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An Interview with:

**CLEMSON
COACH DABO SWINNEY
MALLICIAH GOODMAN
DALTON FREEMAN**

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Clemson head coach Dabo Swinney, Malliciah Goodman and Dalton Freeman. Coach, we'll start with you, if you could give us an opening statement and talk about your Bowl week experience so far at the Chick-Fil-A Bowl and how your preparations have been going.

COACH SWINNEY: Good to be with you all. First of all, it's been a real blessing to be part of the Chick-Fil-A Bowl. This is my third Chick-fil-A experience this year, having had the opportunity to be in the golf tournament that, the challenge, the golf challenge that I hack up every year, but what a great experience that is.

And then obviously we opened up here against Auburn, and now we're back. So it's been a great year for us, just experiencing all that the Chick-fil-A folks have to offer. Just the whole organization. Everything to do with Chick-fil-A is first class, and we greatly appreciate the opportunity to be here and represent Clemson.

As far as our Bowl preparation, it's been really good. I think that's another thing that makes this Bowl really unique, in that it's very seldom that you get to practice where you're actually going to play the game. Most of the time you don't even really get to -- when you go to get to see the stadium you have to stay on the outside because they have it painted and all that stuff and nobody can touch anything.

But to actually go and practice each day in the Georgia Dome, I think it's great. I think it's brought a lot of energy to our practice and helps these guys kind of visualize what they want to do on game day.

So that part of it has been really good. Our players have done an outstanding job. We've got a couple of our great leaders here. This team's had tremendous leadership. We don't have a lot of seniors. We've got 11 of them. But they're all impactful people that have done some great and wonderful things here at Clemson. But it starts with having good leadership. And these guys have been tremendous leaders for our program.

So I'm appreciative of how they've carried that here to the Bowl site. We've had no issues. Everybody's been where they're supposed to be, on time and all that.

Looking forward to another good practice here in just a short bit. And then tomorrow we'll wrap it up with kind of like a Thursday-type practice for us. And then we have our walk-through and then play the game.

So, again, really appreciate the opportunity to be here and look forward to a great match with an excellent team in LSU.

Q. Dalton, talk about what's been your favorite event of Bowl week so far and maybe what event are you looking forward to the most for the rest of the week?

DALTON FREEMAN: First off, we have to remind ourselves we're not in the BCS game. We were very blessed last year to play in the BCS game. But everything that Chick-fil-A has done for us has been first class. And just probably the best Bowl game I've ever been associated with.

We've had a lot of good experiences thus far. Last night was probably the icing on the cake. We got to race go-carts and play video games and eat. And I'm really looking forward to tonight. We get to do a Brazilian steakhouse and we actually have a competition with LSU see who can eat the most meat. We're excited about that.

Q. Projection on how much meat you'll be able to eat tonight?

DALTON FREEMAN: It's per team. So I'm going to say in the hundreds of pounds. But it's

going to be fun.

Q. Malliciah, what about you, what's been your favorite part of Bowl week so far?

MALLICIAH GOODMAN: Mine was the same. The go carts was the best part for me. Playing the games and competing with my teammates is very competitive. Racing and playing the video games. Even though I didn't do so good in the go-carts it was still fun.

Q. I understand that Coach Swinney put a couple of players in the wall. Were you one of the victims?

MALLICIAH GOODMAN: I didn't race him. Thankfully.

Q. Dalton and Malliciah, could you talk about your experiences at Children's Hospital yesterday?

MALLICIAH GOODMAN: It was a great experience just seeing the kids. It was my first time going to the hospital and giving back to some of the kids. We appreciate them and their fight.

And just go in there really hit us, just appreciate every moment you can have, every gift you have, don't take advantage of it. Don't settle for somebody telling you you can't do something and this and that. And we were on the radio station, and just talked to the kids throughout the hospital. And it was just a great experience, fun for all of us.

DALTON FREEMAN: It was a very humbling experience. As he mentioned we were able to get on the radio show, which Ryan Seacrest actually donated to the hospital and it airs to all the Children's Hospitals across Atlanta and maybe even further.

So that was a great experience to be able to give back and to meet some of those kids and just great personalities. And you really just understand how truly blessed you are. And that's what I love about playing for Coach Swinney, he always emphasizes that. He's more about making you a better man than a better player. And it's nice to be part of a Bowl that does the same thing.

Q. Dalton, for those of us that haven't got a chance to see your team play, could you talk about what kind of quarterback Tajh is and what as an offensive lineman you all have to be prepared to do because he can extend the play for so long?

DALTON FREEMAN: I think Tajh, if he's not the best quarterback, he's one of the best quarterbacks in the country. Leading in six of eight categories in the country. He's very explosive. The thing about Tajh, he's a try-hard guy. He came in, right away he didn't pick up the system but spent an entire off-season after having the year under his belt really learning the ins and outs of the offense and really just developing as a leader.

