P.J. FLECK: I think our team showed a lot of courage, showed the character, showed the culture and found a way to win. That's a very good football team. Last year they finished the season 18th in the country. It's a very tough place to play. Their team has beat a lot of Power Five teams, so getting to play there, having to play there in a difficult environment. With that said, you've got to give them a lot of credit. They're a really good football team.

Our non-conference opponents are 32-8. We said at the beginning of the year, there's going to be no easy non-conference games. They're all really good. They're all champions. They all know how to win. It's really good football. That was an example on Saturday night of that.

But I'm proud of our resolve. As a coach you look and you're proud of all that, especially in the locker room afterwards, and you have that, then you've got to move on to what do we have to fix, and there's plenty to fix.

Our defense deserves a lot of credit. Under 100 yards rushing, one explosive play, and then three big three-and-outs, but on the three-and-outs, there was a defensive penalty, which created the drive to continue to go, and those three drives ended in 21 points. So we were off the field but then had a penalty.

So we weren't penalized a lot game 1. Game 2 I didn't think we were penalized a lot, just in really critical situations, right, when you sit there and look at it, that we have to be able to fix, and I know our players want to respond to that.

Some things that usually don't happen, which is really good: Mohamed fumbled, the quarterback fumbled, we dropped a snap, we had the personal foul, we had the muffed punt, we had a hold on a 3rd and 8 we convert, so again, there was inopportune times created to have penalties that set us back.

But with all that said, our players found a way to win. We're being tested at the very beginning of the season by very good teams despite what anybody says. That's a really good football team that almost beat the 23rd ranked team in the country the week before at their place. You've got to give them a lot of credit.

Fresno State is a really good football team. As I said before, I don't think Antoine Winfield Jr is ever going to be allowed in the state of California or near Fresno ever again, with all due respect, but they're a really good football team, really tough. Jeff Tedford I think is one of the best coaches in the country. He gets the most out of his talent, the most out of his players, and just a tremendous head football coach. You can tell by how he's flipped that program.

We've got a really good opponent coming into TCF Bank Stadium. I have a lot of history with them in terms of playing against them when I was at Western Michigan University. A lot of you are going to
ask about the triple option. It's option, but it's not exactly the same as the veer option of Georgia Tech, but it's very similar. Option football is option football, but there are some things that make it a little bit different. It's more zone option than veer option.

They're a very good football team. They're very well-coached. They've got athletes everywhere, and they've won the Sun Belt in the last few years, and they're very good. Won 10 games last year, very good on defense, play an odd front. Quarterbacks are both very good. Doesn't matter who plays, they're both very good. They both can run the offense. Their backs are big, they're strong, they can run.

You looked last week, Maine is sixth in the country and they beat Maine pretty handily, and when you looked at it in terms of the last five minutes Maine scores a bunch of points, but they were up 23-3. They're a very good football team. Well-coached, very disciplined, and when you're playing the triple option you've got to be ready for anything, or the zone option.

So we've got a challenge, another elite team coming in that's won championships. Like I said, 32-8 with the non-conference opponents we're playing, so there are no easy weeks, and this is the exact same thing. We're looking forward to playing again. I know our team is ready to get back and get playing again. That's what I love about this team; they can't wait to get back on the field and play. But with that, we'll open it up for questions.

Q. Last week you were sitting here talking about Jorge Reyna and the threat that he had running the ball. How did you feel like you were able to take that away?
P.J. FLECK: Well, I thought that we did a great job swarming to the football. We condensed the pocket. We didn't give him a lot of lanes to be able to escape through. One was keep contain and two was being able to keep the pressure and shrink it from the inside out, and that's what we did. We kept contain, then the inside shrunk it and he had no place to run. I thought our guys did a really good job of tackling, put him some positions where he made some bad throws, but he's a really tough player. He's very competitive, very good, very accurate and just a gritty football player. But I thought we were able to stabilize that.

Again, what hurt us was every time we'd drive, we'd have a fumble, we'd have a major penalty and it set us back. Uncharacteristic of our football team. So again, getting all to that and learning that if we can still do all that and still win, that says a lot about our football team. We just can't keep doing it, right, and that's one game too many, and that's the way we approach that with our football team.

