

# Southeastern Conference Football Championship Game: Georgia vs Alabama

Saturday, December 6, 2025

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

**Georgia Bulldogs**

**Coach Kirby Smart**

**Daylen Everette**

**Gunner Stockton**

Postgame Press Conference

Georgia 28, Alabama 7

THE MODERATOR: Now joined by Coach Kirby Smart and Daylen Everette, Gunner Stockton.

Coach.

KIRBY SMART: Yeah, start with thanking the SEC and the leadership in this conference. They do an incredible job with this event. It's so well run. Both fan bases passionate. One of the greatest championship games you can play in. I have respect for that.

Our administration, Josh Brooks, Jere Morehead, do an incredible job supporting these players, helping them out. All the credit goes to the players who have had a very long, tough, hard season. The kids in our program buy into hard. I appreciate their toughness in the way they do things. That pays off in the long run.

To win back-to-back SEC championships, it's every kid in this footprint's dream, and an honor to be at Georgia and to be the head coach here and win games like this.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the players.

**Q. Gunner, can you talk about the tone that Cole Speer set with that blocked punt.**

GUNNER STOCKTON: He's one of my best friends, one of my roommates. Just seeing all the hard work he's put into this program, seeing it pay off, it was definitely special.

**Q. Daylen, how big was JaCorey Thomas today?**



DAYLEN EVERETTE: JaCorey went out there and just did his thing. I was proud of him. You saw what he did on that sack. They just turned everybody up. Everybody on the field and on the sidelines.

Just proud about how he played.

**Q. Gunner, the season is not over for you guys, but when you look at this team, what has stood out the most?**

GUNNER STOCKTON: I think the fact that we never quit. I think we've shown that in every game. I think that's one of the best parts about our team, is we never quit.

**Q. Daylen, you were super physical defensively tonight. Kirby talked about how much the SEC Championship game matters to this program. Did winning this game in particular, do you think that made a difference in the way you played today?**

DAYLEN EVERETTE: I wouldn't say that. We try to go out every game and play Georgia football. This was just a game on a big stage. I feel like we executed and did everything the right way.

**Q. Daylen, what do you attribute the fast defensive start to this time?**

DAYLEN EVERETTE: Say that one more time.

**Q. What do you attribute the fast start to?**

GUNNER STOCKTON: She's saying we didn't give up a touchdown like we did every other game (laughter).

DAYLEN EVERETTE: Fast start, it's always great to start a game out with a three-and-out. Get the offense on the field as early as possible. We did that, I feel like that set a tone for the game.

**Q. Gunner, the center spot, Malachi today. Just about the job he did.**



GUNNER STOCKTON: He was awesome. I mean, Malachi is a fighter. Attacked practice the way that Drew did. Drew is a good role model for him. Did a great job. Took snaps in the walk-through in our suits. I took my jacket off, he did, too. We're always preparing, doing everything. He did a great job.

**Q. Daylen, you held Alabama to negative three yards. How much did y'all talk about eliminating that aspect of their game? How much did that help the rest of the defense?**

DAYLEN EVERETTE: I think that helped a lot. We just tried to make it one-dimensional. That's one thing we emphasized coming into this season, we got to do better stopping the run on defense, so...

**Q. Gunner, Zachariah had a big punt return. His first SEC Championship game. What has he meant to this team this year?**

GUNNER STOCKTON: Yeah, Zach, I mean, everybody knows he's a great player. He's an even better teammate. Just the way he always gets his touches in, always congratulating people. That's probably one of the best things he does, besides being a great football player.

**Q. Daylen, you were the MVP last year. How cool is it to see Gunner win it? Gunner, how does it feel to win it this year?**

DAYLEN EVERETTE: It's a great feeling to see him get that. Proud of him for everything he's done this year. Probably one of the toughest kids on the team. Toughest kid I know. Take all the hits, pop right back up. I'm proud of him.

**Q. Daylen, it looked like Rasean Dinkins' first career start this week. Talk about his performance, what it means to step in like that in a game like this.**

DAYLEN EVERETTE: He had an opportunity to step up. I feel like he handled that the right way. Didn't really go out there and make it bigger than what it was. He just went out there and played ball.

I'm proud of him for how he stepped up.

