



THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

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Southern Miss Football News Conference

Jeff Bower's Opening Comments

"We're excited its game week. It has been good preseason and our players have worked hard. We gave them the weekend off, giving them an opportunity to rest and get their legs back. We're going to work pretty hard today and Tuesday, cut it back some on Wednesday, before we have our normal routine on Thursday.

"Preparation for a game is the most critical thing to do. We need to have a great week and work hard. We continue to polish our game plan for Nebraska. We had the opportunity to watch the tape of their game against Western Illinois, and it was a very impressive opening win. It was 45-3 at halftime. They ran the ball very well and threw it effectively, though they had four touchdowns and four interceptions.

"They're a very physical team, just like the Nebraska teams of the past. They have a big physical offensive line. They also have a very outstanding tight end. Defensively, they're good and have almost everyone back from last year. Their secondary also is very good. It's your typical Nebraska team. They had some miscues in the kicking game, that really wasn't their fault. There was a 25 mph wind, that played a role in their two fumbles, but they're iron that out. Other than that, they protected the football well.

"We're looking forward to the opening weekend and getting started. We need to have a great week of practice before we got to Nebraska."

On How Physical Practice Will Be This Week

"We won't scrimmage, but we will practice in full-pads this week. There is a lot to get done before we leave."

On Nebraska's Atmosphere

"They've got great fans. Of all the places I've been, Penn State and Nebraska have really good fans. You can tell that they're used to winning. There's a lot of sportsmanship. It's a tough place to play, and it will be a noisy place to play."

On Nebraska's Quarterback Handling The West Coast Offense

"He can throw it very well, and he has a nice release of the ball, in addition to good velocity. It's a new offense to them, but they ran the football extremely well, and we will have to respect the run. They can still line up and pound the football. I'm sure we'll see some things that we haven't prepared for that will be new. We will need to make some quick adjustments defensively."



On If Nebraska Is Still Using The Option

No. They run the West-Coast offense.”

On How Much Nebraska Diversified Their Offense Against Western Illinois

“They didn’t run a lot of different plays. They didn’t have to. There is more to their offense than we saw.”

On If The Team’s Preparations Fit What They Saw On The Tape

“It’s very similar to the tape we watched of the Oakland Raiders. We’ve been right on in our preparations.”

On If He’s Going To Talk To The Team About Last Year’s Game

“I haven’t, and I don’t think that I’m going to. That’s an old game, and it’s past us. There are certain keys that we’ve got to accomplish in the game, and that’s protecting the football. We didn’t do that very well last year.”

On The Defense Heading Into Nebraska

“We’ve gotten better. We’ve worked hard. We need to get some guys healthy. We’ve had a few players practicing hurt, and have been limited. Hopefully, the weekend off will benefit them, and they’ll be close to 100 percent when we practice today.”

On Injuries:

“Hopefully we’ll get LeVon Pears back today. DeMarcus Barner has been banged up and has been playing with an injury. Pierre Hutchins should be back today.”

On If The Starters Have Been Set For The Opener

“Right now, we’d start Dillon Cleckler at middle linebacker and Jasper Faulk at strong safety. Things can change. We’ve had good competition at both positions. I don’t know if that will change. We’ll evaluate them every day on how they practice, how they perform, and where they are mentally. We can’t afford to have missed assignments.”

On The Defensive Line

“They’ve worked hard to get better. We’re getting there. We’ll find out how close we are this week for sure.”

On Dillon Cleckler

“He had a good week. I think from a mental standpoint, he’s a little further ahead. There are some things that you have to adjust to quickly against Nebraska.”

On Trevis Coley Being A Leader In The Secondary

“He’s done a good job. You always emphasize eliminating missed assignments and missed errors. That’s the quickest way to give up a big play. With some of the adjustments you have to make defensively against Nebraska, it’s critical that we have a good week with no missed assignments.”

On What He Expects From Dustin Almond Against Nebraska

“Remember, with the exception of the bowl game, he played six really good games, and was the second-highest rated quarterback in the country in that stretch. I think Dustin will go into this game with a lot of confidence. He’s a different quarterback than last year. We all expect him to play well, and I think he expects that from himself.”

On The Running Game

"We always talk about the importance of being able to run the football. Nebraska is a great example of that last week. When you're able to run the football, it opens up so many things in your play-action game. You've got to commit more people to stop the run. It's always been important in our offense. The number one thing that we want to do is to have a good running game. Our backs have had a good camp."

On DaRon Lawrence

"I think he's gotten better. I'm hoping the time off helped him. If we played right now, he'd play, and I think by the end of the week I'll feel more confident. He will start, because of the experience factor. He's been a good player for us."

On Damion Carter's Role

"I don't know, but more than likely we will use him. It depends on how healthy we stay and how we do in some things during the game."

On If Anything Can Be Made About Western Illinois' Time Of Possession

"No. When Nebraska got it, they didn't have to hold the ball very long. They scored quick. They didn't have any long drives. They only had eight third-down conversions, which is unusually low in a game. They were really good on first down."