

2005 ACC FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP
Jacksonville, FL

December 2, 2005
Coaches Press Conference

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK BEAMER

THE MODERATOR: Start with some opening comments, Frank.

FRANK BEAMER: We are just glad to be here. Like I said last week, being a part of this great ACC is fantastic. Being a part of the Inaugural game is fantastic. I'm hoping we can hold up, to make it a good football game.

We understand what a great program Florida State has been is, what great players they have in their program, what good coaches they have in their program, we better get ready to play one heck of a football game here tomorrow night. We look forward to it.

Q. Frank, do you think it does, or will feel like a bowl game atmosphere in this town over the next 24/48 hours, and do you have any impressions of the local organizing efforts so far.

FRANK BEAMER: Well any time you are dealing with Rick Cabot (phn) and the Gator Bowl people, you are dealing with a first class operation. Everything will go off great. No question about that.

I'm not sure it's a bowl atmosphere. It's different. We got a regular week. That's how we try to keep it, as far as our practice. We played last Saturday, now we are playing this Saturday. So I don't know that it's going to get into a bowl atmosphere.

I think you got to understand it's like a regular game week-wise. But the stakes are so much higher and you got one chance. You work like hell all year to get yourself in a position to win the conference championship. Here it is now. Let's make sure we put our best effort forward. So it's different. It's different from anything that certainly we've ever been a part of.

Q. Frank, when you played them in the Gator Bowl here it was the end of like a 16 year stretch where they had maybe the 23 losses. The last four or five years they had maybe 15, 16. It's a different program. What is the difference.

FRANK BEAMER: I don't think they're a lot difference. Bobby upstairs talked about the league being a lot tougher now. I think that's certainly true. Not only us, Miami, Boston College. We have solid programs. All of those programs that chased Florida State over the years, the best I can tell, they've upgraded.

So, you know, I think the league is different. I think with the team right now, Florida State, the one thing they've had is some injuries. When you get injuries, particularly in the offensive line, I think those are

people that work together a lot. Sometimes, I know us, staying injury-free has been a big, big part of us being able to be consistent each and every week.

Injuries can get you inconsistent in a hurry. There is a real thin line between being okay and not being okay. The only thing I said with Florida State, and you look at the players they've got, they can get okay in a hurry. I believe that. They have got that great defense. And they're playing great defense. They will hummel you in a hurry. Then you look at those wide receivers and running backs, and you understand that, you know, in one play they can take it to the house on you in a hurry. You stand over there and hold your breath with the talent that they've got out there on the field.

And so this is a very, very, capable Florida State football team. No question in my mind. No question in my mind, they are getting ready to play the best football game tomorrow night. They got too many good players, too many good coaches.

Q. Along those lines, does it seem at all surreal to be 10-1 team that's a clear favorite against a Florida State team that you haven't had a whole lot of success through the years?

FRANK BEAMER: We haven't had any success. The 0-6 during my time. And 0-13 during a lot of coaches times.

Yes, I don't feel like we are a favorite. You look at it. I know where they are. But when you talk about Florida State's program, they're a program that if you said name the top ten teams in the country you would put them in there. I'm not sure you would put Virginia Tech in there year after year. I don't know that we are to that level. Until you can beat them, and until you can get that done, I'm not sure we're the favorite.

Q. Coach, at the end of your Big East run you guys went back to the pack, two years in the ACC, you have been the best team, how have you pulled your team up to that elite level?

FRANK BEAMER: Well, first of all, the Big East was a tough league. And when we were going through that stretch I think there is different things involved.

But the first thing I think you would have to say is the Big East was very good.

I said a while ago, there is a real thin line. There is a real thin line. We lost some close ball games by a little bit and probably didn't win enough by a little bit.

But we just, you know, we have been in a good roll for the last two years. The key things to it is your quarterback. We had the Player of the Year last year in Brian Randall. We had a guy this year one vote short of being Player of the Year, offensive Player of the Year. I'm not sure of my stats. But that quarterback has been very good. Our defense has been very good the last two years. Our kicking game has been very good for the most part. To me, that's how you win.

Q. Coach, you sound like maybe your sandbagging a little bit about whether or not you think your program should be in the Top-10. If you win tomorrow night do you think it should be thought of as one of the Top-10 programs over the last 10 years or so?

FRANK BEAMER: Well, that's something that I think that comes over time. I was talking about this a lot. If you guys start saying, name me the Top-10 football programs in the country. I'm not sure you ought to put Virginia Tech there. We have had some success. It's got to keep going over a period of time before you put us in there with Texas and Southern Cal and Notre Dame and whoever, Florida State.

So I'm not sure. I don't believe I'm sandbagging on that one. I would like, I would hope that each and every one of you put us there. That's where we want to get to is when you talk about our program, you say that's a Top-10 program year in and year out. They've done it the right way. That's what I would like to hear.

Q. Coach, Florida State this season has been forced to go with a red shirt freshman Drew Weatherford, can you just share what you've seen from him, and what playing a season like this can mean for his future?

FRANK BEAMER: I have seen a very talented quarterback. When he has had time he has been very effective. When he has been rushed or had to move, it is like any quarterback, it's not nearly as easy.