**Q. Gunner, Nate had a few yards after contact today. What does his physicality do for this offense?**

GUNNER STOCKTON: Yeah, he definitely runs the ball hard. He's trying to get every inch for the team. He puts his body on the line. That's who Nate is, he'll do everything for the G.

**Q. Gunner, you and other players spoke earlier in the week that you were very familiar with the Georgia-Alabama history. You said something along the lines it is what it is. How tired were you hearing about it? What does that part of it mean tonight?**

GUNNER STOCKTON: Yeah, I think that's just part of the history of two great teams going at it. I'm glad we kept to the same thing, just approached this week like it was a big game. Didn't make it bigger than it was. Just took advantage of it.

THE MODERATOR: We'll release Daylen and Gunner. Congratulations, gentlemen.

We'll continue with questions for Coach Smart.

**Q. Could you talk about what a huge momentum change the blocked punt was. Then talk a little bit about how special the journey is that the kid who blocked it had.**

KIRBY SMART: Just unbelievable kid. I mean, he sacrificed so much for this program. Gets me emotional thinking about it because we had a team meeting on Friday, and we spoke to the team. I spoke to the team. And Drew picked five players. It was a very moving talk. He had coaches come down and talk about the five seniors.

He had Micah Morris. Well, actually he had Daylen Everette talked about by his coach. Donte came and talked about him. Dillon Bell and Cole Speer, Coach Coley came and talked about him. And then Oscar Delp was actually the fourth. So it was four players.

He put on the screen how many days they had been at Georgia. He put on the screen how many days potentially they had left. They had 1%. I think they had been there 1,200 days at Georgia because they're all fourth- and fifth-year players.

Basically Coach Coley talked about Cole Speer's sacrifices. He got to be a really competitive receiver in the spring. He was playing really good, then got an injury in the spring game. It set him back. He never flinched, never complained. He just does what he's asked to do. He's extremely fast and physical.

Think about those players that Drew talked about and had their coaches come talk about. Dillon Bell scores a touchdown tonight. Huge in the game. Daylen Everette gets an interception. Huge in the game. Cole Speer blocks the punt. Oscar played well also.

Before he finished, he said, Stand up if you've beaten Alabama in a game. None of 'em stood up. So it was a very moving piece.

Micah and Cash were there for the national championship game, but they didn't play. I thought it hit right in between the eyes of doing it for the seniors. So many of them have been through heartbreaking losses that they wanted to do it.

Kirk Benedict had a great rush plan, came after the punt, got a huge block there.

**Q. The level of physicality and aggression that your defense played with tonight, how proud are you of them to see that? How big of a difference do you think that made tonight?**

KIRBY SMART: It was a huge difference. It was the domination on that side of the ball. A lot of it came with a chip on their shoulder from the last one. It came with a chip on their shoulder from improving.

We told them after that game there wasn't a lack of execution in that game at home. They outplayed us. They out-executed us. They probably out-coached us. We weren't going to let that happen again in terms of the way we played.

They're getting better. Young kids are growing up. There's a lot of naysayers out there for Schumann and his staff. They never flinched. They kept getting better, kept growing the players. They played really well tonight.

**Q. Talk about Rasean Dinkins stepping in today, how much of a challenge it is against that offense.**

KIRBY SMART: Yeah, a lot of motion, a lot of adjustments. Dink has been practicing really well. If you go back, we got him a series against Charlotte. We considered getting him series against Georgia Tech. Joenel was playing. Joenel is dealing with a wrist. He practiced all week. Joenel practiced and was good to go.

We were like, Look, if Joenel is going to have this glove on, maybe we should give Dink a series or two. Dink went one series, another series. Things were going our way.

He's a good football player. He's got some safety characteristics from his high school. He reminds me a little bit of Bullard. He's got a potential to be able to move to safety and play. He's got a really good skill set.

He is the greatest kid. I'm so hard on him at practice at

times, he gets quiet. I appreciate the way he takes hard coaching because it has not affected him. It paid off tonight.

**Q. The talk all week was about Malachi. What did you see from him during the week in prep for this? How do you feel like he held up?**

KIRBY SMART: The biggest thing is getting the snap there. That's 50% of the battle. Get the snap there and get it accurate. That was my concern.

