

# Florida State University Football Media Conference

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## Head Coach Mike Norvell

### Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Good morning. Appreciate everybody being here. Excited for the week but just want to, you know, kind of go back and after getting a chance to watch the film with the practice yesterday, I was really pleased with the performance from our guys. I thought they did a nice job first game. I thought we played for the most part a pretty clean game.

We had five penalties in the game. One was absolutely something that we cannot do and something that is a teachable but correctible moment. But then we had one procedure penalty. And then the three penalties that we had that were fundamentally based were all newcomers or guys that were in their first real action here at Florida State.

So even though we don't want the five penalties, they're all things we're going to be able to learn from and continue to grow. Offense, defense, special teams all had their moments of playing really well at times. And I thought going back watching the film, the guys, they see the details and the fundamentals that we have to improve on, but I thought we were able to implement quite a few different schemes to look at. We saw some different looks, things to be able to adjust with. And all in all I thought the guys played pretty hard throughout the course of the game and we were able to play a lot of different players.

You saw a growth and a step. And we were -- we dominated a game that we needed to dominate. And I was really pleased with the way that the guys approached the game. I know I've mentioned the students, the fan base, just the atmosphere that we had. That's one of the great things about kicking it off here at home. I thought that was a wonderful experience, and our guys really enjoyed that. It sets up for an incredible week ahead. It's an opportunity to go and get better and improve throughout the course of this week in our preparation.

But it's incredible because of the stage that you get to play on. And to be a Sunday night game, only college game on, prime time, playing in the Superdome, I mean, that's a great stage to showcase the continued development of the identity of this team.

And we got to play game one, so that was a glimpse. And what we do this week and how we prepare, how we seize the opportunity come Sunday night, that will be another opportunity -- that will be another showcase of who we are and what we're all about. And I'm excited about the steps I'm seeing with our team and looking forward to a great week of preparation

**Q. How did you guys come out of the game physically? What were the spirits, I guess, like yesterday at practice?**

MIKE NORVELL: I thought the guys were good. There's a continued sense of urgency for improvement. I thought meetings were good. Really, I thought the -- we came in, we worked out. Guys had a normal Sunday. There was a real bounce in their step.

Defensively, we only played I think 49 snaps in the game. We had a couple guys that got banged up a little, but we'll see where that goes here throughout the course of the week. Offensively and defensively. So we'll see what that looks like. But I thought all in all it was pretty good for us.

But I like the mindset of when you win a game in that fashion, whatever we had, 600 yards offense, you held them to under 200. I mean, there was an attitude of we have to get these things better because there are definitely some things that showed up that I didn't like and things that we have to improve upon and take ownership of the actions. I thought our guys did a nice job of that in yesterday's practice and the understanding of what's ahead here this week

**Q. Two-part question, both about centers. How did the four guys that snapped on Saturday handle the duties, each of them? And Maurice Smith is back on the depth chart. What does the week ahead hold for him?**

MIKE NORVELL: We'll see how that continues to progress. Maurice really started moving around more this past week, and he's got a great mindset. We're excited about this week for him and what that can be. And I

thought the -- we repped four guys at center and a lot of moving pieces that come with that. I thought Darius did a nice job. I thought Gibbons. Tom Shrader was able to get in. You think about the journey for Thomas missing last year with the injury and to be able to get back out there and to play, I mean, that was special for me to see. And then, obviously, David Stickle got some reps there at the end. I thought all those guys handled it well. There were a few errant snaps we have to be better on. But ultimately I thought it was a good workday with the communications that they had. And for the most part, we were on the right -- in the right places with the right keys for what we were trying to accomplish.

**Q. Two-part question for me as well. With wide receiver play, what did you see from Deuce Spann and Kentron Poitier for those guys to get positive reps out there and production. And then secondly how is Johnny feeling, or how did he feel on Sunday? Is he going to be available this week?**

MIKE NORVELL: I thought the receiving core as a whole really did a nice job. And they capitalized on opportunities that they got with the ball in their hands. Deuce, you know, Kentron I thought both did a great job being able to create separation, showcasing speed, making plays when they had opportunity to.

But what I liked about the game was watching the guys without the ball in their hands. There were some unbelievable blocks that we had down the field. The effort, the physicality is something that we take a great deal of pride in in how those guys approach the work. But it was -- I thought all in all it was a good day for the receivers.

