

# Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game

Sunday September 3, 2017

## Jimbo Fisher

Florida State Seminoles



Alabama - 24, Florida State - 7

JIMBO FISHER: I'll say a special thanks to the Georgia Dome and the Chick-Fil-a Bowl. This was an outstanding event. Again, everything they do is run with first class and always have been. Every year I've ever dealt with them, they've put on tremendous events and tremendous venues and hospitality, and everything else has been out of this world. They've done a great job.

I'll say a special thanks to Alabama. They did a great job. They deserved to win the football game. They made the plays. They got the momentum changed in the second half with some special teams plays, and got it going and did a great job. It was a hard-fought game, a very physical game on both sides. Our defense did a really nice job in keeping us in the ballgame and trying to give us some chances, and I think we pressed on offense, didn't get good field position and made some mistakes on defense.

But again, Nick is a great coach and they've got a great program. They did a great job. It was very well-deserving and they'll have a great year. And we just need to rebound, get back, fix the things that we had wrong and go. I still think we've got a great football team. I think we're very physical, I think we're very good. We've got to clean some things up, not make those momentum swings. When you play great people you can't have those, and we'll look at that and then look at the film, make the adjustments and move on.

Again, our kids are disappointed in the result, but at the end, they've got to keep process and we've got to coach better, and the things that go on, that's our job as coaches and my job to fix that and get them in better position to make plays and do the right things over and over.

### **Q. What did you see on that play when Deondre rolled out and fell down?**

JIMBO FISHER: He just like got tackled, but I believe it was a side adjust. We should have thrown the slant on the backside, but I'll wait and see. But I'll wait and see, again, until I look at the film exactly where the decoration was. Should have hot riled it and got it out.

### **Q. We saw him walking on crutches --**

JIMBO FISHER: I don't know until we diagnose it and

see. I'm not a doc -- I don't mean that -- I don't know. I've learned to wait until they see. Unfortunately he's hurt, though.

### **Q. How much more can you ask of your defense as a team?**

JIMBO FISHER: No, they did a great job second half. We gave up a couple plays in the first half, they caught us one time on the safety rotation. They got a guy in the middle of the field and made a great play, but other than that our defense did a really nice job, and we knew, our defense was stalwart, we had a chance to be really good team. They kept us in the ballgame. A couple times Alabama had a chance to put it away, and we kept them to a two-score game at 21-7; that's only two plays away. You're one or two drives -- we just couldn't make the plays. Their defense did a great job, and we just didn't make the plays on our side of the ball to get us back in.

On offense we moved the ball very well in the first half and the first drive of the second half. We felt good at halftime about the way the game went. Disappointed in where we were, but felt in what we were doing and how we were doing it, and we just lost the momentum.

The big thing was the momentum swings and the special teams in the second half. When you get momentum, I always talk about that all the time. Momentum is a things we don't -- it's hard to swing, especially when you play good people.

### **Q. Did you see Deondre, talk to him after the game?**

JIMBO FISHER: No, I just -- again, I saw him and I hugged him and told him I'm sorry he's hurt, we'll get the diagnosis and I love him and we'll figure out what we've got to do from here.

### **Q. Special teams are always such an important thing that you do out there. Were you surprised by the breakdowns?**

JIMBO FISHER: Very much, because we work exclusively, and we do over 30, 35, 40 minutes day on special teams. We work it hard, and we had a breakdown on the edge, and they got through on a field goal at the end of the half, which is another big momentum swing, and then they got the blocked punt. The guy just slid inside our guy. We knew who to

block, what he did, and he just slid inside from what I understand, and I'll look at the film, and got the block. That was critical, and then poor -- he played a great game, and he just made a bad decision. He thought he was out farther, wasn't as close to the goal line, and he should have just let the ball go. Just made a poor decision, and tried to get it out and actually fumbled. Those are big, critical plays in the game.

