

**2005 ACC FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP**  
**Jacksonville, Fl**

**December 2, 2005**  
**Coaches Press Conference**

**AN INTERVIEW WITH BOBBY BOWDEN**

THE MODERATOR: We are about ready to start. We will start with Coach Bowden. We will have a half hour. Wait for the hand-held mic before you ask a question. We will get the mic to you. Please self identify yourself prior to asking the question.

BOBBY BOWDEN: We have had a good week of preparation. After the ball game people ask are you down? Are your kids down? No, they haven't been down all year. Their attitude has been excellent. Their work habits have been excellent.

We simply have not been able to execute like we need to to play in this league.

So, any way, again, we have had as good as preparation as can you get. The difficult time is going to be playing Virginia Tech.

I notice their statistics don't lead the conference, they lead the nation.

So we think we're playing a team that could be about as good as anybody in the country.

Questions?

Q. Did you hear from the ACC Championship Game, the chances are the team that has been favored has one, or evenly matched, you're not surprised how it goes. In the Big 12 championship game, that's where a lot of the upsets occurred; do you see anything in the makeup of the teams in the ACC that lead you to believe whether this championship game will go a certain way or not?

BOBBY BOWDEN: No. Whatever has happened in other conference has no bearing on what will happen in this conference, you know. I can't look to that Big 12, or the SEC, or anybody else to say because of this we got to do this. No, we got to go out there to win.

Q. Do you see a defensive game tomorrow, low scoring?

BOBBY BOWDEN: You know, I don't want to say trend. Our conference is playing pretty good defense right now. We are all struggling as far as scoring. When we are second in the conference in scoring and as low as we are, I think a lot of it goes right back to the defend east. Here is Virginia Tech that leads the nation against the score. And against total defense.

Q. Coach Bowden, you had us all amused after the 1999 game when you were making your comments about Michael and what he did to your defense.

I was wondering if you thought you'd ever been on a game again of this magnitude playing another Vick, or did you think you were done with it.

BOBBY BOWDEN: I turned down a pro job one time so that wouldn't happen again.

(Laughter).

It looks like we're going to get it any way with his younger brother.

They remind me so doggone much alike. You know, they both can kill you in so many ways. We have a quarterback that's not going to kill you with his feet. He is an excellent passer, excellent football player.

You don't have to worry about his feet. You got to worry about his arm and feet. And the same way with his brother.

Q. Coach, with Virginia Tech going for its second ACC Championship in as many years in the conference do you see many similarities to what you guys did a decade or so ago when you entered the conference?

BOBBY BOWDEN: Well, we had advantages of not having a championship game. You go out and win your conference, you win more games than anybody else, you become champion. So we had that going.

So now, not only have you got to win your division, you got to win the playoff game.

So it's more difficult, no doubt about it. They have done a great job in a difficult situation.

Q. Coach, I was just checking to see what was your initial impressions when you heard the conference was going to have a championship game and also right now some of BCS conference have some, some don't, would you like that to be uniform?

BOBBY BOWDEN: Yes, you are right. Lets all do it or don't let any of us do it.

If I had my way, and when we started, I would rather not have one. I would rather not have one. If I had an 11-0 team, I wouldn't want to play somebody 7 -4. They beat me, they win it. And I think most coaches feel very much the same way.

But it's such a money maker you can't turn it down, you got to do it. Anyway it makes it tougher on the guy that wins it. He has had to go down a tougher road.

I liked it like it was, where if you win the conference, you win the ACC title.

Q. The players obviously are up for a game like this, how do coaches approach something like this? You have been at it a long time, how do you approach games of this magnitude?

BOBBY BOWDEN: You can't approach it hardly any different. You only got 7 days of work. We played Saturday. They did too. You go home Sunday, get that film, grade it, get it out of the way, then you start on the next opponent.

So you just don't have time to do a whole lot more. If you had a week off or something, or an open date, you might try to put some angles or put some things in that might be a little bit different.

I think probably, both of us -- I can just tell you the one that goes out there and executes the best, and doesn't turn the ball over, that's who will win it. Turnovers got Miami -- I mean, got Virginia Tech beat against Miami. That's all that got them beat. We have had that problem lately.