Q. What was Winfield's coverage responsibility on that --
P.J. FLECK: Yeah, his coverage -- they run a really good play. They run a delay with the tight end, bring him across the field and then wheel him a vertical, which is very difficult because everybody is down the field already with their responsibilities, and it's kind of like a Y throwback where everybody kind of already has their responsibilities taken care of, but he's supposed to take the post to the middle of the field, which he did. Once he knows Jordan Howden can take over the post, he can now work back to the backside. He sees it, Jordan takes over the post, he wheels back around and makes the play he makes. So it's his responsibility, and he makes a heck of a play. Just like he did last year, it was his responsibility, and he makes the play.

But he can cover so much ground so quickly. No matter where he is on the field, he can be able to diagnose and go, and that's one of his strengths. It's coached, but it's also an intangible that he has,
this instinct that he has, and that's why he's such a really good football player.

Q. That was the play he was supposed to make or was he freelance?
P.J. FLECK: Well, he's free after the post gets taken by Jordan Howden, and now he can come off of that. Now, as he did that, he looked back and saw the ball being thrown, and that's why he wheeled back. It was just a tremendous football play, done by the best player on defense we have. With all due respect to everybody else, one of the best players.

Q. How would you describe the difference between defending Georgia Tech versus Georgia Southern from a defense's perspective?
P.J. FLECK: Well, there's a few things different we're going to do. I'm not going to get into all the specifics of what game plan we're going to do in terms of a press conference, but there is slight differences between the veer option and actually -- actually zone option. They do a lot of things to get the ball on the perimeter quickly. They've got some skill, they've got athletes, and they want to get the ball on the perimeter now. We know we're going to be able to see that, but they're also doing a good job of running the inside zone and getting the ball inside. They have athletes everywhere, and I think that's what makes them really dangerous.

Q. You've talked several times about Tanner's ability to respond to adversity. Given everything that transpired, what does that say about him to be able to make that throw late in regulation to get things tied up?
P.J. FLECK: Well, I think it just shows the confidence we have in our players. Everybody is talking about Tyler Johnson; they should be. Everybody is covering Tyler Johnson; they should be. That last play, Rashod Bateman is double covered into the boundary, right, he'd got a cloud corner, and then you've got double coverage, like kind of a bracket on No. 6, Tyler, and then 7 is to the field by himself, and he's got to be able to make that play. We've got to be able to make that throw and make that play to win a lot of football games. We've got to be able to use the whole field. We've got to be able to use all of our football players, and this is starting to be able to see what our offense can become as we keep moving forward of all of our players being involved. Not just Tyler Johnson, not just Rodney Smith, not just Mohamed Ibrahim, not just Rashod Bateman but get everybody involved as we keep moving forward, and that's what we want to be able to do.

But it says a lot about his character, it says a lot about him as leader and the response mechanism we've talked about since day one. Something bad could happen, the next play he's going to make it good. Something good could happen. He's got a short memory. He's going to forget it and move on. That's what he does. He's a tremendous leader and he's tough.

Q. You mentioned your offense. What is the challenge where you want to establish your run and be a physical run team, you have two good backs, then you watch your wide receiver corps and you're thinking throw it every time because you have mismatches with Bateman or Autman-Bell or whoever? How do you balance what this offense is going to be?
P.J. FLECK: I think it's developing. That's the word I keep saying. It's developing. We're finding out what everybody still can do and how we're able to distribute the ball to every single person that can do it, but also still keep our offense as simple as possible, that we possibly can for right now. But we're going to do what we have to do to find a way to win football games. And if people are going to double cover Tyler, we've got to find new ways to get Tyler the ball like we did last week, and we'll continue to do that for everybody. It's one football, all those athletes, but this is starting to see what we can expand on as we keep moving forward because last year you're just finding out maybe what
they can do, now they're actually earning it and doing it and producing those results, and that's what you want to be able to see as we continue to go over the last 10 games.

Q. What do you think the identity of this offense will be?
P.J. FLECK: Multiple. Yeah, the identity is going to be -- it doesn't matter what it takes to win the football game. We feel like if we have to throw the ball 50 times to win the football game, we have confidence in our quarterback and our wide outs that have to do that. And if it's to run it 50 times and that's what it takes to win the football game, that's what we'll do.

I think our team has a very good understanding of that. It's a very selfless team. That's why I've said I really like coaching the guys, is because they don't care who gets the credit. We have buckets in front of every room. All the yards go in a bucket, all the catches go in a bucket of all the position meetings because that's the type of mentality this team has to have to have success. It's not going to be just about one person, and it can't be, and that's why Tyler Johnson came back this year, is because he knew what type of team we could be, not just him individually but what type of team we could be knowing that he's probably going to get more attention than he did last year.

