Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game  
Saturday August 31, 2019  
David Cutcliffe  
Duke Blue Devils

Alabama - 42, Duke - 3

DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Games like this kind of -- you go one of two ways: They set you back or you get better from them. I know in my heart of hearts that our team will get better from this.

Alabama is not good, they're outstanding. I might say they have a great offense without a doubt. When we needed to play at our best at times, we hung in there and could. But our defense just wore out with the offense not being successful.

And then the story in the second half became had a big penalty and an ejection on defense led to the first score. Then we turn around and we have a big penalty, a shot block penalty on offense and then we get a resulting turnover, another score.

You can't turn the ball over, and you can't get big penalties. In the first half, although we weren't very productive offensively, we were disciplined. We had two penalties the entire first half. And that's how we knew we would have to play. Alabama, as I said, is a great football team.

But we learned a lot about ourselves. We'll figure this out offensively. We'll tackle better. You know, you don't tackle a lot anymore all season or even in camp. When you play a team like this, it shows. A lot to work on.

I saw a lot of good things about our football team we'll build on, so we'll move forward quickly obviously from this, and hats off to Coach Saban and the entire staff and the Alabama football team. They are outstanding.

Q. You had talked leading up to the game about how impressed you were with Tua. Now that you've seen him firsthand, what do you think of him?  
DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Well, he is incredible. I'm assuming everybody heard what I'm answering. He's accurate. He's poised. His release is so compact and supple and quick. He can throw on the run. One of the things early in the game was them avoiding sacks. Had we had a few of those sacks happen, we could have put them behind the chains.

But I said this -- I've studied him now. I had never studied him until this summer. I think he's going to be a great quarterback this year, and he will play in the National Football League a long time. He's going to be a great player.

Q. (Indiscernible) will you do anything different, commit more people to the run, or just better control the offensive line?  
DAVID CUTCLIFFE: No, I don't know that you could say we controlled that offensive line, but we had a good front defensively and we had some people roll in there, and I thought we defeated some blocks. I thought our linebackers were really good, played well. Where they hurt us was when the back got outside of us. We didn't tackle well in the secondary, but when the ball was contained within the line of scrimmage, we felt like we would match up good with them.

I'm anxious to see the tape, see where we can grow even more defensively.

Q. I know your offense had a couple of struggles. Were those struggles (indiscernible)?  
DAVID CUTCLIFFE: During the scrimmages are you asking? I don't know if it was the same. I mean, defensively Alabama caused a lot of people's struggles. We weren't consistent with anything, and I don't think -- and this is on me, that we did a good enough job of using our weapons. You have to be balanced against them. When we got to that right there in the two-minute drill and we got a little bit more to it at times in the second half -- I'm excited about what we can be offensively. Again, we've got two ways to go from this game. I'm expecting us to respond well.

Q. Obviously Alabama has some youth (indiscernible)?  
DAVID CUTCLIFFE: I thought their linebackers, those young linebackers played exceptionally well. They're big, strong, really good players. I know Moses is one of the best linebackers I've seen, period. I think he's a great player. I hate it for him. I truly hate it that he's had that type of injury to miss a season. But their front played really well. We knew they would.

When you lose a couple players like they lost, and when you lose Williams, when you can absorb that and come out and look like they looked, that's a pretty good sign that recruiting is going well.

Q. Early in the first quarter you guys decide to go
for it, you had a shot at a field goal (indiscernible)?
DAVID CUTCLIFFE: I look at any opponent, I look at their offense and I didn't think we could win the game taking field goals. We weren't trying to have a moral victory, we were trying to find a way to win the game. There are ranges that I'm going to go for and we should have gone for there and we should have made it, and we're going to challenge our team that when we make those decisions, there shouldn't be a doubt, and that's the way we have to approach it.

Q. (Indiscernible.)
DAVID CUTCLIFFE: We brought all of our scholarship freshmen, whether they were going to play or not, to experience this atmosphere. We just signed a really outstanding class ourselves. I think our players will have a great memory, regardless of the outcome, but I think more importantly maybe a hunger to put yourselves in these games, these atmospheres. I can't say enough for Gary Stokan and his people. When you get in these types of games, and I've coached them in the past, it can go either way how they're run. The city of Atlanta, their sponsorship, but Gary and his staff, wow, what a great job. So I know our players have seen it done right. Should make you a little hungrier is what it should do. That's a good question, by the way.