I knew he would play well, hard, physical. He did that. I think the way we practice and what he went through last year prepared him for this year. He was prepared for this game because of everything he's been through.

That kid had an injury, an ankle injury, then he was out for another two, three weeks with an injury. I mean, the kid's been through it. He stepped up tonight, played well in Drew's absence. I'm proud of him.

**Q. How has this team been able to survive and thrive when guys have gone down, young guys stepping up?**

KIRBY SMART: Toughness. Strength program. Look, guys, both those teams tonight were beat up. You guys need to do a deep dive and deep study. I'm going to jump on a soapbox now because I'm going to take your question and run with it.

I'm going to give you a hypothetical. That was the ninth game of our SEC schedule. Just imagine that was the ninth game of the season for everybody in the SEC. Everybody played another SEC game. I'm not saying it was on this week. I'm saying it was on a previous week.

That's eight more losses, right? 16 teams. Eight more losses in our league. So one team, two teams. Let's say this last weekend was Oklahoma and Ole Miss, whoever hadn't played yet. They played and they got losses. Then they're going to go to the SEC Championship and play another game.

Those two teams were beat up tonight. That was the ninth game of the year. We're looking at next year having another game.

I mean, the coaches in our league are concerned about it, very concerned about it. I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't speak my piece and say it's concerning.

If that game affects Alabama... I don't know if it will or not, I have no say so in it. I sat in those shoes many times where that game cost you an opportunity.

Hypothetically every team just played another game in their ninth game. There's eight more losses. Who just dropped out? Then there's another game, SEC Championship.

It was tough, physical out there tonight. They were wounded. We were wounded. Noah Thomas tried to go. He had back spasms. He wasn't able to go. We were without multiple guys. Zion, he was just beat up.

**Q. Back to Cole Speer. In this era of people leaving quickly when they're not getting playing time, how rare are guys like him going to be? How much did you enjoy seeing him produce that moment?**

KIRBY SMART: Yeah, I mean, I almost teared up in the locker room afterwards. We called him up to the top. That's going to be gone, guys. That's going to be gone. I mean, Cole, we recruited Cole. Cole is on scholarship. Different than Dan Jackson and Cash Jones. Those stories...

We're going to get 105 now, I support. I'm glad. Everybody will chase 105 four and five stars. The stories of that kid, you got to be a bold coach to say I'm going to take this kid who loves the University of Georgia, do anything, sacrifice.

London Humphreys had one of the best blocks I've ever seen on touchdown runs. He sacrifices every week for our team by blocking. He might get a catch, might get two. Man, he doesn't care. He does it for his team.

That's why I coach. You look guys at Kansas State. Guys walking away from it. That's lost in our game as we move further and further away from it.

Cash Jones has played so well for us this year. Cole Speer. Those guys are incredible role players for us.

**Q. Coming into this week, everyone has talked about the third down conversions last game for Alabama. How do you explain the difference tonight?**

KIRBY SMART: I explain it by a great game plan by Coach Schumann. He studies a lot of tape, has confidence in his plan. The defensive staff got those guys to believe and played hard. They had a little chip on their shoulder. They wanted another shot.

We executed better, affected the quarterback more. He played almost out of his mind the last time we played him. A lot of the calls were the same. Calls wasn't different. The execution was a little better. The rush was a little better.

**Q. You've been talking all year about how you've got a lot of youth on your team. Have they matured beyond what you expected at this point or about at the level you would expect?**

KIRBY SMART: Yeah, probably about the level we expect. I mean, we wanted to speed it up early because we got some talented young guys coming along. We really had these injuries at receiver that set us back. We've been forced into playing the young guys.

Getting Tallyn back was huge. CJ is growing up. Landon Roldan is going to be a good player. Thomas Blackshear going to be a player. Tyler Williams. We have this core group of young receivers I'm excited about.

Then Dink and (indiscernible). We have these young O-linemen. Elijah Griffin. We have freshmen that I now think of as sophomores. They came in the spring. They've literally been here a full year, but it feels like they're sophomores.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thanks for your time.

KIRBY SMART: Thank you.