**Q. How concerned are you if Deondre is out for a while?**

JIMBO FISHER: Oh, I'm definitely concerned because that's your starting quarterback and the kind of player he is and what he has. But we'll get the guys behind him and we'll rep those guys and play and we'll go on. Again, we have great people around him and do the things we've got to do.

**Q. How pleased were you with how (indiscernible)?**

JIMBO FISHER: Well, we moved the ball very well the first half, had a good mix, and second half the first couple drives, then once we lost the momentum and got one-dimensional, had a lot of them to blitz and tee off and come at us and make plays, but again, I'll evaluate the film. I thought they did some really nice things in there because we had some good plays and some things that went really well. Again, we'll look, and when you play good people like that, you've got to be perfect, but I didn't think they were poor at all. I thought they did a pretty solid job, and we'll look at the reasons why the other breakdowns and what happened.

**Q. If Deondre can't go, do you go James?**

JIMBO FISHER: As of right now we will, most likely. That's where we are, but we'll evaluate this week and see.

**Q. What stuck out to you most about the new stadium, and have you ever met Arthur Blank?**

JIMBO FISHER: I don't know if I've ever met Arthur or not. It's a beautiful stadium. I'm worried about those 100 yards down there. I wasn't looking up and seeing -- I joke about that, but I get zoned in. But it looks like a beautiful complex. Great for fans, great atmosphere, great environment. You had all the boards you could see, replays and all the things. Looks like it's a very fan-friendly -- it's a beautiful place and everything in the locker room and everything here is first class, just like Chick-Fil-a does everything, so Arthur is obviously doing it the right way, too.



## FLORIDA STATE QUOTES

Pg. 1

### FLORIDA STATE DEFENSIVE TACKLE #55 FRED JONES

#### ***On miscues and Francois injury in tonight's game***

"We grew up as a team and we came together. We have 11 more games and its time to get it."

#### ***On how to build on tonight's game***

"We never game up and that's something that we haven't done in the past. We played in the first quarter and gave everything til the fat lady sings."

### FLORIDA STATE DEFENSIVE BACK #3 DERWIN JONES

#### ***On trusting the process the rest of the season***

"It's just one of those things where it's football. We're all going through the same process. We're not going to quit as a team and lay down."

#### ***On the mood in the locker room***

"It's just disappointing. Nobody is blaming anyone, but we could have done better as a team."

#### ***On the play on special teams***

"We just made too many mistakes. Alabama is a great team. We have to make the plays on defense, offense, and special teams."



## FLORIDA STATE QUOTES

Pg. 2

### FLORIDA STATE OFFENSIVE #54 LINEMAN ALEC EBERLE

***On reaction to seeing Francois limp off the field:***

"We practice all week for a situation like that. Things happen. We had our game plan into the fourth quarter and to look back and see your quarterback holding his knee, it's frightening. But at the same time, we know Deandre is a tough and persevering guy."

***On the team getting tough breaks tonight:***

"Sometimes these things don't go your way. Whether it's a bad situation or not, sometimes things just don't go your way. We need to do a better job of picking it up and making the best of the situation we're in. We just need to keep pushing for it."

***On competing against Alabama to open the season:***

"Alabama has a good defense and they play hard. It was really fun playing against them. I love playing against SEC schools. They tend to have the bigger dudes and better defenses. It is really fun to go out and compete against the best players in the country."

# Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game

Sunday September 3, 2017

## Nick Saban

Alabama Crimson Tide



Alabama - 24, Florida State - 7

NICK SABAN: Well, this was obviously a great team win for us. We have a tremendous amount of respect for Florida State's program, their coach, Jimbo, and their players. They've got a great defensive team. And it took everything that we had in all facets of the game, the way we played defense, the turnovers that we got, the difference in special teams in terms of blocked field goal, a blocked punt, as well as a turnover on a kickoff return that gave great field position.

