



Chris Davis

Chris Davis - Respondent: Good morning. Just wanted to tell everybody thank you for being here. With that, I just want to tell you all thank you. It is exciting to be here on August 5th and to start not only our first day of football, but we've had a lot of our other sports- women's soccer, men's soccer and volleyball already getting to work with numerous programs working through the summer, and we are here. The 26-27 Georgia Southern athletic season is here, and we are super excited not only as an athletic department, as a coaching staff, all of our student-athletes, and I'd imagine all of Eagle Nation's fired up. With that, hail Southern, and I look forward to answering any of your questions.

Media - Interviewer: The NCAA comes out with their decision where we're talking about the Class of 2022 guys coming back. How do you guys keep it all situated and sorted? It seems like every day something new is coming about and somebody's coming in, new changes with NIL. I mean, how do you guys balance it to make sure you're keeping your student-athletes informed and on the right path?

Chris Davis - Respondent: As it relates to college athletics, we've seen over the last 5-6 years how much college athletics continues to change and evolve. The athletics landscape is always changing. Earlier in the summer, we had the five-for-five come out, five years to play. Then, recently, with that court injunction that came out of the state of Colorado that says the 2022 class now has an additional year of eligibility, what does that look like? I'll tell you first of all, the entire senior-level administration and coaching head coaching staff is locked arms as it relates to great communication. I always say when we're in that room together, that is our captains that are really leading our athletic department. Our head coach touches all of our student-athletes all the time and our executive staff is touching all of our, all of our units. Immediately, the minute that came out, we were on text message threads, communication, phone calls, emails, you name it, on what that meant. How does that look? Then also making sure that we don't get, put the cart before the horse essentially of saying, OK, here's all the student-athletes that could potentially fit in what that court injunction says. Coaches, take a look at it. What does the roster cap, what's the roster cap look like? How are the rules applying? Then let's sit there and make sure we have active dialogue before we do anything. To put ourselves out in front of everything, it's really important we do that; we've already done that, but we are waiting; more things are coming down the line. Clarity is everything, and yes, we always sometimes - college athletics right now is in some ways clear as mud - but the clarity, from a communication standpoint, of making sure that we move with a clear, concise manner, knowing the steps, and that it's much easier to assess and adjust in that manner so we know where we're headed. If there are more steps taken, Frank, we know that some of the moves that. We can make that also would impact our student-athletes, but we also know we've got to have some more clarity points not only from the NCAA. We keep in touch with our Sun Belt Conference relationships as well as following some other schools across the country that we have great relationships with on what they're hearing from a different conference standpoint as well.

Media - Interviewer: Chris, did you agree with the decision to go five for five?

Chris Davis - Respondent: First of all, I do like five for five. It is very clear. I said in the State of Eagle Nation that we put out in early July that I do believe that the five for five, it clears some things up; there are three ways to gain waivers: through religious, through pregnancy, and through military. Otherwise, five years to play five years. The 2022 thing, that's a whole other situation, but I do like the five for five. In my opinion, it was the right move because it puts some clear, concise manners in place. The people that were already here, you file the waiver by July 31st and then you know that you have your time.

Media - Interviewer: Any big changes this year in the game day environment for football? I know always trying to get those fans in the stands and make it as enjoyable as an experience as you guys possibly can.

Chris Davis - Respondent: Packing Paulson, as we all know, is critical to our success. Packing Paulson is extremely important. Our fan base knows that it's important for us to make sure that Eagle Nation is not only inside Paulson. But be engaged, which they are. I mean how great is it that our student section has been filling up for years, and now the growth of our enrollment led by Dr. Kyle Marrero and our entire cabinet leadership on what we're doing from an institution and how that impacts Statesboro, Bulloch County in southeast Georgia with our economic growth because of how much Georgia Southern's is driving from the enrollment growth and from just the student body retention standpoint. Then you put that inside Paulson and also we continue to push season tickets, season tickets are extremely important. We want to continue to raise that single game tickets just went on sale, really important. Away game travel, it's always awesome that on the road we always know that we're going to make a point that there's going to be that blue and white, depending on what color we decide to wear, right, that blue and white area shown at away games and we make a presence shown at that stadium and then on the Paulson piece, we're always looking at ways to engage. We're going to release a "What's New in 2026" in

the coming weeks, we're still working on a few things. There are things that are being built. You can probably see it when you're looking at Paulson. So there's a thing we're doing outside. We're really looking at the outside of Paulson Stadium, not just inside, because this is not supposed to just be a 3.5 hour window inside Paulson. Yes, don't get me wrong, the game is massively important and it's much fun to be able to be there and to be a part of the entire experience, but we know that there's many people on those six Saturdays a year when we're in Statesboro, Georgia, that we want to be able to engage our Eagle Nation, our fan base, more than just inside the gates. And we're looking at ways to also engage our fans outside the gates. We're taking a two-pronged look at, hey, how can we make sure that our football weekend is really a football weekend and also on football Saturdays, how can we make it be more than just the game itself, as well as knowing that the game is massively important and we want to win but we also want to make sure that we're having fun inside Paulson Stadium and making a really environment that's open to the families, the students, the longtime season ticket holder, every age demo, and that's the last thing I'll close with on that is we're also looking at price point? We never want to make sure that we price anyone out of Packing Paulson. I've seen things out there about how much certain games are going to cost to go to this year. One thing I always will say is I know for sure we're going to always make sure that yes, we do have many premium options that our fans do seek and they want, but then we also have very what I would say value friendly options to be able to come to games at a different price point, but they're able to get inside Paulson, see a Division 1 football game, be a part of a fan base that they absolutely love and representing the blue and white, and coming to the games.

Media - Interviewer: Any update on Freedom 2?

