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FLORIDA STATE FOOTBALL
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Jimbo Fisher – Monday, Sept. 5, 2016 – Postgame vs. Ole Miss

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach. We will get things started with an opening statement from Coach Fisher.

COACH FISHER: First of all, I'm very proud of these guys, just the way they competed in the game and overcame adversity. I'm not happy about the situation we put ourselves in, and sometimes in opening games, though, you never know. But what I do know is, we've got a bunch of competitors that care about each other and fight.

Now, again, my hat's off. Ole Miss is a heck of a football team. That was two very good football teams out there that played a hard fought game. And there's a lot of guys that stepped up and made roles and made plays, and it was a fun game to coach in when it was all over with and very exhausting while we did it. That's what college football is about, and this opening weekend is that.

You can say one thing about our kids. They're competitive. And Ole Miss has great kids. They fought and battled right back and made it a heck of a game. So it's what it's about.

It's only one game, guys. It's one game. We've got so much room to improve. We have so much stuff. Penalties, I mean, silly I hate to even look what we were.

What was how many penalties did we have? How many?

A. Fifteen.

COACH FISHER: Thank you, Gene. You're lovely. I mean that's ridiculous. But the thing we didn't have was a turnover, which I was very proud of that. We took care of the football. We can't do that.

Opening games, you hope you improve the first, the second, the third. We've got a lot of work to do, but if we do that we have a chance to compete with people. And we've got a heck of a schedule, so we'd better get better quick. Saying all that, we've got to move on.

Q. Coach, talk about Deondre's performance. Were you surprised about how he performed, his poise?

COACH FISHER: No, I'm not surprised, but I wouldn't have been surprised if he would have there was a couple times that he got a little shook on the sidelines. The thing about it, he bounced back, and that's what he did in practice. We challenged him, as I know. I put the heat on him sometimes in practice. But he's a kid who loves his team. His

teammates believe in him, and he's a fighter, and he's a competitor, which I'm very proud of. At the end of the day, it's one game. Now we've got to get better and move on.

Q. About Deondre, the pass at the end of the first half where he took the hit and delivered the ball, how big of a play was that?

COACH FISHER: The drive at the end of the first half was critical. It got us back to a two score game. No matter how bad you played, you're two possessions away from getting back in front and having the ball coming out the second half. And I think the confidence and I'm going to tell you now, when you stand there and deliver one of them, you realize this is college football and your teammates, that's when those teammates respect you, when they see you standing there and take those shots, and, you know, don't duck and wench away. I thought it was tremendous and I thought it was a drive of the game that gave us a chance to come back in the game. And I'll say this now. Our defense was outstanding the second half. I mean, the first half, they had their thing but that defense, after they felt us getting a surge on offense, I mean they swarmed now. I mean, they created turnovers. They created sacks. They created havoc. And then there were two young kickers that did a pretty good job tonight. Aguayo made every field goal. The punting and the kickoffs, those guys they had a big night. You've got to remember now, you had two freshman kickers, a punter and a kicker and a kickoff guy with a freshman quarterback. There aren't many I'm going to tell you I made some sleepless nights. I promise you that.

Q. Jimbo, the touchdown pass there at the end of the half just seemed to snap something in your team, something clicked. Why do you think that is?

COACH FISHER: You keep chopping. You keep sawing. When you're in a heavy weight fight, you're going to take shots. People are going to hit you. You know that. You've just got to have the willingness to come back. And all of a sudden you start to say, man, I hit this. We've got a rhythm and I'm two plays away from getting back in this game. It creates the competition and the atmosphere and the way they practice against each other, it's kind of the way. The offense will dominate, then the defense will dominate, and they'll go back and forth, and that's why we practice like we do. But I think that just gives them hope, and then they realize that they could go do this, and then we had the ball coming out, and that's what we talked about. Keep chopping. Just keep chopping away. That tree will eventually fall.

Q. Jimbo, the middle of that field was wide open in the first half. Nothing in the second half for that Ole Miss offense. What was the adjustment that was made?

COACH FISHER: Well, our linemen. Big thing, we changed some coverages a little bit, but we got it lined up. As crazy as this sounds, alignment, assignment, technique. Line up in the right place. If you've a foot wide, 2 foot wide, you give bad angles. And football is about angles. It's a low to high game. It's created with angles. And as soon as you lose an angle, a guy gets on top of you, he can expose you. Our alignments were better. We got our guys in position. They were making the reads. Their eye discipline got better, and it made it tougher to throw the ball in the middle of the field, and then their assignments and techniques got better.

Q. Going back to Deondre, I know you've kind of talked about what you've seen from him in practice and whatnot, but what was kind of the worry coming in because it's one thing to do it in practice with a script but it's another actually do it in a game with a live defense coming at you?

COACH FISHER: Not just that, but the poise of the game and feeling the pressure if you're behind like you was and bringing it back and not trying to get greedy. The thing I was so proud about even though we got behind, that he kept playing the plays and just taking what they give him. He didn't force things down the field and say I've got to go make it up all at once and he showed a lot of maturity that way, composure to just keep and trusting his teammates and his teammates kept trusting him. And that was the one thing this group never broke. What I'm saying is they kept trusting each other and playing for the guy beside them and they just kept playing it one play at a time and like I said, kept sawing away till they got a chance to get back in it.

Q. Coach, for those of us that can't wait till Tuesday, could you tell us what you said to your team at halftime tonight?