Q. You said you won a couple times without playing your best football. What will it look like in your opinion when you are playing your best football?
P.J. FLECK: I think you'll be able to see it and I'll be able to see it. I'll let you know when it becomes closer to our type of football. But there's been times this year we've played tremendous football. Our drive the first drive of the game against Fresno State was really good football. There's been times we just haven't done it consistent enough, and then defensively there's been times where we can be off the field and get the ball back to go score more points and we make a mistake or we make a penalty, and next thing you know there's a touchdown being scored, right, and everybody else gets coached, too.

We're playing good football teams. We're playing really good football teams. I think everybody in this room understands how good a football teams we've played, and again, not talking about Power Five and everybody ranked and things like that. These are really good football teams who know how to win games who circle us on the schedule as the game, right, and we know that. I was there at one point. I know what it's like to feel like that. But we've just got to be able to find a way to be more consistent in everything that we do. I think Bill Belichick said it best: You want to play better, play better. But to play better, you've got to prepare better, and I think our practices have shown that.

Q. That first drive you were able to get the tight ends in the passing game a little bit. What have you seen from that position group so far?
P.J. FLECK: Clay Patterson is doing a really good job of developing our tight ends. I think they're becoming more consistent in the run game and the pass game. In our offense you've got to be able to put your hand in the ground, you've got to be able to block a 6 technique, you've got to be able to run block very physically, but you also have to be able to be athletic enough and catch the ball well enough to be able to be in our passing game. I think Jake Paulson has really developed. I think been Ko Kieft had one of his best games before he was out of the game, but I think he had one of his best games he was playing for the 14 plays he was in there. Very consistent performance from him.

And then as we keep going, we're going to get Brevyn Spann-Ford more involved, but again, guys have to be able to earn that part, be able to be more physical, be able to do the whole thing and not just go out there to be a specialized person in something. So we want to make sure when you go on
the field, it doesn't matter who's out there, we can run our offense.

Q. Have you ever thought about running the triple option in your coaching career, and what goes into the philosophy? Is it the area or the region that you're coaching in and the access you have to recruits, or what goes into deciding what your brand is going to be?
P.J. FLECK: Yeah, that's a good question. Well, I'm a wide receiver at heart and I'm a wide receiver coach at heart, so I don't think I've ever thought about running the triple option just based on being a receiver. Selfishly I don't know if that would ever enter my mind. We do have an option in our offense. We have it, but the triple option -- old school football, that's what a lot of people did. The forward pass didn't come from later on in the years, right, and you watched everybody run the triple option. It's a great equalizer. You can be the biggest, strongest, fastest team, but you take that person that can two gap, now all of a sudden he's got to play one gap. You pretty much put handcuffs on a defense pretty quickly, right, and you make them one-dimensional, but you make that defense one-dimensional, right, and you use that type of skill against themselves.

But when you look at like the Armys and the Navys and the Air Forces and what they've been able to do, maybe not with the five-star athlete but with those players that fit the system and be able to work so well in the system, you saw it last week with Army against Michigan and you saw how hard their defense played and how it equalized, how many skill players and how many skilled defenders Michigan has, Army was able to equalize that based on the triple option, based on the true gap sound defense.

It's been around a very long time. I think everybody has bits and pieces of it. But there's certain teams that have invested in it. They have invested in it in recruiting, whether that is for their own firm beliefs and the way they play football or if it's for a recruiting tactic that they can feel like that's the best -- that they can be able to fit their recruits into a certain system.

Q. Playing Georgia Southern this week, this team has a lot of recruits from Georgia, a lot of key contributors. Why have you had so much success in that state finding key players?
P.J. FLECK: Yeah, we have 12 players on our team from the state of Georgia. It's been really a hotbed for us in recruiting. There's direct access from Minnesota to Atlanta, nonstop flights, a lot of them per day, I mean, a lot. You can be here in two and a half hours on a flight and be closer than most cities in Georgia for driving. It's been very easy for us to get there. And once you have a little bit of success with some guys down there, that spreads like wildfire, and that's what we've done.

It's nice to have Rashod Bateman have a lot of success from Tift County and have people be able to see him play and see a Georgia boy have success and then go on and on about a lot of the guys we have from Georgia. But it's really nice to be able to have that recruiting bed, play a team from Georgia, and a lot of our players understand that. Bateman at one point I think was committed to them at one point. But again, it's always going to be a recruiting hotbed for us, and whether it's near Atlanta or near other cities in the state, rural areas, urban areas, we have so many guys that have ties to the state of Georgia, and we'll continue to recruit it heavily.