The thing that worries me, he is talented, those backs are talented, those wide receivers are talented. The offensive line, they are trying to get it together.

Like I said, I think they will play the best they will play tomorrow night.

Q. The Big 12 Conference Championship game has had a lot of upsets. The SEC, chances are the favored team has won, they have been evenly matched. In both cases, the games have been high scoring. Do you have any idea how an ACC Championship Game, the characteristic of that game, will be starting with tomorrow night?

FRANK BEAMER: Yes. No, I don't have any clue. I guess that's what makes it interesting. This is the first one. I think anything can happen in college football. We lose to Miami and then no one would have predicted that Georgia Tech could beat Miami down in Miami. That's why you play the game. And if it's one thing I said about this league, it's one thing I believe it's a balanced league. We take turns beating each other up. But that's what makes it probably a great league.

I think when you look, there is a lot of teams there that last week that was 5 -6 or 6-5, or ended up that way.

It's just a very balanced league. It's hard to win each and every week. It's going to be hard to win tomorrow night. No doubt in my mind.

Q. Frank, this game was originally set for 1 p.m. when they announced the formation 18 months ago. In August ABC asked a flip-flop between the Big 12 and the ACC to put this thing in prime time. Do you think the success that your program has had in the past, and the predictions of your relevance this year had anything to do with that? What does that trial time slot mean to the league?

FRANK BEAMER: I think it makes a statement about the ACC. I'm not sure it makes a statement about Virginia Tech. For them to put our first conference championship on in prime time, I believe, makes a great, great statement about the ACC. And if I'm not mistaken, those people are going to put on what sells, and what they can get those commercials to sell for. I really believe it makes a fantastic statement about the ACC and how exciting TV people think it is.

Q. You're 10-1, they are 7-4, yet you've got at least on appearance an equal shot at the championship. Bobby said he is not so sure he would want to be in your shoes, he doesn't know how fair that is, your thoughts on that.

FRANK BEAMER: Well, I, at this point in time I would just as soon play under last year's rules. I think the way the rules are set up, the way the division is set up, you got to go earn it. All of us knew at the end of the year there is going to be this game, that you have to win it, if you are going to be ACC champion. That's the way it is. The reality of it is, you better get ready to play a great football game.

Q. Right now some of BCS conferences have these championship games and some don't. Is there any concern that the addition of this game might make tougher for an ACC to play for the National Championship. Would you like to have all of the conferences have this type of championship game to even it out?

FRANK BEAMER: There is no question, this makes it a lot harder to play, or get to the National Championship game. Yes, you would like to see every conference be in the same format. You don't have control over that.

I'm just again happy to be a part of this one and the fact that we do have a chance to play Florida State for the ACC Championship and get to a BCS bowl.

There is just no question though that playing this extra game makes it tougher. I think there is great excitement in Jacksonville right now. There is great excitement in the ACC, that we got a gigantic game on prime time.

As I said earlier in the week, there is more pluses than minuses to this deal as far as I can see.

Q. Frank, you've talked a lot about that thin line and about how leadership is one of the things that beyond quarterback play, and having the players that kind of take ownership of the program and stand up and augment what the coaches do, and make everybody on the same page.

Can you talk about the leadership, the trend of Brian and the seniors last year to the 19 guys this year.

FRANK BEAMER: Well, probably what's helped us more than anything is going through the season two years ago. We had some good players. After we lost a couple, we just didn't play very well. We weren't a very good football team.

I think going through that helped us last year. I think going through that, and last year, has helped us this year, understanding that the team does come first. How you play as a team determines what's going to happen.

And understand that good football teams have good leadership, good senior leadership. I think our seniors have really taken it on themselves to be good leaders. I'm really proud of this group. They've won a lot of games. They are good people that really try to be right in every way.

Q. Frank, Bobby comes strolling in here, he's got three or four state policeman with him, all you've got is Dave Smith, I'm wondering what's up there?

FRANK BEAMER: Well, you can take that for what it is. Dave Smith is a tough son of a gun. Does he have a gun? Nobody is trying to get to me. Everybody is trying to get to old Coach Bowden.

Q. Frank, you do always talk about it being a fine line, but in some ways it's as big as a canyon when you look back to '89 or 90 when Florida State came up there early in your career, and somebody scores late, it's a moral victory just for you guys to avoid a shutout.

Could you have imagined the scenario, even though it took 15 or 16 years, to be favored in this position to get from that point to here.

FRANK BEAMER: Things have changed, that's for sure. The thing that hasn't changed is that Florida State is a great football program, great players, great coaching.

And, you know, I think they, Miami have helped bring Virginia Tech up.

I want to see ACC now. I think Boston College, Miami and Virginia Tech has helped that. All of those other schools that have chased Florida State all of those years, they are getting better too. All of our recruiting is getting better.

It's just a fact. If you want to try to beat those guys, you better get you some recruits that can run just like they can, as tough as they are. You just don't walk out there and beat those guys unless you got a few players.

Q. Coach, Coach Bowden talked about how physical your team is. Can you talk about your offensive line the last two weeks, how they have responded, you have been able to run the football against UVA and North Carolina, right down their throat?