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**Alabama Crimson Tide**  
**Coach Kalen DeBoer**  
**Ty Simpson**  
**Deontae Lawson**

Postgame Press Conference

Georgia 28, Alabama 7

THE MODERATOR: We'll open with Coach DeBoer making a statement. Then we'll start with questions for players.

KALEN DeBOER: Just got to credit first of all Georgia, what they did today. You got two teams, congratulations to them, Coach Smart, but you got two teams out there, know each other pretty well over the last two seasons, what the strengths are. Two teams that fight. Two teams that play hard. Got to this point, laid it out on the line.

I'm proud of our guys. I'll never question the heart, the fight, what these guys bring. You can see at the end of the game these guys still giving everything they got, both sides of the ball, all phases.

Fell short today, but proud of the season, getting to an SEC Championship, getting to this spot. A lot to build off of.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

**Q. Ty, you went about 23 minutes without a first down. What got in the way of that? Also, how healthy are you feeling right now?**

TY SIMPSON: Yeah, first off, 23 minutes question, right? We're just one or two things away from having a big play. I think credit to Georgia's defense, they did a good job. We just got to make the easy things easy.

I felt like to be good on third down, we got to be better on



first and second down.

Back to your healthy question, right? Everybody is getting hit, everybody is sore in some type of way.

**Q. Deontae, Georgia had almost 37 minutes of possession time. The of offense wasn't on the field a whole lot. Did that do anything to wear you down?**

DEONTAE LAWSON: I don't think we were wore down. Shoot, we was just going out there, trying to do whatever we can to get the ball back to our offense.

Nah, we wasn't worn down.

**Q. How frustrating is it to have this offensive showing, collectively as an offense, when you have the playoffs on the line here?**

TY SIMPSON: Yeah, we have a standard as an offense in general. Actually, we know we're the best offense in the country. Then when we don't show it, it's very frustrating, especially times when we're just a couple things away.

Like I said, credit to Georgia's defense, right? They had a good plan. That's pretty much simple as that.

**Q. Ty, how nervous are you going to be tonight, knowing tomorrow the Playoff committee is going to look at this game and consider the whole season?**

TY SIMPSON: Yeah, I mean, I'm not nervous at all, right? It's not up to me.

I think that our résumé speaks to itself. We went through a gauntlet of a schedule. SEC is the best conference in the country. That's a really good team. That's pretty much simple as that, right?

We went through a tough schedule and we're the most resilient team in the country. Everything, our résumé, speaks for itself.

**Q. Ty, last game, the third down conversions were the big story. Not the same results. What stuck out to you**



**in the way that Georgia was able to defend you tonight?**

TY SIMPSON: They did a good job of bringing some pressures, right? Almost like they were bringing somebody on almost every down.

But we kind of knew what they were expecting to a sense of what they did in the second half last game. They played tight coverage. Got to make some throws, some catches, got to do the little things right. Pretty much football, right?

Disappointing, for sure. It is what it is, so...

**Q. Ty, how much did Georgia's pressure affect what you were able to do tonight?**

TY SIMPSON: Like I said, credit to those guys. They did a good job. They had some copycat blitzes from people that we've seen before. We picked it up some. But I got to be better at just communicating in general, right? Getting on the same page with Parker on the O-line.

Just like I said, credit to those guys. Georgia is a good defense. We're a good offense. Just didn't roll our way tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, guys. We'll continue with questions for Coach DeBoer.

**Q. Kalen, what is your pitch for why you're still a Playoff team?**

KALEN DeBOER: You look at the games we played throughout the season. If you're really looking at this game, it was a 14-point game with seven and a half minutes to go and we had the ball. You can look at things that didn't go well. We gave them four short fields.

I don't want to take anything away from what Georgia did. The field position battle is part of it. Four short fields, that's a testament to our defense being resilient. One of those touchdowns, if we're really worried about the score, probably punt it on your own 11.

I'm here to win a SEC Championship. If you lose by one or you lose by more, it's still a loss. That's what I was caring about. We're here to win a SEC Championship. We can't get worried about how much do we lose by...

That's what it was about. We're here to win. That's how we play. Again, it was a 14-point game. We had the ball with seven and a half minutes to go against a really good team that knows us well and we know them well.