Chris Davis - Respondent: Freedom is really important to our fan base. That's a huge tradition. I know Steve Hein and the entire team at the Wildlife Center continues to work religiously on getting Freedom to be ready. We don't have the final update on what it's going to be. Other than that we're hoping to have Freedom around more, but it's all going to be based on Steve and the team, what their comfort level is because the one thing we want to make sure is, that that is in a good place in front of all of.

Media - Interviewer: With this NCAA basketball tournament expanding to the 76 teams, do you still see the Sun Belt Conference as a one big league?

Chris Davis - Respondent: I'll start with women's basketball. If you look at it, we had five teams in the Sun Belt in the top 100 at the end of the year. Women's basketball, just because of some different pieces, the Sun Belt has continued to see some growth in that area on a national level that I could see us if the right teams do what they could, you could get maybe two, maybe even in the right year three teams from the Sun Belt on the women's basketball side at a minimum. You can see the growth in the women's basketball category. On the men's, and if you heard Commissioner Keith Gill's opening statement at the Sun Belt Media Days, he talked about in men's basketball, that we still have room to grow. And I 100% agree with Keith. We have had a lot of emphasis on what is our brand identity as a men's basketball Sun Belt Conference as a whole because it takes, and I'm just going to be brutally honest, it takes a lot more financial resources to continue to put men's basketball in the forefront to get more than one team in, because you're going to have to play not only larger competition, but you're going to have to be willing to play and maybe even and pay for bigger games. That's just reality to be able to create a deal where you are winning some games that create a better strength of schedule and put you in Quad 1 and Quad 2 so that you can get some games that then raise your profile and so when you have a competitive schedule or a competitive year and you get to the championship game and you have two Sun Belt teams that are battling for the Sun Belt that are mid-20 win teams but they have really good finishes and where they fit in in Quad 1, Quad 2, etc. You have a chance then to potentially get it, but we know the path, but we still have areas to grow as a conference-wide. And one thing, Charlie from a men's basketball's perspective, he's really putting together, he's putting together a team that really wants to. How we finished last year, we want to start that way, right? And he's really focused on the type of roster and men's basketball is such a roster rebuild every year. He did a really, really nice job. We continue to try to grow the resources across all of our sports in that manner. And then, as we know, Hana's departure to Memphis and Heather's done a phenomenal job with her staff. They've really built both those teams are allowed to be able to be in the summer access, so they're both here, got a chance to see their teams play a good bit up The Hill, and really like where both those teams are, not only from a team dynamic standpoint, but a team competitive standpoint as it relates to the athleticism and skill set you need to be able to compete at this level.

Media - Interviewer: Anything else?

Chris Davis - Respondent: I'll close with, a couple of things. One, just want everyone to know, we're last year, a year ago, it was about when, Nick's Scull, our one of our dang good friends, passed away to cancer, and we continue to love on Melissa and her family and just want - it gives me the chills even saying - just because here we are one year and I remember so many things that Nick worked on with this project that we're standing in at The Tip and so I just want to give a shout out to Nick and to Melissa and their family. He's always an Eagle forever and we'll continue to love that family. Second, I just want to be able to touch on that it's really important that, we have a big awesome event coming up with Jon Gruden on August 28th at The Hill. We're gonna pack as many people as we can because I think it's gonna be a really cool event. Definitely reach out to, our foundation staff and Terry Harvin and, and the team there.

And then lastly, I just want everyone to know Eagle Nation, we truly appreciate y'all. We're super excited about this athletic season. I think from across the board all of our coaches have worked tirelessly to put together a product that we're going to be proud of, but also realize that in sports there's tons of ups and there could be a few downs, but the bottom line is we're in a position where we're continuing to try to grow our resources, but at the end of the day we have grown our resources. And I think that's something that I want to make sure everybody realizes over these last few years we have continued to grow our resources and we've applied them into our areas because we want to impact winning. We truly want to impact winning. We want to impact Eagle Nation. And I know one way to impact Eagle Nation outside of doing all kinds of fun things is we want to impact winning and we're focused on that. We care a lot, but we're always making sure that we're in a constant state of assessing, and adjusting with all of our sports and really providing a blanket.

And lastly, since we're at football and today's the deal, I'm fired up about Coach Helton, the edits he made going into this upcoming season, being in a position where, we've had going into having 4four bowl games and what does that look like and having four bowl

games on national TV and winning last year's bowl game is awesome, but we also know we want to chase what November looks like and what the first week of December looks like with a Sun Belt championship opportunity, and that's our focus because I know Eagle Nation wants that and we want it just as bad. We're going to continue to put everything we can, but truly believe in. Not only what Coach Helton's doing, but our entire roster was able to be at team meeting last night as we kicked it off, and the connected tissue of this team is super excited, fired up, and can't wait to continue to see this month play out as we prepare for a very competitive schedule and a very competitive and exciting home schedule. So it has both. The first four games are a very unique deal because of how we're welcoming our first P4 team as well as having two very what I would say, road non-con games that are going to be extremely good and tough games as well as our home opener that you can never take lightly in college sports. Any team can beat anybody on any given day, so we're excited.

About that first game we have some more things to announce about our football season. We've announced a lot of things in the Whiteout and the Blueoput game and when all of our promotion games, please visit GSEagles.com or follow our social media, but I'll just say we're really excited to welcome Eagle Nation and to continue, let's, stay together as Eagle Nation and spread the word that let's Pack Paulson and let's get after it and let's celebrate Erk 100 because as he always said, let's 'do right.' Let's have a GATA mentality. And lastly, as Erk said, 'You ain't seen nothing yet' and that's what we're chasing.

Hail Southern, appreciate y'all,

GATA. Thank you guys.