



## **2013 DISCOVER ORANGE BOWL PRESS CONFERENCE QUOTES – DEC. 29**

### **NIU QUARTERBACKS COACH BOB COLE**

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started this morning with Northern Illinois coach Bob Cole. You've been in town a few days getting ready for the Discover Orange Bowl. How have your team's preparations been.

BOB COLE: Outstanding. They had a great time. Great hotel. Great facilities to practice. It's been top-notch. Can't complain.

**Q. I'm curious in recruiting how much does the history of Northern Illinois and college football come up in recruiting, things such as believed to be the origin of the shotgun and the first 3,000-yard passer and all those things people probably aren't aware of. Do you educate kids that you're trying to get to commit on what this program has meant in the last couple years?**

BOB COLE: No question. We have a couple guys that come to practice just to watch us play, and our name is getting out there nationwide now, and with what Jordan is doing, the quarterback, that type of thing. It's a huge advantage for the university and our program.

**Q. How is Jordan technically at quarterback, his throwing motion? He's known mostly as a runner. How is his throwing motion, passing ability? How well do you think that might translate to perhaps the next level, seeing what's being done there by quarterbacks who aren't in the mold?**

BOB COLE: Right. I think that's the thing people don't understand about him. He's a great passer. He has great mechanics. He gets the ball out of his hand quick. I think you guys will see that when the game starts. Russell Wilson doing what he's doing in Seattle and the smaller-type quarterbacks and the NFL going to more of a spread deal, I think it sets up perfect for him.

**Q. Could you talk about how NIU has recruited Florida and other parts of the South and whether that -- has it been a tough sell? How did you get your foot in the door and how much importance that's been for the program?**

BOB COLE: I think it's been huge for the program. We've been down here in South Florida, we're in the panhandle, we're in South Alabama and some of our best players on the team are from this area and that area. With us coming down here and doing that, playing in the Orange Bowl, it's just amazing what it'll do as far as recruiting goes. We're getting phone calls from everybody now about wanting to come to our place and finally getting our name out there nationwide. So it's been unreal.

**Q. How are you game planning against Bjoern Werner?**

BOB COLE: Our game plan, we basically had it in before we got down here and now we're kind of reviewing and going over everything. Obviously we're playing a great football team in Florida State with tremendous team speed. We're going to obviously have to have our "A" game going on come the bowl game. This will be our best opponent all year.

**Q. Talk about the physical toughness of Jordan Lynch, who gets hit, he's either running the ball or going to get hit on the read option.**

BOB COLE: Probably the toughest player I've ever seen. I've been coaching for quite some time now, 25 years, and I've never seen a player that takes the pounding he takes. Just a tough kid from the south side of Chicago who loves playing football.

**Q. There seems to be a perception outside that this is a tough match-up for you guys physically, athletically, however you want to describe it. Talk about your view on that. Is there a question in your team's mind about matching up?**

BOB COLE: No, I don't think there's a question on that. They're going to go out there and play hard like they do every week, regardless of the opponent. That's one thing about our football team, they're going to show up and play as hard as they can for the entire game, and we just happen to run into a hot team right here that's extremely talented, and we're going to come out and give our best shot and see what happens.

**Q. Just to follow up on Tom's question about Werner, is there anything specific, anybody specific he reminds you of in terms of his ability to get in passing lanes and do you have to kind of shade your protections that way?**

BOB COLE: Yeah, I mean, any time you throw the football the first thing we look at is can we protect the quarterback. Obviously we'll have to do a couple different things to keep Jordan safe back there, get the ball out of his hand, move the pocket around, that type of thing. Like I said earlier, extremely talented football team, extremely fast and physical, and we're going to have to play our best game going in there.