I think field position was controlled a lot by special teams in the game, which was very good. Obviously some of the areas that we probably weren't as happy with is consistency on offense, didn't make a lot of explosive plays, had some opportunities, whether it was a lack of protection, quarterback didn't have an opportunity to do what he needed to do, but we didn't have any turnovers. We didn't have any penalties. We've got to do a better job of executing on a more consistent basis, but very, very proud of our players, to come and -- first game of the season, you could always pick out a few things that were a little ugly, but I'm really proud of the way they competed. They played really hard in the game. It was a tough, physical game, and hopefully we'll focus on improving and do the things that we need from here on out to try to get better as a team. We certainly know where we're at right now.

**Q. Can you just talk about the process in the off-season of what you guys do as a team to capitalize on your opponents' mistakes because that seems to be characteristic for you guys, and especially now in the first game where you're trying to work out kinks, you're trying to figure out things, and again it was on display?**

NICK SABAN: Well, they didn't do a whole lot of stuff that they haven't done in the past, so I think our coaches did a really good job of preparing our team to take advantage of some situations in the kicking game. The blocked punt was good scheme based on their protection and how they protect. Should have scooped it and scored it instead of falling on it, but sometimes freshmen are freshmen.

But we continue to try to look for ways to help our players be successful in all facets of the game, and we're going to continue to do that, and I think they believe in it, buy into it, are committed to it, and

practice it so that we can make plays in the game, and it always reinforces their efforts when they do.

**Q. What is the status of Rashaan Evans and also Terrell Lewis?**

NICK SABAN: Rashaan Evans has a groin. They'll have to check it out. He couldn't play in the second half. Terrell Lewis has an elbow injury. His status is very questionable. Christian Miller has a biceps injury, very questionable, and Anfernee Jennings has a sprained ankle and could not play in the second half. So we had four linebackers, three outside backers and an inside backer that didn't play much in the second half.

**Q. If you could comment on Damien Harris and his play tonight.**

NICK SABAN: I thought Damien did an outstanding job. He's practiced really well, had a good camp. The combination of he and Bo, maybe we'll get Jacobs back, Najee Harris, I think all those guys can contribute at that position. But Damien had a really good night tonight, made some big runs for us.

**Q. Was the plan going in to play both Trevon and Levi at corner and what did you see from Levi in particular?**

NICK SABAN: Those two guys have been competing at that position all fall camp. We busted a couple coverages. We were really lucky early in the game. We cut people loose two or three times, not just Trevon, we just made some mental errors, and Levi has got a lot of experience. He's been in the system for a long time, played very well when he had the opportunity to play. Very smart player.

**Q. I know you haven't seen the tape yet, but how would you evaluate Jalen?**

NICK SABAN: Well, I thought Jalen did a good job. He did what we asked him to do. I think a lot of the things that could have been really good plays for Jalen didn't turn out so well because we didn't protect very well. Now, he will tell you that sometimes he's responsible for that because he can redirect the protection, but there were other times where he made mental errors up front and didn't block them, and we had people open but couldn't get them the ball.

So the whole deal on offense, we have to do a better

job of executing, especially when it comes to the passing game. They're a pretty good front. We could complain about running the ball better, but we probably ran it good enough if we could have had the kind of balance that we wanted in the game and been able to protect so that we could make some plays and make some throws down the field. But I thought Jalen did a good job in the game.

**Q. What did you tell them at halftime, and what was the biggest adjustment you feel like was made in the second half?**

NICK SABAN: Well, look, we make a lot of adjustments based on what the other team is doing, but mostly what we go over is the mistakes that we made, and I didn't feel like we executed very well in the first half. We made a lot of mental errors on fundamental things, and I challenged the players to execute better in the second half, which I think we did. And I also told them that this was going to be a 60-minute game. It was going to be a tough game and everybody is going to have to check their hold card to see if they have the kind of will to hang in there because it was a physical game. We had a lot of guys banged up at halftime, and we had some other guys step up and do a good job for us, so I was really proud of the will to win, the will to hang in there, the perseverance that the players showed, especially in the second half.