I think that's what your quarterback has to be, commander-in-chief on the field and he's done a great job of that. For people who haven't seen him play, I think they'll see a dynamic guy that can run or throw the ball as you say can extend the plays and hopefully make something out of nothing.

Q. Dabo, we've heard about the physical nature of practice during Bowl month here. I just wondered why have you decided to ratchet up the physical nature of practice, is it more or less physical than preparation for South Carolina week?

COACH SWINNEY: Well, first of all, South Carolina, you basically have three days and you have a practice plan that you go through each and every week that you believe in and you've played several weeks in a row. So the season's a little bit different than just this season.

But even preparation for that game, you're always trying to get your team ready for what they're going to see. And I think we were well prepared for that game, had great preparation. Don't make any excuses. We got beat by a better team.

But the season's over, and you have basically a month to get ready for a new opponent and you study what they do and then you try to develop a plan to best prepare your team.

And it's been very physical. But if you watch LSU play, that's how they play the game. It's their style of play is a little bit different. I mean, people get caught up in you have to get an I formation to be physical. That's the furthest thing from the truth.

But it's like saying that you can only run the option if you're a triple option team or something. We have elements of everything in our offense.

And we pride ourselves on being a very physical football team. We do it a little bit differently than maybe LSU. But you have to

prepare your team for what they're going to see. And this is the team that's going to line up and a lot of times there's one line out on the field and it doesn't really matter whether it's third and 10 they'll run the power right at you. You better be prepared for that.

So that's how we developed our practice plan and just trying to get our guys the best we possibly can to simulate what they're going to see on game day. And this is a national championship caliber football team we're getting ready to play.

So I'm confident in how we prepared. We've tried to do everything we can to give our guys the best opportunity to win on game day, and we'll see how it turns out.

Q. I just wanted to ask you, with all the SEC talk and string of national championships and LSU being in the Bowl game last year, what motivation do you draw to represent the ACC well and to beat a SEC power in this game?

COACH SWINNEY: For me we don't really spend a lot of time talking about the conference or any of that other stuff. We got one agenda and that's to try to be the best Clemson that we can possibly be and try to play our best football game.

All the other stuff is great, but to be honest with you it's just distractions for what we're trying to accomplish. So that's just a side part of it. We win the game, that gives somebody something else to talk about, but it's really not about that. Obviously the SEC has been the power conference in this country for the last several years. But I believe those things come and go in cycles, and our focus at Clemson is to be the best we can be and bring the national championship back to the ACC through Clemson. That's our focus. Nothing more than that. It would be great for us to find a way to win this game and not have to answer that question anymore, at least for a few months.

Q. Coach Swinney, I read where a few years ago when you were looking for a defensive coordinator, you interviewed John Chavis, can you just recall that meeting and as you prepare to face his defense what stands out to you?

COACH SWINNEY: Yeah, he was actually coming to Clemson until Les stole him from me right at the last second. Dirty dog. He's a great football coach. I mean, I've known Coach Chavis a long time. I was at Alabama for 13 years. And as far back as I can remember, playing and

coaching, Coach Chavis is roaming the sidelines. And Woody McCorby, my coach at Alabama and John are like best friends and actually worked together at Alabama A&M at one point. And then also coached together at Tennessee for about five years.

So I've had a lot of interaction with Coach Chavis and through other people that have been around him. And I just have the utmost respect for how he handles his business. He works very hard in recruiting. Does things the right way. He's a great on-the-field coach. He loves his players. And I think that's why they play so hard for him. And they've been -- his defensive groups have been so consistent all throughout the years if you track him. And I think it all goes back to who he is as a person. There's a lot of good coaches out there, but he's a good man and he loves his players.

I think that shines through with those guys in how they play for him. So great respect for Coach Chavis.

Q. Coach, Dalton touched on it earlier but most media outlets has said this is one of the best three or four matchups in the entire Bowl system this year. You guys were in a BCS game last year. How does this match up with the BCS game and the BCS experience?

COACH SWINNEY: Oh, this is tremendous. It's every bit as good. Probably the only thing we don't have our buses wrapped with our pictures on the side of them, that's about it. We throw that in to Gary.

But I tell you, there's really no difference. This is a tremendous, tremendous Bowl. People who have not experienced a Chick-fil-A Bowl but have been to other Bowls, I've been to other Bowls, Sugar Bowls, Orange Bowl, Fiesta Bowl and Outback Bowl, Chance Bowl, Citrus Bowl, bunch of Bowl games throughout my 20 something years in college football here. And this is as good as a Bowl as there is out there.

It really goes back to how it's run, the people that are involved, the pride that they take into the organization. They have great events. They make it competitive. It's just not kind of the same old, same old. They really do some neat things here. They've got great gifts, all that kind of stuff. But we've really thoroughly enjoyed our experience.