**Q. Obviously there have been some changes in the staff with coach carry and those sort of moves. You've got such a -- the no-huddle offense and all the changes that had to be made at the line of scrimmage. Talk about how Jordan has adapted to that as well as the changes.**

BOB COLE: I think the players on the team deserve all the credit. They've been through -- if you take Coach Carey for instance, he started off as the O-line coach and the run-game coordinator, and then went in to offensive coordinator and now he's the head coach. That all happened in four months. I'm not sure that's ever happened before in college football, and to the kids' credit, they've stayed focused, they've followed things through, and it was a seamless transition. And as far as Jordan goes with the play calling and the no-huddle, that was the main thing, I think Jeff Compher wanted to keep in place so that the offense stayed the same regardless of who was the head coach, and that's been a big plus for us as far as going into this game.

**Q. How tired are you guys of -- from the minute you guys got this bid, there were comparisons to Boise and there was criticism and we don't need to rehash it all, but how exhausting has all this been, this whole notion that you guys don't have a chance to win this game?**

BOB COLE: I was getting texts at like 2:00, 3:00 in the afternoon saying we're going to the Orange Bowl, and I was like, hell, no, we're not going to the Orange Bowl. After I saw it on TV I actually believed it. For what it's done for our community, our players, our school it's been unbelievable. They've got signs all over the place in the street back home, Go Huskies and Good Luck in the Orange Bowl. I think one store is selling oranges, Herbstreit Ammunition, so they got that going on up there. It's been a good run. We want our guys to have fun down here and enjoy the whole experience, and they have. The community down here and the Orange Bowl committee has been outstanding.

**Q. Has this perception bothered you?**

BOB COLE: About not getting in?

**Q. How nobody on the planet it seems like outside of your circle, especially --**

BOB COLE: Yeah, that doesn't bother us at all. There's a lot of angry people out there, but there's probably 120 of us in the hotel that are really happy about the whole deal. We don't really care what everybody else thinks. We're glad to be here. We won a lot of games, and we did what we were supposed to do.

**Q. With the defense at FSU how important is it to get off to a fast start in this game offensively?**

BOB COLE: Coming off to a fast start? Yeah, I mean, I think that's extremely important. We've been working on our openers now every single day, and the team -- we can't simulate the team speed in practice and that's the one thing we'll have to get adjusted to when the game starts, just how fast they actually are. On film they are super fast. We'll see what happens when the ball gets kicked off. But I'm in total agreement with you, that's going to be a big part of the game, for us to come out, start fast and do well early.

## **Northern Illinois Quarterback Jordan Lynch**

*On the year and making a BCS bowl...*

"It's been a fun year going 12-1. A lot of the guys in the past set the stage for us. Coming into this year we were going to be young, but we knew we had a lot of talented players. The senior leadership really took over throughout the year, getting to 12-1 and a BCS bowl -- the Orange Bowl. It's a dream come true and it is really starting to kick in now. It has been a great season."

*On being recruited out of high school...*

"Coming out of high school, I ran triple option so not a lot of colleges took me seriously as a quarterback, but more as an athlete. I always thought I could play quarterback at the next level and Coach [Jerry] Kill, who was at Northern [Illinois] at the time, was the only college coach who gave me a shot to play quarterback in college. I always knew I could do it."

*On Florida State's defense...*

"Florida State's defense looks fast and physical on film – definitely the best defense we will play all year. They are sound fundamentally and look like a bunch of guys that just like to get after it."

*On running style...*

"I am a physical kind of runner and just to get up for the next play and move the sticks. I have a great offense line, they always get up there to the second and third level. I just want to follow their blocks."

*On quarterback he models after...*

"Peyton Manning is a perfect example with the ways he carries himself and makes plays. He always makes sure his team is set with the right play. With our offense, we check a few times and I always try to get our team in the right play."

### **Northern Illinois RB Akeem Daniels**

*How physical do you see this game...*

"It's going to be a very physical game. Every game is a physical game, but this one is going to be real physical. We just have to fight and push back."

*How important is it to get off to a fast start and how do you think it's going to go...*

It's important every game. We have to make sure we get off to a fast start so we can go down, get the momentum and carry it out for four quarters. I think it's going to go good. I think if we just keep practicing hard like we've been practicing and execute what the coaches call we will do a good job at it.