COACH FISHER: No. You got to bleep, bleep, bleep, bleep, bleep, bleep, bleep, bleep, bleep. I'm going to have tell you that right now. And it was bad. I think Showtime's got it on there. I'm not going to say. We challenged them. I mean, listen, one thing we're going to do, we're going to do, we're going to compete. I'm not going to play guys that don't compete. I'm not built that way. I wasn't wired that way. We got our minds made up at halftime we were going to compete in the game the second half and do the things the right way. That's the way I said it nicely.

Q. What does a win like this do for the ACC?

COACH FISHER: I've been saying the whole time, we have great credibility. That was a very good Ole Miss team and we make so much about these conferences and it's good. It's my like side. They're a good team. We're a good team. We both have a good conference. I been telling you all that. Now, you all write all your stories and who you predicate and all that stuff. There's good football in the ACC, there's good football in the SEC. There's good football in the Big 12. But it gives us and a recognition that we can play with those guys. And we've always said it. And at Florida State, we feel like we can play with anybody.

Q. Coach, last week during the game prep, you were talking about Deondre Francois and his role as a game manager and how that's not a bad title. But Deondre also broke off 30 yard runs tonight. Were we seeing the game manager or the play maker or a combination of the two tonight?

COACH FISHER: A game manager is a play maker. That's what I keep trying to tell. Everybody says Tom Brady and Peyton Manning are the two best game managers in the history of football Joe Montana and Johnny Unitas. They manage situations they take what's there. When the legs let them run run, they run. When they throw the slant, they throw the slant. When they throw, they throw the go. Everybody puts game manager as a tag that means you can't play. That's not true. And play makers don't mean that you're wild, you know what I'm saying? What I loved about him, he managed the game and when the opportunities were there for him to make plays, he did and to me, that's what playing quarterback is. Managing the game, taking what they give you. You can't listen, I can't throw wide open posts if there's two safety back there. I've got to check it down and go to the next play. That's also called making plays, and he made them with his feet and his arms. But more importantly, he made it with his mind, and that's the key to playing quarterback.

Q. Jimbo, you had a drive in the third quarter where you went on a long touchdown drive with Dalvin on the sideline. How much confidence does it give this offense that you don't have to rely on him?

COACH FISHER: It's great. Like I say, what did he have tonight, 91 yards? He caught a bunch of balls, didn't he? He had 200 yards of offense, and we just feel like he wasn't there. I mean, think about how good is that? It shows you his versatility, what he can do, what he is, but it also gives you that there's a lot of other playmakers on this football team. To be a great football team, you have to do that. You're going to have to spread the ball out. All those young receivers caught balls. Our tight ends caught balls. It was big.

Q. Coach, with Dalvin, did you touch base with him on what happened with that fumble? Was he trying to switch hands there?

COACH FISHER: It just slipped out of his hand. Surprised me, too. That's just what happens. That's ball. We kicked a field goal on that drive because we dropped a touchdown or two right after that. We had opportunity. That's a great sign of this team. They just kept playing, and things happen. You've got to move on.

Q. It looks like he pulled up on his hamstring there on the last drive.

COACH FISHER: No. He was just tired. Ankles banged up. What did he have, 23 carries and seven catches and touched it 30 times. It's a hot night. He's fine.

Q. Jimbo, what does DeMarcus Walker mean to this defense?

COACH FISHER: Didn't he have four and a half sacks in the second half, something like that? I'm going to tell you what. DeMarcus Walker loves ball. I'm going to tell you what he does. He loves playing ball. He loves being a teammate. He loves being a leader. He loves razzing me. He loves about everything. I mean, but he just creates an energy among this team that is a genuine love to be good, you know what I'm saying, and he puts his heart and soul into everything he does. It matters to him. He's fun to watch play and fun to watch practice.

Q. Jimbo, Matthew Thomas made his return in defense tonight, seven tackles, second leading tackler on the team. What did he mean for you guys tonight?

COACH FISHER: This guy's going to be special. And you see him flash he can play in space. He can cover. He can blitz. You ain't even seen everything yet. I mean, this guy has a chance to be a heck of a football player, be a difference maker. I'm very proud and happy because he's been through a lot of things in his life, man. You talk about perseverance and tough and just a heck of a kid. I mean, deep down that's just one of the best kids I've ever been around in my life, very smart kid, great kid, great character and just keeps fighting and scratching and clawing. I'm extremely proud and happy for him.

THE MODERATOR: Two more for Coach Fisher.

Q. Jimbo, Hugh talked about just the momentum swing in the third quarter. How big was that for them to come out after halftime and make noise on defense and then capitalize on it?

COACH FISHER: Well, it was. He got to score at the end of the half, got to score there and then got a turnover. I say that all the time. You hear me say it in my press

conference. Momentum is something that we don't talk about in sports enough. We all want the reasons why, but once momentum swings, sometimes it just goes. It takes a heck of a group of kids to turn it back. We were able to do it on our side, and we kept it enough on our side they almost come back and had a big drive to go back up. They got a heck of a team, but momentum is critical. And then you've got to find ways. That's where you go back to your training and trust. You've got to trust each other, have a system and go back to the basics and don't worry about the outcomes. It's hard to change momentum, and we got it and kept it.

Q. Coach, seeing Derwin seeing Derwin get his first career interception everything you were hoping it would be tonight coming off a surgery, coming off an injury?

COACH FISHER: Who did you say?

Q. Derwin.

COACH FISHER: Oh, yeah. I mean, Derwin is great. I mean, Derwin is one of the best football players. Man, it's just I can't say enough good things about him. And I'm going to tell you this: You talk about a teammate and a leader, too, who is a team guy and not an individual. Unbelievable, man. You're just seeing the surface of what he can do.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.