

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Coach Mike Norvell

Postgame Press Conference



Florida State 47, Duquesne 7

MIKE NORVELL: Just to start off, really proud of our football team. To come out, a lot of work has gone into the off-season, and just into preparation for this first game. We've got a lot of new faces. Got a lot of returners but a lot of new faces that have come in and had their first opportunity to go out and compete there at Doak Campbell Stadium.

I first want to say that our student section, the Marching Chiefs, wow, that was impressive. The student section was sold out. The Marching Chiefs, just our crowd in general, just grateful for our fan support. To be able to see this team -- this was the first glimpse of the 2022 Florida State football team, and I'm proud of our players.

It definitely wasn't a perfect game. There are a lot of things that we're going to be able to learn from. A lot of guys played, got opportunities. There was some good, some bad, things that we're going to have to continue to grow upon, but the experience and the approach is what I'm really pleased about.

It was a tough and physical camp. I thought we showed as a fast and physical football team. I think it was the first time in school history we've had three 100-yard rushers in a game. That's impressive, and that goes not just to the running backs but to the O-line, to the tight ends, receivers, everybody doing their part.

But I was really pleased with the way that our guys showed up. Jordan played a half and a series. I thought he threw the ball really well, made great decisions, pushed the ball down the field. It was a very clean game for him, and we were able to get some opportunities for other guys, things that we're all going to be able to learn from.

I thought all in all, it was a good game 1.

Q. You mentioned the blocking was good, but also the backs it seemed like they broke a lot of tackles. They made a lot of guys miss, and all four of them did. Have

you been seeing that all camp?

MIKE NORVELL: We have. I think we've got a great running back room. Those guys are very competitive. But they're very supportive in how they work. We want to be a football team that we move forward on contact. I thought those guys showed it. They were able to break some tackles. They've done that throughout fall camp and scrimmages. In live situation, it was good to see it show up.

Still some things that we're going to continue to be able to get better at and just cleaning up some communication. We had a couple of missed assignments that forced them to have to make people miss a little sooner than what we want, but I thought it was a really good mindset and approach by our running backs, and I was proud to see all of them -- Rodney Hill coming in in his first game, and he had a couple highlights that showed up, and I was proud of him and the way that he approached, because I think he's got a chance to have a great future, as well.

Q. You guys used a lot of offensive line combinations. How did you think the guys did at handling just kind of quick change and different pairings?

MIKE NORVELL: Some of that was designed, some of it was having to adjust. I thought they did a good job -- we had to play, I'm not even sure how many linemen we played tonight, and it started pretty early, but that's part of this game. Guys have to be ready at the drop of a hat to go, whether it's playing a different position, the different combinations, the way that we communicate. Alex I think does a wonderful job in how he prepares guys.

We'll be able to come and watch the film, make those corrections and then just continue to push to find that best five as we're moving forward because we know that with each week there are great challenges ahead, and our offensive line has got to be a strength for us as we're moving forward.

I thought that tonight there was some really good things that showed up and obviously some things that we're going to have to clean up.

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Q. How does a game like this kind of prepare you guys going into next week when you have to get ready for an LSU team in New Orleans?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, anytime you get experience, I think it helps. This was the first time that our team, this team, got a chance to take the field together. You're always going to have new faces. There's a lot of true freshmen that played, transfers, returning players that came out and plays better than they played, and that's a good thing to see. So we'll take the experience that we had tonight, and we've got to build upon it.

We get an extra day leading up to Sunday night kick versus LSU, so we need every one of those moments from film watching to on-the-field practice to prepare and improve so that we are our best come next Sunday night because that's still always going to be the standard. It's not about who we're playing. It's about us. It's about that constant growth.

When we get an opportunity to get out there and execute, we've got to go play at a high level. It's going to be a great challenge. It's going to be a great opportunity, being a national showcase game. Probably won't need a whole lot of motivational speeches next week, but the focus is on us. It has to be on our growth.

That's where I thought our guys did a nice job, especially with week 1. You have a game like that behind you, and that's what everybody wants to talk about, what media wants to talk about is the LSU game. Well, tonight mattered. Tonight mattered. What we did, the way our guys played, it was important because it's still about us. I appreciate the work and the focus that our guys had on this plan and the opportunity that we got in front of our home crowd.