I thought our defense did a heck of a job going against them. One thing we didn't really do is take the ball off 'em. The one turnover they got, short field.

Again, that's football. That's the way I looked at this game. If this game applies to and takes away from our résumé, I don't think that's right. I really don't. I think the precedence has been set. I don't know how you can go into a conference Playoff game when you're the No. 1 seed, did all these things throughout the year, and playing in this game against one of the top teams in the country, as well, how that can hurt you and keep you out of the Playoff.

Again, we've done what we've done all year.

**Q. You mentioned field position. Talk about that offensively.**

KALEN DeBOER: Yeah, it was back and forth there early, right? Couldn't get it going there. They punt to us, then they shot punted us back. I'm trying to remember there. There was a possession there. They scored on their short fields, got the 14-point lead there.

Yeah, the field position is a big deal. It's a huge deal. Makes it harder. You're swimming upstream, for sure. Our guys moved the ball there at the end, still almost scored another touchdown. If we're really worried about point differential, we're right there.

You're not going to take the points and kick a field goal just to make the score look better. That's not what it is about. It's about winning a conference championship. Credit Coach Smart and what they did. They had a better day today.

**Q. Do you know what you need to do to get Ty's confidence back or is that not an issue?**

KALEN DeBOER: I think it's just having some continuity in practice. If I went through, I don't think this is what this is about, but if I went through the guys who we are gluing together, I know that locker room has the same situation going on, but you talk about Parker Brailsford, who if you give these guys two weeks to get ready, what the health will look like for these guys, Parker Brailsford, Germ, Daniel Hill, I'm not saying what he's playing through, but two weeks, it will be a different Daniel Hill, okay?

You execute or you have a lack of execution in games because you probably didn't have everyone out there working together in practice. So Dewberry will be back, 100%, I mean, he was at the end of the week. Geno would be back. He got taken out of the game there. He'll be back. I can keep going on down the line.

More reps for our other running backs. Fully expect to have Jam back. Two of our three losses are when Jam doesn't play.

Really not a chance that he felt like he could play today. He's not that far away. It's not the one, to me, injury that keeps you out, holds you back. Even a chance to -- could be tight, but a chance even Kevin Riley. That might be a little bit tight, just to be real with you.

There's a lot of guys. I think that's what it really comes down to, is playing with their guys. We got into this game today. The execution just wasn't quite as crisp. There's usually a reason for that.

Again, defensively the same thing. Kelby Collins, LT, Z.B. in the game today dinged up. Dijon a little bit before the game with an evaluation we had where we had to hold off.

All those guys in two weeks, considerably different football team, the one you would have seen earlier in the season.

**Q. The punt block. Georgia's not always played having eight guys up at the line. Was that something you have seen much? What happened on that play?**

KALEN DeBOER: I can tell you exactly what happened. We got a new face in the spot. Obviously that's LT Overton's position. Just tell you what it is. There's a check we got to make. You got a new face in that spot. That's what happened.

Again, getting guys more reps, getting guys back out there makes a big deal. I don't fault our guys that were in that spot, doing everything they can. But there's a check we got to make, one we make all season long. We missed it. They got an extra hat that we couldn't block.

**Q. Ryan Williams was able to break free a couple times in this game, but a couple times he was off the field in some of the moments after that. Talk about the approach of Ryan Williams.**

KALEN DeBOER: I mean, we were intentional in trying to get him the ball. We got four guys that really are working in the rotation. Someone is going to be out. If we go two tight ends, which we still like to do, there might be two guys out.

Ryan came out and had a great week of practice. He's one of the guys that is pretty healthy. We were intentional. Made some plays, like you said. There's more to be had out there the next time he gets a chance.

**Q. Is it still the plan to have Coach Shepard continue with the team for whatever is next, or is it possible you'll have to be replacing him soon?**

KALEN DeBOER: There will be a couple days. We're going to try to make it go as long as we can. He might have to have a few days, especially early in the week here, where he has to take care of some things with his team.

That's where my background with the position and just the offense and stuff, we'd be lighter here at the beginning of the week no matter what the situation was.

So yeah, we intend to do everything we can to have him with us throughout the course of the Playoffs. I know he wants that. Help him be efficient, helped him that way.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.

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