*What was the key of you ending the year strong...*

"I think I just got more opportunities. It was good that the coaches realized that they needed somebody to compliment Jordan Lynch and every opportunity that he gave me, I took it upon myself to take advantage of it."

### **Northern Illinois WR Martel Moore**

*How do you feel about matching up with Florida State speed and size wise...*

"Athletic wise, you know their fast, big, and strong. Size wise they probably have a little bit of an advantage over us, but speed wise I believe that we probably are equal because we do have a lot of speed. They're from the South and we're from the South, so I don't see there being a speed difference."

*How is the buildup for this game...*

"It's a lot of buildup. It's been a month since we last played. I'm just ready to get back on the field. All of these practices you just keep going against the same people. It's time to play somebody else."

*Are you trying to do anything differently offensively...*

"We go out there and play. Go do what we've done. We don't need to change up anything. We just need to go out there and be us."

### **NIU TE Jason Schepler**

*On QB Jordan Lynch:*

"He's definitely a great player. He brings the level of everyone else up too by how well he plays, and I think that we can do stuff for him because we know he's going to play hard too. In the back of our heads we're going 'alright just play to the whistle because you never know when Jordan is going to go down when he has the ball. I feel like the play is good for an extra five seconds so you just got to keep that in the back of your head and just keep blocking downfield. I think he's a great leader on and off the field so in big games like this he is relaxed which makes everyone else relaxed too."

*On opponent:*

"They are pretty good athletes; they are big guys, fast guys. We're just going to have to be out there and not make any mistakes mentally, and as long as we play our game I think we'll be fine."

*On how it feels to be the first MAC team in a BCS bowl:*

"I think it feels awesome. Representing the MAC like this in the Orange Bowl is definitely a great opportunity for us, a great opportunity for the school, and a great opportunity for the MAC."

## **NIU OL Jared Volk**

### *On preparation:*

I think the one thing we've learned so far is in the beginning of the bowl practices we've started developing the young guys a little bit, let the older players some rest and let them get their legs back in the first half, and let those young guys develop so we can keep the program going the way we want it to. Once it gets closer to game time, once the older guys' legs are back, we come back and go all out. I think its very useful for us because the young guys need to develop and then once we get our legs back we can start coming back to the beginning of the season where we had fresh legs and could go faster and harder, so I think that is one thing that is really important for our preparation.

### *Best non-football part of the last few days:*

"The weather, because back at home it is 23 degrees and snowing, and down here it is sunny every single day and it's nice weather. I get to wear some shorts and going on the jet skis was a lot of fun too, so those were probably the best things so far."

### *On how it feels to be the first MAC team in a BCS bowl:*

"It feels good. I'm happy to represent the MAC; they've been doing pretty good this year. It's exciting and I feel that we should be here to represent the MAC in the way it should be, which is a good way."

### *On how big of a job it is to protect QB Jordan:*

"It becomes bigger as the year goes on. Jordan is a great player and we want to give him as much time as possible to make plays because if you give him enough time, he is going to make plays. It is really important to us to make sure that he has plenty of time to do those things. We want to make sure that he stays safe and healthy, but I think that's the same thing as every other game; it's not going to change for us. We're going to keep doing what we're doing which is protect him and make sure that he gets off the field safe."

## **FLORIDA STATE DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR D.J. ELIOT**

THE MODERATOR: Coach, you've now been here for a few days getting ready for the Discover Orange Bowl. How are preparations going for your team?

D.J. ELIOT: Preparations are going very well. The players are focused. The guys have been working hard. We've been able to get after it pretty good in practice, and we're very excited about this opportunity.

**Q. When you see Lynch, what -- I don't know if there's -- the ACC obviously has some very athletic quarterbacks, but I don't know if there's one that compares as far as all the skill sets that he brings. Can you liken him to anybody and just how daunting is it to get ready for a guy that can obviously do a lot of different things?**

D.J. ELIOT: You're right. He's a rare player. He's got 1,700 yards rushing and 3,000 passing, and it's tough to compare him to anyone. But from the quarterbacks that we've played I'd say he's most like probably B.J. Daniels at South Florida, very athletic, a guy that can make you miss and is very active on his feet.