Q. Bobby, if Tech wins this game it will be 2 in a row since they joined the league, does that instantly make them the leagues premiere program?

BOBBY BOWDEN: It would make them a team that everybody wants to get, you know. Because when you are winning everybody is going to lay for you. They are catching a little of that now. They have handled it pretty doggone good.

I just think Frank has done a tremendous job there. I used to play against them when I first came to West Virginia. We are very familiar with Virginia Tech.

When I was at Florida State we used to play Virginia Tech. And one of our best football teams went up there in 1964 and got beat. The only game we lost that year. And I played them at West Virginia.

Frank has done just a great job along with some of the other coaches, Jerry Clayborne, always one of my favorites, they have done a great job.

So if they win tonight, that gives them 2 in a row, will that put them at the top of the pack? It most certainly will. It will be the target we are aiming at.

Q. Your leadership has been a big thing for Tech, and getting by the disappointment of the Miami loss, can you address how it is for a coach when players stand up?

BOBBY BOWDEN: There is nothing like it. No doubt bit. We've talked, my staff, earlier in the year. We talk how important senior leadership is. Not freshman leadership. Not sophomore leadership. Senior leadership.

I think a lot of times that is the difference in that football team. I bet you Southern Cal has got great senior leadership.

I bet Texas has got great senior leadership and Virginia Tech has.

Our senior leadership has been real good. We probably don't have as many that are starting and in a position even maybe as Virginia Tech. But, I think, it's vital. It's very obvious their guys have done a good job.

Q. Coach, you touched on at the luncheon, you said this may be Frank Beamer's best team. Some people will be surprised that they lost a game, and you played them in '99 when they were undefeated. Can you talk about that, how it's an overall team like '99 when they just had Michael Vick and maybe less talent around him?

BOBBY BOWDEN: It looks to me the worse news is how physical they are. I never seen a dad-gum secondary to average 216 pounds. Folks, that's linebackers. That's linebackers. The safety is high 20's. The other one is low 20's. Unless old Frank is doing it wrong, which he probably is. He is probably stretching about 10 pounds a guy. One of his corners is 216. The baby is 205. You know, I don't remember that in '99 when we played them.

I bet he's as physical as anybody in the country right now. Offense lineman, defensive linemen, defensive end, linebackers, secondary, runners, fullbacks. You know, he has got a physical football team.

Q. Coach Bowden, following up on that, is your concern for your team more of the emotional state or its physical state going into this game?

A. Physical. Emotion has not been a problem with us. We hit the field every game we played ready to go with our kids wanting to win and giving everything they've gotten.

The biggest thing we are faced with right now is trying to play a game with 3 starting offensive lineman out of the game.

I don't know of any team in the country that has been able to get by with that one. You can lose a runner, you can lose a receiver, you can lose a linebacker, you can lose a so and so. But to lose offensive lineman is very, very difficult.

I haven't kept up with them. Have they lost any? I don't know. There is a lot of luck involved in coaching. Because we've had years where we've gone through the year with no injuries, and we are usually pretty good that year.

Then we've had other years where we got injured bad and usually were not as good. There is a lot of luck involved in that regard.

Q. Following up on that, Bobby, how do you place your third guard now in the middle, how much of a concern is it?

BOBBY BOWDEN: Our offensive line Coach Mark McHale, who was raised up in Virginia, Williamsburg, I believe, up in the northwest up there, he has done a real good job. It's amazing watching him every Monday trying to piece that thing together, you know.

Mark, what are you going to do? We are going to move so and so to here, and then get so and so over to here. The next week, Mark, what are you going to do? We have to move so and so over here and bring so and so here. Mark, how many more moves have you got? I ain't got anymore.

We are going to play tackle at guard and play a second team tackle at tackle.

The second half, when our starter comes back, who is a freshman, it's not like he's a dripping wet senior that knows what he is doing. He is a freshman from right here in Jacksonville. At least we get him back. He is No. 1. We will have him the second half. Take this guy and move him back to tackle and that guy back on the bench. That's what our offensive line Coach has been faced with the last four or five weeks.