And we have a great matchup. Had we

gone to the Orange Bowl this year, Northern Illinois is a great worthy opponent. But LSU's the seventh ranked team in the country.

So we got that lucky draw and coming to the Chick-fil-A. So this is a big-time matchup and certainly one of, probably one of the most intriguing matchups from an outside perspective. These guys are top ten in defense. We're top ten in offense. So it's pretty easy to get excited about that.

Q. For the players and coaches, if you would like to touch on it. You talked about preparing them for what they're going to see. Most times in Bowl games you might get out of conference flavor you haven't seen but you guys are very familiar with the SEC. How much does that help with your preparations, maybe not having played LSU recently, but teams like them?

MALLICIAH GOODMAN: LSU is a very physical team, have big guys up front and big backs. So you just have to prepare to be physical with them for four quarters. That's the thing that we've been doing like Coach Swinney talked about with practices, just having that mentality of it's going to be a four-quarter physical battle, battle, you have to prepare your mind that way and fight that way.

DALTON FREEMAN: As Coach said, I think it's all kind of a distraction. At the end of the day, football is still football. We play some great competition in the ACC. We also play South Carolina, Auburn, other teams in the SEC.

So we're used to seeing this kind of stuff. I don't think SEC varies that much in style from the ACC. It's all great competition.

COACH SWINNEY: And the span of 12 months, starting this past August, we will have played Auburn, South Carolina, now LSU and then Georgia to open up the season.

So we might as well be in the SEC. Heck, that's a pretty full schedule right there. But we're excited about having that opportunity. And if you want to be the best, you want to put yourself in those situations to play the teams that are considered the best.

Q. Coach Swinney, what are your theories as to why the SEC has been so good and so deep in recent years?

COACH SWINNEY: Well, I think that it's been more top heavy as far as conference goes. This year's been a little bit more unusual, I would

say. Some really dominant, a few dominant teams. A few more dominant teams.

But I think just their TV contract has been huge. I think that's probably been one of the things that impacted them tremendously. Recruiting. Got great coaches. Great tradition. And it's a great area to recruit college football players here in the southeast. And I think that they've maximized every opportunity and every resource that they've had available to them through their conference.

I think they've done a good job of being together as a conference. And, again, they've produced one or two dominant teams over the last several years. And I think their conference, the teams in their conference has won about 14 or 15 national championships in the last 30 years, I think. And I believe the ACC's teams we've had about 11.

So it's for whatever reason our conference, we have really not produced that dominant team. And we've been very, a lot of parity. Very competitive from top to bottom. Much more balanced in that regard. The SEC has been really heavy on the top end and with some very, very dominant teams that have been 12 and 0. 11 and 1, pretty consistently. And I think it all goes back to just, first of all, great, great programs, great coaches, the area that they're in, great TV contract exposure, all that stuff and recruiting at a high level.

Q. Coach, you had a 2009 recruiting class that you called the Dandy Dozen. Malliciah is a part of that. You've got a very small senior class, talk about what it would mean to get a win for these guys as kind of a statement game to end their careers. And Dalton, you started your career here, you didn't get to play but Alabama was the first college game you saw as a Clemson Tiger. Here you'll end it here, and just talk about the time in between.

COACH SWINNEY: We've come full circle. Regardless of what happens in this game, these seniors have been a special group. They've won more games as a senior than I think any group here in a long time, maybe since 1990 or so. And so I'm really proud of them. And they came here at a time it wasn't real sexy to come to Clemson. And Dalton was one of those guys that was stuck here and came here for something else and now he's going to have to look up and play for

this Swinney guy.

But I remember Malliciah, because Malliciah was actually -- I personally recruited Malliciah and he was actually committed and all this stuff happened and I end up getting the job. I'm very thankful for those guys for choosing to stick with us. I mean, they're all very special. Meeks was my first-ever commitment. And what a good player he's been for us. Carrico and Malliciah. Those guys, Tajh Boyd, I'll never forget sitting up there in his house. Coach Belotti goes out one day, Coach Tressels coming in next.

And here comes Coach Swinney. I'm like, listen, man, I need a quarterback at Clemson. I don't have anything to offer you. I got no resumé. I've never coached -- I've coached just a few games as an interim guy here, but man I think we can do some great things.

So four years later it's very fulfilling to see the progress that we've made. And these guys deserve all the credit, because you can be a great coach, you can do whatever. You can have a lot of knowledge. But if the guys don't believe you have no chance. And these guys have chosen to believe in our program. They've done a great job of recruiting, as we've steadily built this thing.

And so 11 wins in Clemson history has been a pretty rare thing. 1948, 1978, 1981. And so to be at the doorstep of that for the second year in a row is pretty special. And the consistency that these guys have been able to develop with our program, there's six teams in the country that have been ranked for 28 weeks or more.