Johnny, he was feeling definitely better yesterday. And it was one of those things in the game where it was close to see whether or not he -- he wanted to get back in there. And he was moving around pretty well. But obviously we held him throughout the rest of the game. Yesterday it was a normal day after a game where you got a little banged up. But I'm excited to see how the progression of that goes.

**Q. Just what are your overall impressions of LSU and just particularly their defensive line and wide receiving core?**

MIKE NORVELL: It's two extremely talented position groups. You look at the defense front, receivers, both those group have high draft pick prospects in it. Overall as a team, I mean, you see size, speed, athleticism. Defensively, you know, they've been able to bring in a good number of transfers especially in the defensive backfield, guys that all have experience, can really fly

around the field. And you have great size that complements that.

But they've got great depth on the defensive front, athletic, powerful. So that's going to be a great challenge for us. A little bit of unknown of exactly what the presentation of what they're going to do schematically. You know, the coordinator, Coach House, he's been in the NFL for the last few years. We've looked at everything through this off season, whether it was going back to Kentucky film '18-'19, being able to watch Kansas City, watching the Chiefs, trying to get just as much broad perspective of what we can potentially see.

But also in the fact of studying the personnel of guys that were there and then guys that came from other places. So offensively, you know, being able to go against and compete against Coach Kelly over the last few years. And obviously have a history with the offensive coordinator when he was at Cincinnati and even before. So very well coached. And when you have weapons like they have at receiver, they know how to use them. And they're going to be able to create space, try to get those match-ups.

They've got talented quarterbacks there and guys that can defensively get them the ball. So it's going to be a fun match up to have to prepare for. And these are those type games when you're playing against top players in the country and great coaches, I mean, it's going to be a fun week. And that's what you look forward to in being able to build up to Sunday night.

**Q. You talked about it a little bit there in your last question. The challenges of you've gone against their offensive coordinator when he was at Cincinnati. How do you prepare for what you know he does versus how he might do things differently with new personnel now?**

MIKE NORVELL: You really almost have to approach it this is a game one because we've not seen them in how they're going to implement all the different schemes because it's very multiple. And they do a great job, running game, passing game, screens, getting the backs out, I mean, all those things are a part of what they do and what they've done well in the past schematically, but how does that fit to the specific guys that they have on this team.

So each year is going to be different. All schemes will be adjustable. And we've got to go in and be able to have a plan but then also have great adjustments to whatever we will see.

**Q. I've got a three part -- no. It's one position but three players. Could you go through the three quarterbacks**

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**that played?**

MIKE NORVELL: I thought Jordan was exceptional. I mean, probably one of the best games he's had. Played half and a drive and you go back and even on the incompletions, there were a couple of -- he located the ball well. And he did -- there was maybe one or two plays that we'd like to maybe like to have back in a sense of just -- where our eyes were, but, I mean, he was phenomenal.

And I thought it was great to be able to get Tate and I thought it was great to be able to get AJ in there at the end because that experience is great experience. And ultimately there was good and then there was -- the interception is a play that, you know, we can't have. And it's something that you get a real perspective from the young man and a route and there's all different components that go into it because that's one -- everybody can sit there and you look at just a player, but what else is going around the player in that situation.

And it was great to be able to get that feedback from Tate and kind of give some instruction and things that we can apply because, I mean, he's had a great fall camp. And I thought it was good to be able to see him go out there and even with a bad play come back the next drive and respond and be able to lead down to a scoring drive. So it was good experience for him.

And then for AJ to get his first action, you know, was big, even though it was just one drive, but he got the ball in his hands, he was able to operate the offense. And I thought he did some good things in that series.

**Q. Defensively, you held them under 200 yards. What were some of the things you saw in the game that you can clean up?**

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, I think there's always a lot of -- we got hit on a couple of misdirection plays. We've got to make sure our eyes are where they need to be. There were two balls that got pushed down the field a little bit. Obviously on the touchdown, you know, just we have to be better in some of the finer details and technique of where our eyes are and then how we transition and make sure we're in the right place to be able to make a play on the ball in those instances.

But I thought our guys played hard. They played -- you saw the physicality up front. I thought our linebackers flashed and really flew around the field.