**Q. Can you talk about the decision process of staying back and coaching FSU in this game, and why was that important for you?**

D.J. ELIOT: Well, you know, the last three years have been tremendous for me at Florida State, and obviously I have such great memories and worked so hard, and my players mean so much to me and the opportunity that Coach Fisher gave me, I really wanted to finish this thing off on a high note, and I wanted to do everything I could for the program, the coaches and the players to make sure that we finish this season with a win and continue to do what I can throughout the rest of this week to get us there.

**Q. Could you just talk about preparing a game plan? Georgia Tech you had a real active role in preparing the game plan, too. Was that different than during the course of the season? Was it a collaborative effort?**

D.J. ELIOT: Well, Coach Stoops has been the defensive coordinator for obviously the last three seasons and has been the head guy in preparing the game plans for us the majority of the time. With Georgia Tech I had a little better feel for those type of offenses, so I was in the lead that week in preparing the game plan and calling the defense. But it was an active role by all the coaches. There wasn't just one guy that was a part of any of our game plans. It's the same this week. It's an active role with all the coaches involved for this game plan, these preparations, as well.

**Q. I was wondering how much integration you've had with the young players in practices this week and how that will be affected -- how much you're using the young players early on in practice kind of getting them into the system, almost scout team kind of stuff, and how the coaching staff changes affect that decision?**

D.J. ELIOT: I don't understand your question.

**Q. Northern Illinois was alluding to that early on in practice they'd used a lot of the young players, kind of bring them along a little bit and say, okay, this is how we're going to do it, almost get them ready for next year.**

D.J. ELIOT: Definitely we did. We had some practices early that were not designed for game plan practices, they were just skill-development practices, and we made sure that our young players got a lot of reps in those early practices.

**Q. And with the coaching changes how has that affected how you approach those practices?**

D.J. ELIOT: It hasn't affected me any differently. I'm still working for Florida State and that's been my approach, and I'm doing everything I can as a coach and as a coordinator to help this team be as successful as they can.

**Q. Just wanted to ask about what these last three weeks have been like? Obviously going up to Kentucky, back and forth a lot, trying to get the game plan obviously for this bowl setup.**

D.J. ELIOT: Well, I think I broke a record on airline miles. But no, it's been very busy. You know what I mean? It's been very busy. I've had a lot of responsibilities on both ends, and there hasn't been much downtime at all. I've still got a task at hand, so I'm still in that mode, that work mode. You know, it's been exciting, but it's also been challenging to manage two jobs. But I'm fully committed, fully focused on winning this game and doing whatever I can.

**Q. Obviously you know what your future is, but as far as you guys have come these last couple of years, how important is it to you personally to end this on a winning note?**

D.J. ELIOT: Well, you know, Florida State has been a great experience for me, and it's one that I'm going to cherish forever, and I want to finish this thing off right, and that's why I'm working so hard to do that. I always looked at Florida State as a place where they weren't lucky to have me but I was lucky to have Florida State, and that's the way I approached work every day. Coach Fisher took a chance on me. I was a young D-line coach at Rice that did a good job in an interview, so I tried to repay him every single day with my work.

My players mean a tremendous amount to me, so I want to make sure that I finish this thing off for them. They bought in early to what we were doing, and they've been very successful, and they've always respected me and done exactly what I've told them to do. So I want them to know that I was going to be here until the end for them, as well.

**Q. Obviously with all the attention paid to Lynch, what do you think of the rest of NIU's components from the line to the receivers to the backs?**

D.J. ELIOT: Well, obviously they're a very good offense. They've got great numbers. They've won all but one game, and there's other weapons besides Jordan Lynch that we're going to have to be prepared for. They've got good speed, and their offensive line is very effective. They work well together. So you know, we're conscious of more than just one player for them.

