, or having meetings and practice, you know, all that stuff goes together. But you know, when we get some free time, it's finally a chance to really just relax and settle down and get your mind off of football and have a couple of laughs and be with your teammates. It's a great deal.

Q. What do you see in the Georgia offense?

STEVEN PARKER: I mean, you know, just by watching film and you know, studying. The biggest things that you see is that we're going to have to be physical but we've been physical all year, so there's nothing that's going to change. It just going to be our mentality out there on the field.

Q. What do you see from Jake?

STEVEN PARKER: Jake, he's a great leader. He's a guy that I feel like will make some bad throws if we get some pressure on him. He's a young quarterback but

he's ready to go.

Q. The inside -- making sure --

STEVEN PARKER: It's huge for the secondary. For the secondary, we have to be ready to go at all times. You never know when a pass is going to come your way. All you can do is basically just align and study, study, study. That's the biggest thing right there. There's some alignments where we can call out pass or there's some that you can call out just run. So we're going to have all hands on deck and ready to go.

Q. How different is it going into this Bowl game without J.T.

STEVEN PARKER: I mean, Tre has been doing a fantastic job. J.T., you know, he's been building backup and he's been doing better and better each and every day, each and every week. Especially after he had gotten hurt but tray Norwood has done an exceptional job stepping in and basically he's just bawling.

Q. Does he seem like a freshman when he's out there playing?

STEVEN PARKER: Not at all. I mean, Tre Norwood, we're close. We're a family right here. So as far as my DBs and my wolves, we love each other to death and we could put anybody out there on that field and know that we've got each other's backs.

Q. Obviously a lot of talk about Georgia's secondary, but in the back end, you, specifically -- how important is it for you to play well?

STEVEN PARKER: It's very important for us. We have to get the defense lined up and communicating, ready to go. You know, it's very important for us to have a great game because we can't let anything behind us as safeties go, and also, we can't let anything go unknown. So we have to basically open our mouths and make sure that everybody gets the right call.

Q. Obviously a lot of people are worried about their secondary players making tackles, but you guys, how do you feel like you match up, specifically coming up and tackling?

STEVEN PARKER: We feel like we match up with them very well. This is a physical group but we are also a physical group. You know, I know that they have seen, you know, a lot of different defenses, but I feel like ours is going to be the one to really, you know, have a bittersweet game and kind of shut some people up. But we have to go out there and do it on the field. It's not talking. It's about all the actions that you do.

Q. What do you tell guys like Tre and like Kenneth, what do you tell them getting ready? Are they getting antsy?

STEVEN PARKER: Definitely getting antsy. We're

definitely all getting antsy. We've been off football for about a month now as far as not playing a game. We're all antsy to go and we're all ready to go. Those young guys, you really don't have to tell them much. They have done it all season long. If they are coming in and they are stepping up, then we're all coming in and stepping up. We all have each other's backs, like I said.

Q. This is a huge game, playing Georgia, and you had to prepare a lot. Is there any moment that you step back and say, man, I'm at the Rose Bowl and this is surreal, it's my senior year?

STEVEN PARKER: For me, I expected to get here; not I, but we, expected to get here as a team. You know, this is something that we've been talking about all season, all year long, excuse me. You know, starting from winter, going to summer, going to fall camp. We worked our butts off, so I really feel like, you know, we deserve to be here and we've concerned to be here, both of those. For us, this is just a great opportunity, you know, to be at the Rose Bowl and get the chance to represent our university.

Q. Anything you guys took from the experience a couple years ago in the Playoff?

STEVEN PARKER: I mean, it's definitely helped since we've been in a big game like this, at least some of the seniors, you know, in this class. You know, for us, we get to tell them kind of the things that we didn't do the first time. You know, why it's important to do it the second time.

So the little things is the things that matter.

Q. For you personally, is there anything that you felt like you didn't do a couple years ago that you made sure to do this year?

STEVEN PARKER: As an individual, I didn't have the greatest game as far as tackling goes. But also, you know, speaking as a safety, you know, I feel like we didn't also have the best communication. I feel like this year, it's been a lot better communicating. It's just about going out there and making some plays.