**Q. You held Florida State to 40 yards rushing. Was that something that you expected out of your defense, and can you speak on the play of your linebackers?**

NICK SABAN: Well, we had a tremendous respect for Florida State's offense. The balance that they usually create running the ball and passing the ball and making explosive plays, I think the combination of them only making one explosive play in the game and their inability to consistently run the ball was probably something that was a real benefit to us. Early in the game, they were moving the ball against us because they were running it three, four, five yards. We were getting in 3rd and 3, 3rd and 2. Our plan was to try to pressure the quarterback, could never do it in those situations. So we started creating more negative circumstances on 1st and 2nd down, which put us in a better position on 3rd down. When we got into that rhythm, I think we played a little better on defense, but I was very pleased with the way we stopped the run.

**Q. At the end of the day, it's a week one win, but did the game itself feel bigger as far as the ass moss fear goes?**

NICK SABAN: It was a great atmosphere. I think the Chick-Fil-a people here do a marvelous job. The city of Atlanta is very -- the hospitality that they afford us is really appreciated, and we love playing over here. Our

players love playing over here. I think this Mercedes-Benz Stadium is a fantastic venue to play in. It was a great experience for our players to have the opportunity to play here, and we played a really good team. A lot of good things.

But it's one game. We have a long season. We're going to have to get other players ready to compete at a high level that don't have as much experience if we're going to continue to improve as a team, and that's the focus that we have right now is what's ahead, not what's behind.





## **ALABAMA QUOTES**

**Pg. 1**

### **ALABAMA DEFENSIVE # 94 LINEMAN DA'RON PAYNE**

#### ***On the Win:***

"We beat a great team. Florida State came out relentless. I think we played with great consistency. We have some improvements to make, but it was a great win for sure."

#### ***On Takeaways from the Game:***

"We get a chance to look at the mental errors of the game and tidy stuff up. We're still knocking the dust off our cleats."

### **ALABAMA DEFENSIVE BACK #39 LEVI WALLACE**

#### ***On the Team's Second Half Adjustments:***

"We just communicated a little bit better. We learned a lot from this game. We need to execute better. We want to take it one day and one game at a time."

### **ALABAMA LINEBACKER #20 SHAUN DION HAMILTON**

#### ***On the Win:***

"We did okay. We held them to seven points and got the win but we have room for improvement. Everybody did their job – all eleven guys. We have to do better at practice this week. We tried to get out there play after play and wore them down."

#### ***On Mercedes Benz Stadium:***

"It's amazing. I didn't know that the Jumbotron did a full 360. I was looking around the whole time. It was really nice."



## **ALABAMA QUOTES**

**Pg. 2**

### **ALABAMA CENTER # 75 BRADLEY BOZEMAN**

#### ***On Second Half Offense***

"Our tempo picked up, we kind of started getting things down, kind of getting it rolling. I think it really improved in the second half

#### ***On Communication***

"Communication was good from the start. It was just getting all the timing down and late changes and the stuff that goes on without talking."

### **ALABAMA RUNNING BACK #34 DAMIEN HARRIS**

#### ***On his second half score:***

"Anytime you score a touchdown it feels good."

#### ***On whether this game featured the "two best defenses in the country":***

"I guess you could say that. They have a great defense. They are solid in the run and played great in the secondary. And we think our defense is the best in the country. We played physical, hard and smart. That was a good challenge for us at the beginning of the year."

#### ***On the Alabama Backfield Depth:***

"When you have a few guys in the backfield it makes it easier for everyone. We have 4-5 guys that can come in and contribute at any moment. We have faith in (Bo) to execute just as well. That takes a lot of stress off our guys."

### **ALABAMA WIDE RECEIVER #3 CALVIN RIDLEY**

#### ***On Expectations for the Offense:***

"I expect that our offense will score as much as possible. I told them that we need to outscore every team by as much as we can. You never know when the defense may have an off day, and it's up to the offense to step it up."