Q. How big was it to have so many players get reps, second team, third team, this early in the season to get that kind of experience to build on moving forward?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, it's great. You have practice, and some of the guys that prepared and worked all through fall camp and some guys that were down on look squad or scout team that still got an opportunity to get in the game, and they learned a lesson. You get to see exactly where you are and some areas that you need to improve. Some guys showed up and really provided a spark that might have been working with that second group or third group that you took notice of. So they will earn more opportunities, and they've got to show that consistency as we continue to grow throughout the course of the season.

As you guys know, what your team looks like game 1 is always going to be drastically different to what it is towards the end of the year, and that's because guys develop. Guys maximize those chances that they get.

I thought it was great being able to do it this first week.

Q. I was wondering how big you thought it was for Johnny to make a play like that early on in his career at FSU, if there was an update on him physically and also Duke Cooper, an update on him and if you expect him to be back?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, Johnny has had a great fall camp and it was great to see that carry over. He made a big play on a vertical post, came up a little ginger, and he got out there and kind of moved around. We'll see where that goes as we get to tomorrow.

Duke unfortunately was unavailable tonight, but I like how he's progressed here towards the back part of the week, and looking forward to hopefully having him back in full effect here at the start of the week.

Q. How would you assess how your cornerbacks played without Duke Cooper?

MIKE NORVELL: How our cornerbacks played? I thought they did good. I thought we had the one foolish penalty, and I appreciate the young man coming -- he knew immediately, owned it. But we've just got to get that corrected. But I thought they were competitive to the ball. I thought we had some PBUs, being able to mix different personnel groups. We played five DBs, six DBs at times. It was good to see the way that they competed. It was good to see it was Are Thomas getting in, Sam McCall, Greedy Vance, a newcomer into the program. Those guys definitely challenged -- I've definitely been pleased with Renardo Green throughout this fall camp. He's just getting better every single day. Jarrian Jones has had a great fall camp. Like I said, there was the mistake early, but really responded, and I'm proud of how those guys played. They shut down the passing game, and I thought they did a great job.

Q. A long time since this program has had a season-opening win, 2016. How did you build from this and how much of a confidence boost is it for these guys since it hasn't been done in a while?

MIKE NORVELL: Really what's been done in the past didn't affect anything for today. It was about us, and it was about this team.

I appreciate how they prepared. It was just about going out

there and being able to grow together. That was something that I think is important for this team. They've invested a lot. There's been a lot of challenges over the last few years, and ultimately all we can control is what we're willing to put into each day.

I love seeing the physicality. It's something that I wanted to see. I thought you felt it on both sides of the ball. There were some big hits out there. I loved our coverage units were awesome. We had some missed opportunities on our return units, and those are things that we're going to continue to challenge and work on, but you felt our team fly around.

I liked that mentality, and for us, it's just about continuing to push to get better. But we're excited about being 1-0 and taking care of the business that was on hand tonight.

Q. To have the 90-minute delay and then come out and score on your first six drives, including one after halftime, does that just speak to the focus?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, and one of the words that I had for the team today was "respond." You guys that are around this program, you hear me say that a lot. It doesn't matter what happens. We have no control over the weather. I was hopeful that we would be able to have a smooth transition, but when the lightning delay and you back it up 90 minutes, we have a plan in place for it, and guys executed the plan. All departments, our nutritionists to our strength staff to how we stretched guys and did things throughout because it's still -- regardless of the event that occurs, you still have to be prepared when they put the ball down.

I thought our guys did a remarkable job for that. Once again, that's where I want to commend our students. That was awesome. You have a 90-minute delay, and we came out, and that end zone was rocking. I appreciate that atmosphere and what they did.

But our players, they handled it the way I wanted them to handle it, and I thought even throughout the game, it's always about that response. It's one of the things we've got to continue to push.

Q. Going back to the rushing attack and just the play of the running backs, what did you think about the way they made plays and broke tackles outside of what was blocked and getting more than --

MIKE NORVELL: That's an expectation here. We talk about this is an offense and a program that's built for playmakers. Those guys have great play making ability. All of them were brought here for a reason, and they have

grown, they have invested, they have developed. They all have their own unique journey. But they made the most of the opportunities that they have.

It wasn't just a display for what happened tonight. It's something that's shown up in practice. They don't take off days. They compete for every rep, for every rush. But they do it with each other, and that was -- I thought it was a great performance, and really pleased with the mindset those guys bring, and they've got to continue to get better.

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