Q. Bobby, has the theme of the week been, you can make up for a disappointing season with one night?

BOBBY BOWDEN: Let me tell you something, I mean, this struck me yesterday. I mentioned it to my football team. I said men, if we were 11-0, if we were 11-0, and we lose that game, we ain't conference champions.

You know, here we are going in our 7-4, and they are nearly 11-0, 10-1, and yet, whoever wins that game is the champion.

So anyway, again, here is Virginia Tech preparing for this game, we are 10-1. Florida State is only this. And yet, if we don't win that darn game, the fight for the championship was bad. I can think of other words, I'm afraid to use them. I'm afraid somebody will take it wrong. I mean, really, 11-0, 7-4, you got to win it.

Q. Bobby, could you assess the freshman season of Drew Weatherford, the ups and downs and what will this experience mean for his future?

BOBBY BOWDEN: Drew Weatherford has really surprised me. He was not supposed to start this year. Wyatt Sexton was supposed to start. He is a red shirt junior.

In my 30 days at Florida State, our quarterback has always been a red shirt junior or more until Chris Rix came along, we had to start a red shirt freshman. Then we spent four years with Chris, looking back he did a pretty darn good job. Now we will get back in sync, we are going to start Wyatt Sexton, a red shirt junior. Now he gets sick and can't play, now we go back to a red shirt freshman again.

What kind of job has he done? I think he has done a super job. He has done a super job. If can you protect him, if you can protect him, he can hurt you.

We have outstanding receivers running around out there. If you can't protect him, I don't care how good or outstanding they are.

I thought it was very evident last week against the University of Florida. We certainly couldn't protect him the first half. They would not let him throw the ball. They were in his face all day. Then about the middle, or the third quarter we begin to protect our quarterback. People would like to say Florida went into prevent. Oh no they didn't. You didn't watch the film. They ran the same blitzes at the same time with the same coverages.

Never let up, which was pretty smart of them. We protected our quarterback, and they had a hard time keeping us from moving north/south.

So, anyway, to answer your question, if we can protect him, I am very impressed with him.

Q. Coach, I want to clarify something you said on the conference call, and ask you a question, when you spoke to us earlier in the week you mentioned things that you have to do to fix this stuff, and you mentioned recruiting.

I want to make sure you're not talking about what happened in the last months, you are talking the last 4 or 5 years.

Since Virginia Tech saw you a couple of years earlier in the decade, the previous five years were much better for your program better than the past five years, talk about that please.

BOBBY BOWDEN: Well it was. The previous 14 years were better. And yet you look back, the last five we've had 4 losses, 5 losses, 3 losses. That's not what we used to do. But that's what we did, you know.

Now, this year, of course, it's a new situation. You got a new quarterback, and what are you going to do the next five years.

We started off 5-0, I thought my goodness, this thing got back pretty quick. Then, of course we began to lose people and just not get as good as we were. But that will come.

The things that I resent a lot is that you have a year that's not real good and people all of a sudden start saying, oh the program is destroyed. The program is gone. Oh the program is playing like it was 50 years ago.

Where is your competitiveness. We can come back as easy as any anybody else can come back. It's this far from the white house to the out house. And it's this far back from the out house back to the white house. I have been on both ends in my 53 three years of coaching.

As long as I stay there I will fight to get back. When I can't fight anymore, I'm gone.

Q. Bobby, you talked about playing Virginia Tech back to '64, has their identity always been that kind of physical play?

BOBBY BOWDEN: Yes, it's their mentality up there. Jerry Clayborne, was one of the finest football coaches I have known. Jerry was all physical. He was all physical. I think Virginia Tech right now runs a brand of defense that he ran. Jerry was always a 6-2 back in those days. He was 6-2-2-1. And Frank still runs a version of that right now. I can see Jerry Clayborne in it right now. It's a little modified. But Jerry was always a physical coach and then I think, I forgot, who followed him.

Q. Bill Dooley?

BOBBY BOWDEN: I don't think Bill was there when I was, was it? No it was Jimmy Sharp and someone else before him.