**POSTGAME NOTES - 3/3 FLORIDA STATE VS. 1/1 ALABAMA**  
**SATURDAY, SEPT. 2, 2017 • MERCEDES-BENZ STADIUM • ATLANTA, GA.**

**GAME CAPTAINS:** Alabama's captains for tonight's game vs. Florida State were offensive lineman Bradley Bozeman, linebacker Rashaan Evans and defensive back Minkah Fitzpatrick.

**FIRST TIME STARTERS:** The Crimson Tide had seven student-athletes make their first career start tonight vs. Florida State, including two on offense, three on defense and two specialists. Getting their first career nod on offense were tight end Irv Smith Jr. and offensive tackle Matt Womack. Making their first start on defense were defensive back Trevon Diggs, linebacker Anfernee Jennings and defensive lineman Isaiah Buggs. Place kicker Andy Pappanastos made his first career start on special teams handling field goal attempts while Scott Meyer made his first start as the Tide's long snapper.

**SEASON OPENERS:** Alabama has compiled a 99-21-3 (.817) all-time record in season openers, and is in the midst of a 16-game winning streak dating back to a 39-34 victory over Middle Tennessee at Bryant-Denny Stadium in 2002. Alabama is 37-4 (.902) in its last 41 season-opening contests dating to 1977 and the Tide has posted a 24-2 (.923) opening day record since 1991. The 2017 season marks the 18th consecutive year that the Crimson Tide has opened the season with a non-conference opponent.

**SABAN IN SEASON OPENERS:** Head coach Nick Saban is 19-3 (.864) in his collegiate career in season openers, including a perfect 11-0 mark at Alabama. Saban won his very first collegiate game on Sept. 8, 1990, as he led Toledo to a 20-14 win over Miami (Ohio) in his only season at the school. He was 3-2 in season openers at Michigan State and 4-1 in season openers at LSU.

**DOMES OPENERS:** Under head coach Nick Saban, Alabama has played in eight season-opening games in a domed stadium. In those eight contests, the Crimson Tide is a perfect 8-0 and owns a 289-111 (36.1-13.9) scoring advantage over its opponents.

**DOMES SWEET DOMES:** The Crimson Tide is 25-7-1 (.773) all-time in domed stadiums, including a 16-2 (.889) mark since 2009 and is 17-4 (.810) in Nick Saban's tenure. The Tide was 3-0 indoors in 2016. Alabama opened the year with a 52-6 win over USC on Sept. 3 at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, then posted back-to-back wins at Atlanta's Georgia Dome - a 54-16 win over Florida in the SEC Championship Game on Dec. 3 and a 24-7 win over Washington in the College Football Playoff Semifinal at the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl on Dec. 31.

**NEUTRAL SITES:** Alabama is 84-49-4 (.628) all-time in 137 neutral site contests. The list includes all Alabama-Auburn games not played on campus, including Legion Field from 1948-88. Alabama is 17-5 (.773) in neutral site games during head coach Nick Saban's tenure at Alabama.

**OPENING DAY SUCCESS UNDER SABAN:** Alabama is a perfect 11-0 under Nick Saban and has outscored its opponents 435-127 in those games. The Tide has averaged 39.5 points per opening contest under Saban and given up just 11.5 points per game.

**SABAN IN ATLANTA:** Alabama's Nick Saban has a 14-1 career record in games played in Atlanta as the head coach at Alabama (11-1) and LSU (3-0). Saban's Alabama record includes a 5-1 record in SEC Championship Games, a 5-0 mark in Chick-fil-A Kickoff Games and a 1-0 record in the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl.

**107-7 UNDER SABAN WHEN LEADING AT THE HALF:** Under head coach Nick Saban, the Crimson Tide is 107-7 (.939) when leading at the half. Alabama led Florida State, 10-7, at the half tonight and has held the lead in 26 of its last 32 games dating back to the start of the 2015 season, including 13 of 15 games in 2016.

