

December 31, 2012



Clemson – 25
LSU – 24

An interview with:

COACH LES MILES

COACH MILES: First of all, I want to commend Clemson. Thought they played a tremendous game. They did the things they needed to do to win.

On our side of the ball, frankly, our football team played so well on defense. I thought we had the edge on special teams. Offensively we couldn't protect our passer. When you can't protect your passer, then it becomes very difficult to run because, frankly, there's an extra man in the box because you're not throwing the ball.

There for a while, we ended up about six sacks, get a first down and get sacked, get a first down and get sacked. We had a nice plan, just couldn't execute it because we couldn't protect our quarterback.

I went into a locker room where there was a group of men that really just played a hundred plays, gave everything they had, and with an opponent who really snapped the ball about 50 times more than our offense, they had to kick a last-minute field goal to beat us. At defense played their butt off. There's young men there that are spent, gave everything they had. To me, I'm really proud of them. Thought they played as hard as they could have.

We have to improve. Offensively we really just could not protect tonight, and that was really the mark of the game. If we protect our passer a little bit, he hits some balls. Now they have to play some coverage, the running game comes to life, it's just a completely different game.

That wasn't the case tonight. Again, congratulations to Clemson.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. What would you do different defensively, given the opportunity?

COACH MILES: Call runs that get first downs. I don't know what those are. Call passes that we can protect our quarterback. I don't know which ones those are either. We threw a couple of balls, got them batted down.

I can't blame Zach. I thought Zach played really, really hard, but frankly, he was under duress from the first series on.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH MILES: Well, I think Hopkins had a big night. Certainly a sure-handed big receiver. But I have to be honest with you, I don't know where the MVP award goes, but to me Boyd. To me, I don't know how many yards he got rushing, but every yard he got, he got drilled. He just kept getting up and made plays for Clemson and scrambled out and kept the ball alive and made a pass. I just want you to know he played extremely well in this game. Very, very, very big night for him.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH MILES: Well, no. When you're -- really, risk/reward, put guys a lot of guys up in there, they extend, if you block it, it's a big play. That's kind of what happened.

But there were a number of guys in there. They got extra guys in there that we can't block. Simply put, if we get a couple balls, they have to take those guys out of the box, it's a different game.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH MILES: We had to eventually pitch some balls down the field. We just had to.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH MILES: Well, we were not running the football. They were in a position where they out-numbered us in the run. The opportunity to make the throw, certainly we start out about an

eight-yard gain, really it's the same scenario. If we had another one to get a first down, it certainly makes a difference in that game, so...

Q. Nothing is easy at this level. This year it never seemed to be simple. What made the difference?

COACH MILES: I think there's some young guys that will eventually mature, step in there and make some big plays for us. I think, again, we're moving some guys around in the offensive line. I think we're looking forward to getting some age there. I think the opportunity to protect certainly in the future...

I think we got good players, we just didn't play well tonight.

Q. Talk about Mingo's performance, possibly his last game.

COACH MILES: Keke is a great player, a tremendous team man. He's unusually quick, got great speed. Penchant for making the big play. That play was key. Those turnovers, they were the mark.

If we don't turn the ball over, kick a field goal. If we make a seven-pointer instead of a three-pointer. The style of turnover, if we turned into points, certainly was an advantage for us today.

Q. (Question regarding Kevin Minter.)

COACH MILES: Kevin Minter is an all-in guy. For those guys, the shame is you couldn't have finished in front. Kevin Minter was all out. I think he was out for two series, then cramps, then back in.

Just a great leader, great player. Instinctive. Big hits. That's where I have to give Tajh Boyd, I saw a number of our men really hit him clean shots. It's amazing how he continued to play as well as he did.

Q. Did you sense you were on the verge of a knock-out in the third quarter?

COACH MILES: I liked our chances when we took the ball over. Get a couple first downs, run the clock out, the game's over.

Q. A month to prepare...

COACH MILES: I do understand that. It's a tough thing to kind of figure that our pass protection was as poor as it was.

I mean, it's a misleading piece. If that was a strong part of tonight, this would have been a

completely different game. That's the piece that needs fixing. Frankly, we got some young players that we'll address, will improve, take some strides as we go forward.

Q. With that thought, you didn't throw the ball.

COACH MILES: We had to throw the football.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH MILES: Well, you know, again, we have a very quality football team. The guys have spent every energy that they had tonight. This moment, this is a painful one.

But the good news is, there's some strength in this offensive line that will return, some good runningbacks, receivers. I like our quarterback. He took it on the chin tonight, but I like our quarterback.

Defensively, you know, we'll be good. Our punter showed in a pressure situation he can step in there and hit a ball. I liked our return game. Certainly adjustment has to be made. We need to get better on offense. But I like where we're at. I think we'll be a really fine football team, as well.

Q. (Question regarding juniors.)

COACH MILES: We're going to sit down with them this week and give them all the information we can. It's certainly their call.

The only thing I don't want to see happen is I want to make sure our guys are doing the right thing for them. I don't want to give the NFL a deal in any way.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH MILES: Every opportunity. We bring the ball out late in the game to the 50 yard line Michael Ford's on the kickoff return. Jamie Keehn steps in and just really...

You can just see in his future, he's going to be a dynamic punter, just everything that we need. This was a great first experience for him, or second, I should say.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH MILES: I think our football team realizes that there's some very talented men in that locker room. There's going to be some improvement made. Whether or not that's enough to have them stay or go, I'm not certain.

Certain guys have a predisposed position there, some of which I'm certain will leave. But I can tell you that this is a team that could well be playing for the very finest honor. An opportunity to improve to do so is certainly what we're after.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH MILES: I didn't hear him at all.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH MILES: You think they were upset. How about the coach who said that they were cramping, a hundred plays, what a miserable event for them. They were the guys in pain, okay?

There was no advantage to LSU to lay down on the ground there and allow them to gather their play and call their play with no duress. It was certainly not a ploy in any way. They can get upset all they want. The reality of it is, one team played a hundred plays on defense and one team played 50.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH MILES: Well, I don't think there's any question that in a position to win the game, you have to be able to control the ball. The issue there is, you know, there's a need to improve our protection. I think we all understand that. I think that can be done.

I'm certain there's some young men back there in that locker room that are willing to work hard to do that, as well.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH MILES: No, not at all. Well, I take it back. Tajh Boyd was phenomenal. I did not expect the heroic, if you will, efforts that he had.

I thought their pass-rush really was the difference in the game.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH MILES: Obviously not. We felt like we had guys that could protect. Really it wasn't a numbers issue, it was just guys beating guys.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks very much, coach.

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