Q. When you grind out two wins the way you've done, what do you hope that the players take away from winning those games in that manner moving forward?
P.J. FLECK: Yeah, we're going to be in a lot of close games all year somehow, some way. We always are. And you've got to be that team that can find a way to win close games. We've been educated in two weeks of how to do that. We're going to be tested as the year goes on. This week, other weeks,
we're always going to be tested. But you see the mental fortitude, you see the courage, you see the character of your team when games don't go exactly to plan or when you get challenged, especially on the road in a hostile environment like that with all the circumstances against you. You find a way to win, that says a lot about your football team.

So again, we've got to be better, and they know that. We watch it. They see it. One thing I like about this team is they continue to come to work every single day ready to go. They have fun with each other. It's a fun team to coach. They're excited. They're excited to get better, and I think that breeds well for the future.

Q. Is there a teaching lesson there from Saturday, too, how a penalty can change a game?
P.J. FLECK: Oh, we had so many. This is the card I used, right? That's the card I used for our team meeting that I just shared with you today, all the things that went wrong. As a football coach, there's so many things that went right, and that's what happened in the locker room, and we celebrate and everybody is having a great time. Pretty cool atmosphere inside that locker room at, whatever, 4:00 in the morning, whatever it was, by the time we got done playing central time.

But at the end of the day, they know on Sunday when they come back in, now it's time to put your leather vest on, zip it up, and let's be critical of each other. Let's be critical of ourselves. Let's change our vest. Let's find a way to make sure we can improve from this. There's a lot of hard lessons they've got to watch, and they've got to watch in front of their teammates. That's the only way to get better. That's not calling somebody out in a negative way. That's not how our program does it. We use it as educational teaching moments through a positive way to make sure everybody understands you can't do this if you want this. If you want a certain result, you can't do this. Here's what it looks like when we don't do it, here's what it looks like when we don't do it, because we didn't win the 78 percent, we won the 22 percent. But last year when we did that and when we just won the 22 percent, we were 0-6. Well, this year we're 1-0, but you can't live in the world of that 22 percent. You've got to be able to continue to find ways to win the football games statistically that we value, especially with the turnover margin, especially with the missed tackles and the explosive plays that fit in that 78 percent. If we're not winning those, we're not going to win many football games and you're not going to get away with it. There's only so many times you can touch the stove. They know that.

But again, we're playing against really good football teams, and those teams are well-coached, and they're circling us as their Super Bowl, as that big game, and then we're playing at a tough place to play. There's a lot of teams that did that that didn't come away with a victory and we did. So we've got to be able to continue to educate them but also praise them, praise the model of what we want to be able to get the result that we need.

Q. You mentioned last week about guys not just doing their jobs but sometimes over doing it, filling in where maybe they shouldn't. How have they responded to that disciplinary lesson this week?
P.J. FLECK: Well, everybody has got to do their job. Week 1 we were a little bit out of character doing everybody else's job, a little amped up. Last week I think everybody did their job. We just have to do our job better. We've got to eliminate three things out of that game, and it's completely different. But you can't eliminate things, you've just got to learn from things.

This week everybody has to do their job 10 times better than they did it last week because it is gap sound, it is option football, and if you don't do your job, it isn't a 10-yard gain, the guy is hitting his
head on the goal post. It's a touchdown.

So we have to make sure that we continue to do that, which I felt like we matured from week 1 to week 2 in being able to do that, but just a gutsy performance last week, a gutsy way to win, when everybody thought we wouldn't. You look at everything after the game and you're finding all the information to share with your team, I think Fresno had a 93 or a 94 percent chance of winning at one point when it got to that 4th and 13 and we only had a 6 or 7 percent chance of winning. You kind of go through that stat line I think on ESPN, it's like that graph that continues to show, and it went from bright red to shot right back up to maroon, and it was like, we show them those things because you can't just read the media, you can't just read the stats. You can't. You've got to go play football. You've got to go make plays, even when everything is against you and your back is against the wall, so that's what I saw from our team, and that's what's encouraging for the future. We have to play better, though; they know that. That message has been sent loud and clear. But they're a mature group. The players understand that. It's a player-led team, and find a way.

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