Q. Middle of the first quarter you went to (indiscernible) put Alabama off guard. What inspired you to put that in, and how do you think (indiscernible)?
DAVID CUTCLIFFE: Well, I don't know if it threw them off, but we were trying to find ways to run the ball better. I was a little disappointed that we didn't get a couple of things done more clearly with it. I thought it was really ready, but it's very difficult to scrimmage that against your own defense. So a little bit of our first look at it, and something that we're going to continue to tinker with because we've got some really good backs, and we're going to try to find a way to run the ball better.
DUKE QUARTERBACK #18 QUENTIN HARRIS

On the positives from today's game:
"I thought we communicated well offensively. Obviously, we didn't convert as many third and fourth downs as we would have liked. But I thought with communication, we were on the same page. I think a lot of guys did some good things with the ball too. I think there's a lot to take away from this moving forward."

On not converting the fourth down conversion in the first quarter:
"Obviously, when your defense puts you in a situation like they did getting the turnover, you want to convert and turn that into points. It was disappointing not being able to convert that, but it was 60 minutes of football – so there were multiple plays in there that could have changed the momentum of the game."

On Alabama's speed:
"They're a great team. We knew they had great athletes and a great team. They've had a lot of success recently. We obviously knew they would be great athletes and play well. We believe in our guys. We thought we played and matched-up well. We just didn't execute as much in certain areas. They are a very good football team and had a great game."

On playing against Alabama and high-caliber talent:
"We are taking each game week-by-week. It definitely is a great challenge and great measure of your team when you have to face one of the best teams in the country. I thought it was a great learning experience and I think we'll ultimately get better from it."
DUKE OFFENSIVE GUARD #67 RAKAVIUS CHAMBERS

Alabama’s defense against the triple option:
“I don’t think they were prepared for it, but I don’t think anyone we would go up against in a first game would be prepared for that either. That was one of the things we were looking for when we decided to put that in, so I think that worked in our advantage.”

Alabama’s on-field reaction to triple option offense:
“Of course, there was a bit of confusion because a team goes from running a normal spread offense to running a triple option. It’s something we haven’t shown ever before. I think there was a little confusion on their part. They held up well and I think their linebackers and their defense eventually caught on to it and they defended it pretty well.”

On implementing the triple option:
“Yes, that shows the versatility of our players, our playmakers, our offense and it shows all the hard work we put in preparing for this season. We knew that the offense was something that the media and others would have questions about. I think the team really took that to heart and we all really went to work this offseason and in camp in order to improve upon on our offense and make sure that it was where it needed to be.”

On playing Alabama:
“It was a great experience. I enjoyed going out there and playing against my rival growing up because I was an Auburn fan. It’s great to go out there and feel that atmosphere and feel that level of competition. It was a good measuring stick, and it’s going to be a good measuring stick for us to watch in film.”

On competing against one of the nation’s best:
“I thought we did pretty well. We moved the ball up and down the field a good bit. I think that we will just go look at the film and see what we can improve on in technique and fundamentals, and ultimately, see where that can help us later on in the season because this is a full season it’s not just one game.”
DUKE PLAYER QUOTES

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DUKE LINEBACKER #42 SHAKA HEYWARD

On starting the opening game:
"I found out about probably the second week of camp."

On the new linebackers:
"It's been good. We've all been rotating and competing in practice."

On playing in Mercedes-Benz Stadium:
"Obviously in high school there wasn't a lot of people, so it wasn't too loud but in this one it was loud. We just had to make sure everyone stayed focused. That was the main thing coming into this game. Just focus."

DUKE SAFETY #16 DYLAN SINGLETON

On close game early:
“First half we were able to match up with them well. We looked good in the first half. We tried to give Tua [Tagovailoa] some looks that he hadn’t seen before. As far as building off of the game, there's some good things that we did, but obviously a lot of bad things that we did. We just have to go in this week and fix those things in practice and just keep progressing. We still have to play. We still have eleven more games that we have to play, so we still have to come out with that mentality every week.”

Playing close to home:
“Obviously, I love playing at home. It's just a different feeling when I'm here. I just go out and play every week, it doesn’t matter where I play. I’m just going to play football.”

On what things changed after halftime:
“I don't know really. Alabama just made their adjustments and they came out and looked really good.”