

Clemson, with step up play by team leaders, others get it done opposite Auburn

Written by Levi Johnson, Sports Editor
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ATLANTA - Dabo Swinney likes to talk about step-up play in big games; especially from senior leadership.

And in the opening game in his fourth full season as head coach of the Clemson Tigers, the Sat. night(Sept.1)encounter against Auburn was evaluated by him as a "big one" for his participants from the South Carolina Foothills.

So when it was all on the line, in a showdown in front of a record crowd of 75,211 in the second Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game, at the Georgia Dome, Swinney's Tigers "fed" plentifully by the difference-making play of redshirt junior quarterback Tajh Boyd and redshirt senior running back Andre Ellington eventually "feasted" on a hard earned 26-19 win over Gene Chizik's Auburn Tigers. In the first Kickoff Game Fri. night(Aug.31), Tennessee spanked North Carolina State 35-21.

In the end, Ellington, who rushed for 231 yards on 26 carries and Boyd, who was 24-34-1 in the passing department, including the tell-tale toss for six to junior wide receiver DeAndre Hopkins that put the winning Tigers up by four (23-19), with 9:17 remaining, got most of the praises from the Clemson coach. However, Swinney also talked loudly and strongly about the play of his offensive line that included three players who were starters for the first time.

"First of all, that was an incredibly gutsy win from our guys; especially the way we played up front on both sides of the ball," said Swinney. "A great win. I'm very proud of our team and for

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the preparation we've had all summer.

"This was a difficult game to prepare for. I'm so proud of our coaches for the job they did. Our guys showed up ready; and in the end, it paid off for us."

Tajh Boyd, opting to take the spotlight away from himself to the team, mentioned the preparation that went into getting ready for the opening night.

"All summer long, we made a point of just being ready to play on opening night," said the Clemson No.1 field general, who hails from Hampton, Va. "And as things turned out, it looked like we showed up and played when the game was on the line. I just like to thank our linemen and all of my teammates. This was truly a team win."

Andre Ellington playing up team win as well, talked also about mental and physical toughness exhibited by the Tigers.

"This was just a great win (for us as a team)," said the Clemson stellar ball carrier. "But we couldn't have gotten it if we didn't make it happen when we needed to. We played big when we had to and we got help from a lot of our players."

Though visibly disappointed in absorbing a loss wherein his offensive foes compiled 528 yards in 87 plays, Gene Chizik nonetheless gave credit where it was due.

"We have to give Clemson a lot of credit. They played a very good football game tonight-hard fought on both sides. They are an extremely talented team; and they did a great job coaching," said the Auburn helmsman. "I'm proud of our guys. We had our chances to win; and didn't get it done."