Q. Charley Coffee?

BOBBY BOWDEN: That's right, Charley Coffee. It's been so long ago I forgot. So we used to play him all of those years at West Virginia. When came back to Florida State, we played him a lot because -- what are you trying to tell me in the back? Are you talking to me? The guy back there was signaling. I don't know if he was trying to tell me something or not. Maybe trying to tell me to shut up. Any when I first came back to Florida State we played Virginia Tech every year because we were an independent, and I think they were too. Then we both got into conferences and quit playing each other. I'm very familiar with their program.

Q. Bobby, earlier in the week the Virginia Tech players was speaking about your team with a lot of respect saying such things as you got to play twice as hard to play with a team like Florida State, it's a Florida team.

When you go on the field against a team that's not Florida and not Miami, do you still bring some measure of mystique or something else to the table that teams are looking for or watching for.

BOBBY BOWDEN: I would like to think so but I don't know. I don't know what they are thinking. I wouldn't think so. I would think they would judge us on what they seen this year and go from there. That's what I would think. You know.

Q. Coach, there is some difference in your age obviously, you and Frank, he talked about how you developed a relationship with each other, a lot through Nike events, and things likes this, is this one of those situations where you really have a lot of respect and like each other?

BOBBY BOWDEN: Yes, yes. Yes. I started saying something about Spurrier, but I ain't gonna say it. I ain't gonna say it.

Frank is one of the guys, because I've been with him when we were around a lot of head coaches, maybe 35 of us at a time in Hawaii, or in Mexico, or the Caribbean down there. He is just one of the well liked guys. I don't like him because he won't let me beat him in golf. Other than that, Frank, anybody that knows Frank, I don't know if anybody can have something negative to say about him. Or I can't see anybody not wanting to be around him. Him and his wife, wonderful people.

Q. Bobby, you are 13-0 lifetime against Tech, I know most years you have been better than he is, is that fate, chance, or what? Do you feel like your luck might have to run out?

BOBBY BOWDEN: Well, you wish that meant something but you know every time you start the season, you forget all of that stuff in the past. This is Virginia Tech of 2005. We are Florida State of 2005. And if you look at their records, you wonder why we are here.

So I cannot see them wilting to what happened 30 years ago. I can't see that. We simply have to play our best football game, and I think they would have to make some mistakes. Mistakes can neutralize a lot of things.

Q. Bobby, based on the way this season has gone for your team, when you look at how you discuss this game with them, how important is this game to make this season right for your team and what's happened to it and what you are expected to have happen to it, and what they expected to have happen to it?

BOBBY BOWDEN: Well, any win can really perk things up. There is no doubt about it. This win, you look back at our last ball game, would you say this one is more important than the last one? I believe it is. Would you say it's more important than 2 games ago? I believe it was. Is it more important than 3 games ago? I believe it is.

So now you are going into a very important football game, you know, so you can imagine what a win would mean to us and also to Virginia Tech.

Q. Bobby, is there any chance that over those last three games there was maybe some looking ahead to this game? The other part of that is, how much does your team seem jazzed by this opportunity as the 7-4 team to almost steal the championship?

BOBBY BOWDEN: Well, I do not think there was any looking ahead. I never felt like there was any looking ahead.

Maybe we would have played feistier had we had to fight for this doggone thing instead of us having it handed to us when Boston College got beat or somebody, and handed it to us. You all are playing N.C. State

tonight, you got it no matter what. It's not a very motivating thing. I didn't see our kids let up any. I thought we played hard. I just think we have been inefficient. I don't think we have been able to get it together. I blame a lot of it on injuries, you know.

Q. Bobby, again, following up on what you said a minute ago about this season, and how this game is an important game, is that going to be how it's changed in this league now because you could just as easily be 10-0, 11-0 just like Virginia Tech is 10-1, and if you can't get this one, you can't get anything?

BOBBY BOWDEN: Yes, that's what I was alluding to a while ago when I said if we were 11-0, if you still can't win this darn game here, you don't even win the championship.

So here we are 7-4, they are 10-1. It looks like you got no business being there with those guys. Yet whoever wins that game will be the conference champion. That part of it is good for somebody like us.

Q. Thanks, Coach, we'll talk tomorrow.

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