**ALABAMA AS THE NATION'S NO. 1:** The University of Alabama has played 71 games as the nation's top-ranked team since the inception of the Associated Press poll in 1936. In those games the Crimson Tide boasts a 61-10

(.859) record. Those numbers get even more impressive when you look at the 10 seasons under the direction of head coach Nick Saban (2007-present). Since the ninth game of the 2008 season (113 games), Alabama has played 47 games while being ranked No. 1, posting a 42-5 (.894) record during that span.

**SABAN'S 51st GAME AS AP No. 1:** Tonight's game against Florida State was Nick Saban's 51st career game coaching Alabama as the Associated Press No. 1 team, the most games coached as No. 1 at one school. At 45-6 (.882), Saban has won more games coaching at No. 1 team at one school than any other coach in college football history. Woody Hayes (Ohio State) and Bobby Bowden (Florida State) are tied for second with 40 wins each. Bowden was 40-5 at Florida State as No. 1 and Hayes went 40-6 with Ohio State.

**CAREER FIRSTS:** Damien Harris' punt block, Keith Holcombe's fumble recovery, Levi Wallace's interception and Mack Wilson's interception tonight were the first of their careers in those categories.

#### **DEFENSIVE NOTES**

**10 POINTS OR FEWER:** Alabama's 24-7 win over Florida State marks the 67th time the Crimson Tide has held an opponent to 10 points or fewer under head coach Nick Saban since the start of the 2007 season.

**RUSHING DEFENSE:** Alabama has surrendered only 17 individual 100-yard rushing performances dating back to the 2005 season, a mark that is the lowest in the nation. Alabama has not allowed a 100-yard rusher in the past 24 games (Nick Chubb, Georgia on Oct. 3, 2015). Since head coach Nick Saban's arrival in 2007, the Tide has allowed 11 players to rush for more than 100 yards in a game

**HAMILTON CAREER-HIGH IN TACKLES FOR LOSS:** Senior linebacker Shaun Dion Hamilton finished with a career-high 3.5 tackles for loss tonight. Hamilton's previous high was 2.0, which he had achieved three times in his career, most recently against Tennessee in 2016.

#### **OFFENSIVE NOTES**

**SCORING STREAK CONTINUES:** Alabama's school record consecutive games scoring streak was extended to 214 games tonight with Andy Pappanastos' 35-yard first quarter field goal. Alabama was last held off the scoreboard in a 9-0 loss to Auburn on Nov. 18, 2000.

**RIDLEY NOW TIED FOR FIFTH ON ALABAMA CAREER TOUCHDOWN RECEPTIONS LIST:** Calvin Ridley's 53-yard second quarter touchdown reception is the 15<sup>th</sup> of his career, moving him into a tie for fifth place all-time at Alabama with Joey Jones (1980-83) and Julio Jones (2008-10). Ozzie Newsome (1974-77) is No. 4 all-time with 16. Amari Cooper (2012-14) is Alabama's career leader with 31 scoring grabs.

**RIDLEY MOVES INTO FIFTH PLACE ON ALABAMA CAREER RECEIVING YARDS CHART:** Calvin Ridley's 82 receiving yards on seven catches gives the junior 1,896 yards for his career, which ranks No. 5 all-time at Alabama. Ozzie Newsome (1974-77) is fourth with 2,070 yards. Amari Cooper (2012-14) is Alabama's all-time leader with 3,463 yards.

#### **SPECIAL TEAMS NOTES**

**SCOTT NOW THIRD ON ALABAMA CAREER PUNT ATTEMPTS LIST:** Punter JK Scott's six attempts tonight moves him into third place on the Alabama career punting attempts list with 195. Chris Mohr (1985-88) is No. 2 all-time with 203 attempts. P.J. Fitzgerald (2006-09) is Alabama's career leader with 238 punts.

-UA-