Q. How is it for you as a DB knowing more about the opponent's running attack and passing attack than some of the teams you play?

STEVEN PARKER: We're ready at all costs. It's all hands on deck for the most part, so I mean, we're going to be readying to. I mean, if they run the ball a thousand times, we're going to be ready to go defend it a thousand times. If they pass it a thousand times, we'll be ready to defend it a thousand times.

Q. Usually winning a Bowl game is an elation, and it's at the end of your season, but here, there's

really two games. How do you temper -- because the winner here, it's not the end of the mission.

STEVEN PARKER: It's not the end of the mission for us, but right now, this is the most important game that we're going to play. It's the next game. We can't think about the National Championship or anything like that because we haven't made it yet. So the most upon thing is about worrying about this game right here.

Q. You bring Baker Mayfield and they bring Jake Fromm, what do you see from him?

STEVEN PARKER: He's a humble guy that's going to be able to stand back there in the pocket. We're going to have to get some pressure on him. He's a great leader, great character, as far as his field discipline on and off the field, and we're going to have our work cut out for us in the secondary.

Q. You guys have probably been hearing it a lot, Baker Mayfield, he's been sick all week. Has he given you any words of assurance that he'll be fine?

STEVEN PARKER: We know we'll be fine. We know our quarterback.

Q. It's the worst possible time for something like this to happen; is there any concern?

STEVEN PARKER: No, no concern at all. I always think that you have to turn things into positives and he's turning it into a positive. You know, he's getting some rest that his body needs and like I said, he's fine.

Q. Lincoln was asked about Baker -- as a captain, have you felt any added responsibility?

STEVEN PARKER: Not added responsibility, because we have a lot of leaders on this team. Me, Oko, Orlando, we are all captains, but we're not the only leaders that are out there as far as offensively, defensively. You know, we have a lot more guys that can show up, guys like Mark Andrews, Dimitri Flowers, Will Johnson is up there. So we have some leadership.

Q. Given the fact that you have a new coach, here you are --

STEVEN PARKER: I'm sorry, what was your question?

Q. How surprising is it you're here with a new coach? Usually it takes awhile.

STEVEN PARKER: It's not surprising at all. With us, we already knew that we had a great coach. We already knew we had a special group, special coach, and a special group of players that we could go out there and win with. You know, if we did everything up to our expectations, we would have a great season and that's what's happened so far.

Q. What do you think he has brought different?

STEVEN PARKER: I mean, there's not a lot of differences, but then again, there is. We have a younger coach. You know, he's a little bit more hands-on, but with Coach Stoops, we feel like we would have had the same season just if we were with Coach Riley. Coach Riley has done a fantastic job with us.

Q. They have three excellent running backs; do you look at them as similar or all kind of unique in their own way?

STEVEN PARKER: They are all unique in their own way. They all have different type of styles. You have one that you can split out wide and play like a receiver and then you have two that are real running backs, but they have two different running styles.

So you know, with us, it's all about just tackling, tackling, tackling. That's the biggest thing.

Q. As a DB, do you prefer to face a team that you're more concerned about their passing attack or containing their running game?

STEVEN PARKER: As a DB I'm a player and whatever I get, you know, I have to respond to and react to, and that's what's going to happen.

Q. Pretty unique situation having to face a team in the SEC; how unique is this opportunity?

STEVEN PARKER: I've been very blessed to participate in everything that the Bowl has to offer for us. It's been a blessing. We've loved every minute of it and they have done a great job hosting this event.

Q. Is when you face a young quarterback, a freshman, like you're going to, do you fly around, blitzing, whatever you have to do, is that part of the game plan?

STEVEN PARKER: The game plan is to go out there ask disrupt and right now that's all we've got.

Q. But when you face a younger guy, maybe he might be more prone to getting --

STEVEN PARKER: That's very true, but like I said, it's just about making the other offense, the other team uncomfortable and that's our game plan right now.