And then what I did like is I saw our defensive backs making -- other than the one touchdown, we were actively making plays on the ball. And that was good to see. And

we know the challenge that's ahead, but just being able to fine tune the fundamentals and details. I thought the communication was good for the most part. But there's still a couple of adjustments that we've got to get cleaned up as we move into this week

**Q. You mentioned the blocking of the wide receivers down field earlier. There was a play where Mycah Pittman was blocking on the perimeter. I think on the next play he gets the ball on the screen. Is that by design to reward him or is that the flow of the game?**

MIKE NORVELL: It's flow of the game. I mean, it's not -- there's an expectation to block. And whether you got the ball or not, I mean, everybody's got a job to do. And that's one of the things I appreciate with our guys. I mean, you see that -- it's what you need in a good offense. You've got to have guys that are willing to be selfless, whether it's blocking for a running back, whether it's running backs in pass protection, whatever the job entails. I mean, we've got to have 11 guys playing as one, giving all that they can to help somebody else be successful. Then when you get your opportunities, you've got to make something happened

I thought that in sequence, you've got Mycah on the outside zone play, I mean, he did an unbelievable job, one of the -- those physical punishing plays that he was able to have. And then the next play, he gets a ball in the perimeter and you see a 330 pound guy running 15 yards down the field with Dillan blocking a safety. That's what you want to see within an offense. And so I definitely appreciated that.

We still -- I think we played 80 something snaps or 82 snaps of the ball being snapped throughout the course of the game. And there were still too many times where we had missed opportunities and where -- we've got to give a little bit more extra effort collectively. But I thought as a whole, I mean, our offense played hard. And those were some great examples of it.

**Q. I mean, the beauty of like that, you get to play more depth in that game. Did anyone stand out on offense or defense that got some playing time that probably wouldn't have got playing time in a regular game?**

MIKE NORVELL: It was good to get some of the young guys. You look at some of the young offense linemen, Julian Armella had a couple of nice flash plays, you know, creating space. A guy that -- he started the game, but I do want to point out I thought Markeston Douglas in his first game of playing extensive action did a really good job. Some of the things we were able to do with our multiple tight end sets, I thought those guys worked together. I was

pleased with -- he's going to be active in the rotation, but he showed things that he did in fall camp. I mean, Josh Farmer was a guy that really productive in his snaps that he got. And that was exciting to see for me. And, I mean, there's a lot of guys, Patrick Payton got in and was able to -- these guys -- we're anticipating them playing for us a good amount this year, but it was good seeing them take advantage of the opportunity that they had and showcasing some of that growth.

**Q. What do you think a game like that can do for Deuce and Kentron since neither one of them has really produced at that level in a game at those positions?**

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah. It was -- they took advantage of what they got. And you have to rise up and make the play. It don't matter who you're playing, when you're playing, when your number is called, are you going to take the things you've done in your preparation and be able to apply it? And that's what they did.

I was really pleased with those guys in that moment and just how they caught the ball, the work of what they tried to do once they got the ball in their hands. And they made some tough catches, and it was good to see. So that has to build confidence because that is part of their experience. They've been working really hard in fall camp and to see that translate over into game one, now we need to build on it here as each week continues to unfold.

**Q. It seemed like Duquesne was definitely running a quick passing game not letting the pass rush kind of have full effect. What did you see from the pass rush given that? And what are your impressions -- I know LSU is going to have maybe an entirely new offensive line out there -- what they might be able to do?**

MIKE NORVELL: I thought Duquesne did a really nice job of getting the ball out. For us I actually liked some of the things I saw pass rush wise. There was -- sometimes that balance. I mean, that ball -- if they get the ball out quick and on time, it's going to be hard to get home. But we were in good positions.

And it was good to see Jared Verse get his first quarterback sack here. It was good to see pressure. Derrick McLendon had a couple nice wins but the ball was out. There were some pressures that were created. But you've got to give credit to them. They were getting the ball out but also allowed us in the defensive backfield. I mean, we were on them pretty good and all of it kind of ties together.

But we have to be able to establish a pass rush. We didn't

-- I thought we executed the game plan the way we wanted to. But we always want to push for more in being able to create pressure for that quarterback.

**Q. On special teams, a general review of special teams. What did you see that you liked, and what are some of the things you've got to clean up?**

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah. You know, I think it stood out -- I mean, our kickoff coverage unit was remarkable. I mean, I loved watching those guys cover down. There was a real passion that was on display. I think we tackled them inside the 15 yard line three times. Great kicks by Ryan. We got Mac in there at the end. He was able to get a ball out of the back of the end zone. But it was good to see those guys.