**Q. Bjoern Werner, Coach Fisher has talked a lot about his instincts and just his feel for the game is different than a lot of football players. Could you talk about that, and is it a -- do you still see those things that surprise you even this late in his career?**

D.J. ELIOT: Well, you know, Bjoern is a player that -- you have certain players that you can give them a certain amount of information, but they can only apply so much, so you have to be careful on who and what you give to certain players. But Bjoern is one of those players that he can take in anything you give him. You know what I mean? And he can apply it in the game. So he never ceases to amaze me on how much he can improve, and he's done that his whole career. Brandon Jenkins was the same way and Tank Carradine has played well for me, as well, as well as other defensive ends. But Bjoern is one of those guys that's a student of the game and continues to improve.

**Q. You guys have obviously had a lot of change there at the defensive end positions this season with the injuries to Brandon and Tank. What's the resiliency of those guys been like especially with Mario coming in and having a chance to play throughout the year?**

D.J. ELIOT: Well, they're a very tight group. They train together in the summer, they meet together even when I'm not with them. They always had the approach that they were going to be the best in the country. That was always their approach and their mentality in everything they do.

When we lost a player, it was the next man up mentality, and the younger players like Mario that have stepped up, he takes on that responsibility.

**Q. You'll have to excuse me ignorance here. You mentioned both Kentucky and the capacity you're in currently, balancing the two. Can you go into more detail in that? Are you doing anything for Kentucky right now, or are you solely in a Florida State capacity and keeping it in the back of your mind?**

D.J. ELIOT: Well, fortunately for me from a focus standpoint, this is the dead period in recruiting, so there aren't a lot of recruiting responsibilities that I can do right now. So I've been completely focused on preparing Florida State for the Orange Bowl, and that's where all my time has been.

**Q. Before the dead period started, how did that work for you?**

D.J. ELIOT: Before the dead period I was mainly committed to recruiting for Kentucky. But so was the Florida State staff at that time. They were committed to recruiting for Florida State, and then the practice preparations started just about when the dead period started.

**Q. With Mario, you just talked about Mario and the way he stepped up in the Georgia Tech game. What do you see for him? You won't be coaching him, but just how was his progress this season and what do you expect from him going down the line?**

D.J. ELIOT: His progress has been tremendous. You know, fortunately for him, he came in and was behind three of the best defensive ends in the country through training camp. So he was able to learn from those guys and see how those guys operate, and I think that that's made him a better player. He's extremely talented, maybe more talented than all of them, and I think he's got a very bright future at Florida State.

**Q. You obviously had a big hand in not only bringing some of the ends to Florida State but also sustaining them and maintaining them when they got there. What is it going to take for FSU going forward to get those kinds of D ends to continue to come to Florida State and continue to produce?**

D.J. ELIOT: Well, you know, fortunately for me, in recruiting some of those defensive ends, Florida State has a rich history of defensive end play. The program -- funny thing you may ask that, when we led the country in sacks a couple years ago, somebody asked me if I broke a school record, and I'm like, that's harder than leading the country in sacks. There's so many great players here, and you always have that to sell at Florida State.

## **FSU DT Everett Dawkins**

*On getting to South Florida:*

"It's a great feeling. As far as me being here five years, this is my first year coming. It feels great to finally be here and it was well deserved as well. It was a hard road, we had a lot of great opponents that we had to play, but it feels great to actually be down here."

*On defensive coordinator D.J. Eliot:*

"It's been fun. I'm grateful he's coming back for the bowl game because a lot of coaches go on to the next job but he actually came back and he's helping us out with the scheme and calls, so we're thankful for that. It's been great, he's knows what he's talking about and he knows what he's doing so it's fun."

*On getting back to national prominence:*

"I think it will help out a lot. A lot of people look at the opponent that we're playing and they don't think that it will, but a BCS bowl game is a BCS bowl game. I think if we go out there and handle business and do what we're supposed to do, what we know we're capable of, everything will be fine for us."