LSU, Alabama, Oregon, Stanford. Clemson. South Carolina. That's pretty special. And that's what these guys have been able to do. They set the winning record at home in the history of our school. So a lot of great things. But it all goes back to the players and what they believe and the choices that they make, the commitment that they have. And these two guys have been great leaders for that whole process these past four years.

Q. Coach and Dalton, could you brag on your receivers a little bit with Sammie and DeAndre, what they've been able to do and what kind of matchups they can be for defenses?

DALTON FREEMAN: I think we have the best receivers in the country from top to bottom. No question these guys could play anywhere in the country. And it's just really special. I enjoy going back and watching film on Sundays just because I

don't get to see some of the spectacular plays they make.

But we have the home run threat every time we touch the ball. And it's just so exciting to watch. It's exciting to block and play for guys like that. Guys that make Tajh better. And our offensive line has been a work in progress. I was the only returning starter. Four underclassmen with me this year. But we were able to play well enough to open up the running game which set up the passing game. It's really allowed those guys to execute on the outside.

Q. Dabo, to follow up on the class of 2009, a 12-member class, through injury and attrition it's like an eight-member class or something. What's that meant and how has it affected the program and you've been down numbers for a number of years?

COACH SWINNEY: That was kind of a chosen path that we took knowing full well that at some point there was going to come a time such as this. That's what's probably been the most gratifying thing about 2011 and 2012. I knew in '09 we would have a chance -- unfortunately, we'll have to start fresh with a quarterback, but I knew we'd have a chance with some skilled guys to do some things. And we were able to take Spiller and Palmer and Jacoby and ride those guys as far as we could.

But it's been interesting to watch it kind of develop over the last four years and now you're sitting here with a team. We have 11 seniors and 11 juniors.

So we knew we were going to have a couple of years, we were going to be a very young football team. And last year 42 true freshmen and redshirt freshmen on our championship team.

So it's exciting to me. It's nerve racking and frustrating at times because they don't just all come at the same stage or pace and you have to rely on some young players from time to time. And mistakes are made. That's just part of the process of getting better for all of us. But it's been interesting to now have that group of guys as they're maturing.

But the thing that's given us a chance having the amount of -- that you just couldn't predict four years ago -- has been the fact that the few veterans that we've had have been really, really strong leadership type people. And that has helped us tremendously. And a guy like Dalton, for

example, as you just said, we got the whole offensive line is gone, basically.

And he's basically another coach on the field. He took those guys this summer and he had them ready for us when we got our hands on them in fall camp. That takes a lot of personal commitment and accountability and unselfishness and all that type of stuff. That's what we've had giving us a chance to be successful.

And so as we look at our team right now, 11 seniors, 11 juniors, so we've got a lot of freshmen and sophomores that have won 20 games the past two years. So the expectation is really to win and to win at a high level and consistently do your best and all that kind of stuff and go to class and graduate and it's been fun to kind of watch the program evolve since that first Dandy Dozen class, if you will.

And all of those guys have done a super job for us. Look at Spencer Shuey, he was one of those guys, look at how he's impacted our team. So it's been fun to be a part of it and there's no way we'd be where we are right now without going back to the very beginning with these guys.

Q. Coach, happened to be watching ESPN during the season caught the piece on Daniel Rodriguez and his story. Can you just elaborate a little bit more on him and in an era where there's some people on TV reality shows that aren't the best for kids to look up to, the example that he sets?

COACH SWINNEY: He really is. I look up to him. I'm 43 years old, and I look up to him. It's an honor to have him on our football team. 24-year-old grown man that has experienced things that most of us could never even dream of.

And to see him handle the challenges of his life, the adversity of his life, so forth, and to bust through to the other side and continue to persevere, continue to pursue his goals and dreams and to put into action the things that he had to do to accomplish those dreams, you know that's what it's all about. He's a great example to so many people.

And I think that's probably why his story has caught on so well all throughout the country is people are looking for inspirations. And he's an inspirational type person, because of the courage that he has displayed. And as I tell our team all the time, it's about being the best you can be, taking what God's given you and make the best out of it.

Here's a guy that's maximizing his potential to the very fullest, and I just think it's awesome. It's awesome. And it's a military appreciation day this year that I will never forget.

It really was -- I mean how many people have a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star recipient on their football team? It's been a great year. It's been fun to watch him grow and mature. And he's not a bad little player on top of that.

Q. (Question off microphone)?

COACH SWINNEY: Dalton at right tackle. Malliciah will be our move tight end -- no, no, we're pretty set where we were when we left Clemson. That's about it. A few guys here and there on special teams. But we'll pretty much go with how we finished.

We're pretty thin in the secondary, as you all know. Not a lot of bodies back there onboard. But we've got everything we need. We just gotta go and play our best four quarters. So we're excited about that.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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