FRANK BEAMER: I'm proud. We had 2 running backs that have done well, Humes and Imoh. But I think the first thing they say, the offensive line and those tight ends are blocking.

I will tell you somebody else, our wide receivers, they got to get out there and block, and they've done a good job. That together, if you are going to throw the ball, it's got to be a team effort. But if you are going to run the ball, it's got to be a team effort. As an offensive football team, we've done very well.

But running against Virginia and North Carolina, that's no slight to those two places, that's not like running against these guys at Florida State. I said it, it's just like going against Miami's defense. It's the same caliber player up front, strong, big, fast, linebackers that can run. There is no difference. We didn't do very well against Miami.

I think it gives us the opportunity to see, can we do any better against this crowd? It's going to be tough. These guys are good. These guys are good. I was just watching N.C. State against them. They had a lot of rushing yardage. It's all on two or three plays. After that, they're hammering them. You look at Florida last week. It's a couple of plays there that kind of popped a little bit.

For the most part Florida State just kind of hummeled Florida. This crowd is good.

Q. Frank, will Imoh play?

FRANK BEAMER: Yes, he will. We will start out rotating. Whoever is hot, that's who is going to get the carries.

Q. I understand Coach Bowden called you earlier in the week in regard to that difficult season that you had a couple of years ago, and how you got your team back, what was your reaction and response in terms of having the winningest Coach in the game and seek a little advice?

FRANK BEAMER: My first response is why is he calling me after all of these games he has won? I will be honest with you, in the end, I was really honored that he would feel like we would have something to talk about or maybe share. He would want to hear whatever I had to say. In the end, I'd say I was honored by the conversation.

Q. When did he call you?

FRANK BEAMER: Monday.

Q. Frank, Coach Bowden said he didn't think he would ever have to play against another Vick, he's got one on Saturday, can you talk about how critical Marcus's play will be tomorrow night?

FRANK BEAMER: Well, you know, there is no question, if you are going to beat the team with the caliber of Florida State, your quarterback has got to play well. Marcus didn't talk about it yesterday. He has to be right for us to have a chance winning this football game. He played great against Virginia. He came back and had a couple of plays against North Carolina that was a little bit inconsistent. That's part of learning, maturing, he is such a competitor. I believe he will be better here. And he needs to be. He needs to be the guy that gives us the chance to beat Florida State.

Q. Coach when you played Florida State in the Sugar Bowl they won, and won the national championship. Your team lost the game. It seems like around the country, and most of Florida, people were talking about Michael Vick and how your team played, what did that mean to your program?

FRANK BEAMER: I think it was big. I think playing for a National Championship, and you put Virginia Tech's name in there, a lot of people will say that could never happened. But it happened. And really having a legitimate shot of winning. We got ahead of them, having a legitimate shot of winning the National Championship. That's about the time that we decided to put a trophy case in there that's reserved for National Championship up in our memorabilia area at Virginia Tech. Hopefully, we will get a chance to put a trophy in there one of these days.

Then I think the other part is that people did talk about Michael Vick and how that affected applications to Virginia Tech, and how that affected how much publicity for Virginia Tech. How many people would go out and wear a Virginia Tech hat on, when they used to put a Notre Dame hat on or Michigan or whatever.

I don't know that you can ever measure how much that helped us in recruiting, that the best player in college football was at Virginia Tech. Maybe I need to take a look at Virginia Tech. I think it's gigantic what that game meant even though we didn't get the win that night.

Q. Frank, this may be a stupid question?

FRANK BEAMER: I will tell you if it is.

Q. I can trust for you that. Have you guys addressed the way Marcus holds the ball when he is being pressured after the Miami game, or is that just a Marcus thing?

FRANK BEAMER: Well, he gets scooting around there. Yes, Coach Rogers has talked to him about getting that ball up there high and tight and controlling it. He understands, too.

The thing I like about Marcus, he is smart, and he wants to be better. I think he will be better in the future.

A lot of times when you are ready to throw, and there is people around you, all of a sudden you are scooting away from them, you are not thinking about securing the ball you are thinking about trying to get away from this guy, so I can throw to that guy that I just saw come open.

It's kind of hard when you are in that traffic to get the ball here when you still want to try to throw the football. There is no question we got to take care of the ball. We got to understand there is people on the other side that want it. They are after it.

Q. Frank, getting back to Bobby's call to you about asking advice, what did you tell him?

FRANK BEAMER: Not anymore than I had to. I went through what our football season went through, what I felt personally happened, and the things that was going on that I felt within our football team.

I think the big difference -- there is a big difference. This is what you guys kind of talked about a while ago. That football team, after we lost to West Virginia, we beat Miami at home, then we went back and lost to Pittsburgh. After that we didn't have a chance to win a Big East championship. And we didn't have a chance to go to a BCS game. After that we didn't play very well. We just didn't play very well.

But I think Bobby's situation is totally different in that, you know, they've struggled some down at the end. But they've got a chance to win an ACC, and they got a chance to go to a BCS game, and there is a lot of difference. That's what's at stake tomorrow night.

Q. Thank you.