*What the best non-football part of this week has been:*

"It would have to be the jet skis and just being able to go out on the beach and swim. It's been fun; everybody loves Miami. Just being able to open your balcony doors and have the wind coming in off the sea has been great."

## **FSU DB Xavier Rhodes**

*On being in a BCS bowl...*

"It was a great atmosphere to be at a BCS bowl and to play at Sun Life Stadium. Not many teams have this type of opportunity and we look forward to getting out there on Tuesday."

*On NIU quarterback Jordan Lynch...*

"He is a good quarterback to tell you the truth, a really good quarterback. He can run and throw and is very aggressive, likes to take chances and has made some big plays this season."

*On facing up-tempo offenses...*

"We have already faced this type of offense before in playing Oklahoma. They run an up-tempo offense and that experience will help. We have to worry about limiting their big plays and stay disciplined out there."

*On senior leadership...*

"The senior leadership has been great. Everyone holds each other accountable and takes responsibility. We feel like everyone wants to take that step to the next level. In order to do that, we have to grow both individually and as a team."

*On reaching goals...*

"It doesn't matter who you are, every team has the same goal to go to a big bowl and win it. We were able to reach this game and now we have to focus on doing our best to win it."

### **FSU LB Christian Jones**

*On being in the Orange Bowl...*

"Winning a BCS bowl hasn't been done here in a long time. People who grew up watching Florida State football are used to seeing FSU playing in big games. It is great to be back in the Orange Bowl and we look forward to going out there Tuesday."

*On facing Northern Illinois' offense...*

"One of the big parts of NIU's offense is Jordan Lynch. He has great numbers this season and has helped his team win 12 games. We have to key in on stopping him and go from there."

*On facing mobile quarterbacks...*

"We have gone up against a lot of guys who are mobile and can throw the ball. It is not like this will be the first time seeing an athletic quarterback. With guys like that, you have to be disciplined – he can hurt us at any time and we have been preparing for that."

*On being in South Florida...*

"It has been a great experience so far. This is a beautiful area and we have to make sure we stay focused since the main thing we came here for was to play a big game. That is the most important thing."

*On playing for head coach Jimbo Fisher...*

"It is awesome. He is a coach that knows what he wants and is very organized. The guys have done a great job of buying into his plan since the reason we come to FSU is to play in big game like this. It has been great playing for him."

### **Florida State LB Vince Williams**

*Talk about the difficulty of playing Northern Illinois who has a chip on their shoulder...*

"I feel like we are going to have a chip on our shoulder too. We've had a chip on our shoulder all year. We're Florida State. We're going to play well no matter who we play against, no matter who's the opponent. We always have a chip on our shoulder. We are ready to dominant anybody that we play."

*How important is it to win a bowl game leading into the offseason...*

"I've never lost a bowl game, so I understand the importance of coming into the offseason with a win. I want to be able to give the younger guys and some of the leaders coming back the feeling that I've had for the last five years."

*What is the defensive game plan to prevent Northern Illinois from getting a fast start...*

"We're just going to play Florida State football, fast and physical."

### **Florida State DE Bjoern Werner**

*How much does D.J. Elliot's decision to stay affect you guys...*

"A lot, especially me and him and our relationship. I always knew he wanted to be a defensive coordinator and I'm so happy for him that it worked out. I'm so happy he didn't go with coach Mark Stoops because they were really close. I'm so happy for him and I'm happy that he's staying. He coaches exactly the same way as coach Mark Stoops, so it wasn't a big change for us. They play the same technique and all the same stuff. I'm happy for him and I can see that he's happy for us that we're doing so good. He's going to leave on a good note."

*What do you think about the team bus with your picture on it...*

“When we drive through Hollywood with police escorts and my face on the bus, it’s pretty funny. Good publicity.”

*Could you ever have imagined when you came to the United States to be where you are now...*

“No. This is just a different world. This is everything I could dream right now, all this hype and not just about me individually. I’m so happy that we’re in the Orange Bowl. This was my goal to be on the big stage, that’s why I came to Florida State. I’m so happy that we are here. Hopefully we can leave this thing with a win.”