We talk about the identity showing up in the coverage unit. We only had the one punt. But it was still a great execution in that. The return units -- I thought our punt return unit -- Mycah made good decisions. There was one time -- we didn't get really catchable punts throughout the game. And the ones that we did, you know, we did a good job with.

There was the one that -- it was a short kick. We've got to do a better job in our communication making sure people getting away. We had the one that bounced off Kevin that we were able to recover, but those are those critical moments. We've got to continue to work that.

In the kickoff return, I thought we were close. We had two returns. And it was -- you look at the big picture of it, and a lot of guys that are in great space. And we have one guy that kind of got through. So we've got to continue to clean up those return units. I'm excited about the guys that we have back there, and I'm excited about the personnel. We've just got to be able to execute in the moment. I've got a lot of confidence we will.

**Q. You talked about how big rivalry games are and that's why kids come to Florida State. They need to embrace expectations of those games. You mentioned this game is a Sunday night, national telecast, pretty much exclusive viewing window for you guys. This opportunity here, is that something that needs to be discussed, just the stakes of this game, or that is something you don't want to get into your players heads at this point?**

MIKE NORVELL: It's the game that's in front of us. And that's the joy of coming to Florida State is you're going to be in these games. You're going to be prime time on that stage. That's where you want to be. Does that mean that we need to -- if you're preparing harder for this one than you did last week, then you're not going to be as good as

you can be this week because you missed out on the opportunity. And that was the focus. I wanted to see our guys go out and dominate last week, and I thought we did.

And because they took that approach for that game, yeah, everybody was talking about this one that's coming up. So it's not -- there's not -- it's not a secret that it is a showcase game, you know, across the country. But every day that we have and each game that we play will either put us in position to be better and to be ready for this moment or you'll miss out on it. And so I was pleased with what we did, and now it's time to continue to get better so that we're ready for that stage whenever we get there Sunday night.

But you don't really need to talk about it because it's talked enough around everybody else. And kids, they know. I mean, it's -- you don't have to hype it up any extra for what it is. You go play your best and put your best foot forward each and every play, and you'll give yourself the best chance to be successful in the moment.

**Q. There's been a rich history of Florida State and LSU way back. It's been 30 years since we've played that game. But have you any memories of it within the staff, Odell or any --**

MIKE NORVELL: You're testing my age there a little bit.

**Q. I am.**

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, going back 30 years. Me personally, no. I don't have any memories that come through. But, I mean, it's -- it's Florida State and LSU playing in the Superdome. Let's go. I mean, it's exciting. If you're not fired up for this one. I mean, it's two storied programs, prime time. This is what college football is all about. We're definitely looking forward to it.

**Q. The running backs obviously had a lot of success. It seemed like there were a couple times -- you mentioned after the game some of the runs they had to make big plays it was because maybe they didn't see it originally. I was asking particularly, there was the third and 6 or third and 7 down near the end zone. If Tre gets outside, I'm thinking that might go. How did he do in terms of just being back on the field? Did you see him get better as the game went on?**

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah. I thought there was -- really, all three of the backs had opportunities. They all went for over 100 yards, great nights, ran really hard, broke tackles. But there were still very teachable moments that we go back and see -- to the finer details of where we can continue to improve. And there were a couple of those plays that where we maybe didn't have all 11 guys

executing the call or a check or something. And that's where it goes to the back where you say, well, if he would have done this or done that, but there's other factors that you might not know that show up.

And so those are all things that we get to teach from. And it's great to be able to do that when you have three guys that run for over 100 yards and to be able to say, well, this is where it gets better and this is where it has to get better because as each week goes by, the competition is better and people are going to defend you in different ways. So we need to stay focused on those little things.

And that's -- like I mentioned earlier, that's what I love about this group is they didn't come in yesterday everybody chest out. Yes, you're 1 and 0. You did what you needed to do to come into this week, now go get better, go improve. But Tre it was awesome. I mean, coming off of a very challenging start to his college career and a lot of people that doubted him, what he would be, you know, he did what we thought he would do. And I'm excited about the growth of that room and the opportunity that's ahead for it.

Thanks guys.

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