

# Florida State University Football Media Conference

Monday, October 3, 2022

Tallahassee, Florida, USA

## Mike Norvell

### Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Appreciate you guys being here. Coming off the game Saturday night, it was disappointing. Any time you lose, especially losing at home, it's one of those things that you go back, you reflect.

I appreciated the effort that the guys gave, especially the second half, trying to do everything that we could to get back to win the game. Just all in all, we played a very experienced, talented Wake Forest team. They've won a lot of games over the last few years, and they've got a quarterback and an offense that was extremely efficient.

You look back, it was only a ten-possession game on both sides. So the -- each possession that you had offensively, you had to be effective on. Then you look at them, I think they had four possessions where they had over 12-play drives.

I thought one of the keys to the games was, one, we didn't create take-aways. We turned the ball over the one time. Then obviously you look at the third and fourth down conversions on both sides. That allowed them to stay on the field. The time of possession was off balance.

Then offensively, there was one drive that was one play. We had a couple great opportunities after a great punt return, we get the ball at the 35 yard line, would have got down to inside the 5, but had some negative plays with penalties that pushed us back. We had a sack, the only sack we gave up, but in that situation, knocked us out of field goal range, and we had no points in that drive.

You go through, and just every drive was critical. We just didn't make enough plays there to come out on the positive end of that one.

Our guys were extremely disappointed, rightfully so. Coaches, players, everybody involved, we know we've got to continue to work and get better. There's plenty of things for all of us to improve on coming out of that game. I did like the mindset of the work yesterday. Guys came into the weight room. They got after it. They pushed hard.

We went out to the practice field after our meetings. There was a definite sense of urgency. There's not been a time -- we pointed this out yesterday. There's not been a time here that I can recall, maybe the bye week one practice, where effort has been something that I've questioned.

When we've been out at practice, when we've been in our preparation, our guys, I really like their mindset towards the work. It's something that showed up on Wednesday, and I pointed it out after Wednesday's practice but also kind of reflected back. Just the finer details of execution, the little things, trusting those things in the moment because you look back at the game and there was some third down situations where we had either a missed communication or total missed assignment. Those things can't happen in those times.

We've got to coach it better. We've got to go out there and execute it, stay focused in those critical times.

All in all, I really like the response that our guys had. They're going to come to work and have a great week. We have an incredible challenge ahead, get to go on the road against another top team in our conference, another very experienced team that's in our league.

We know that we've got to go play our best game. That's all I want to see our team do is go out there and get better. We had the example -- like I said, it physically makes me sick when we come up short. For us to have the lessons that were learned there Saturday afternoon, we've got to apply the lessons, and we've got to go get better.

I know our team's going to do that. Looking forward to the week that's ahead.

**Q. The fact that you guys have played cleaner games before Saturday and the fact that you didn't play a very clean game and they did and it was still a one possession game in the middle of the fourth quarter, is that kind of going to be encouraging to the players to realize that against a top 15 team, if they just play a clean game, they may --**

MIKE NORVELL: You see the response of it. Defensively

we didn't start the way we wanted to. I say that like we had the first drive was good, but then they had some drives and were put in some tough situations. The first drive of the third quarter was not very good at all.

Then you saw those next few possessions, like, all right, there's the response. That's what it needs to look like. That's what we're capable of in that moment against a very good offense, and that was a very good offense.

On the flip side, same thing offensively. There was times in that second quarter when we found ourselves down, and I know I mentioned it in the post-game and the film showed the same thing, I thought it's not just one possession. I thought we just started pressing, whether it's up front, out wide, in the backfield. They're just almost trying to do too much because of some of the adversity we have faced, and that's where it's just, guys, take a deep breath and go out there and play.

I was really pleased with what the offense showed there in the second half of being able to go out there and just execute and trust what they saw, take what they're given, make sure that you're trusting your technique on the different blocks and the things that we had prepared for.

You see that response, and it is encouraging because you point it out to the players. Look, you're capable, but what were the things that were happening early that kept us from that? Even what were some of the things that happened late that didn't allow us to finish the job?

This is a capable football team. We're still -- like I said, we're still growing. We're still learning from the experience of I want it yesterday. I want it done now. Like I said, it's not an effort issue. It's something that we just have to be consistent in that day in and day out.

We've had some success. We've been able to see the positives of that. When you drop off and have the penalties that showed up, some of the focus things that showed up, you can't beat good teams, and we're playing good teams. That was the difference.

**Q. What feedback did you get from the offensive guys about the first half and how kind of bogged down they seemed to get in that stretch where they struggled? And did Wake do anything up front defensively that was a surprise versus what you expected going into the game?**

MIKE NORVELL: No, we started off great first drive, moved down the field, had some great plays. Second drive, we had a mistake. We ended up having a three and out. You had a mistake, ball got on the ground. They did a

good job on the third down play of tackling the short. That gave them the ball back. The third drive we were able to move it. The fourth drive was a one-play turnover.

Those are -- kind of that second, third, and fourth drive, that sequence, there was either mistakes, negative plays, or a turnover, things that we just can't have.

It wasn't so much of necessarily what they were doing. They did a great job. They won the game. They played really well. They contained us in some ways. Ultimately, we've got to be able to play cleaner football in that -- in those moments.

I think that did contribute to us pressing a little bit. Obviously we were able to settle down. We had the drive right there before halftime I thought was really good. Still we'd like to be able to finish that in the end zone, but you saw a positive response from the offensive guys.

It's just these drives all -- especially in a ten-possession game, these drives all matter. They're all critical against a really high powered offense and what they were.

Unfortunately, it's lessons that are learned, but just really trusting and doing the things that we prepared to do and being able to go out there. For me there were things I needed to do better in certain angles and just certain calls that I would have liked to have had back.

It's all of us together, but it all contributes. We look at it, we learn from it, and we move forward.

**Q. When you have a tough loss like this and obviously the expectations were high -- you mentioned being disappointed and players disappointed afterwards. As a coach, what are you looking for from response immediately after? I'm sure it's disappointment, but is it productive in those moments?**

MIKE NORVELL: Sure, expectations are always high. It doesn't -- my expectation is for us to go play our best every game. There's times that you win games and you're disappointed because whether or not you accomplished that.

But, yes, you come out of that, and what I want to see is I want to see the ownership. I want to see ownership from myself, from coaches, from players. What are the things that contributed to that? Because everything, it all falls on me, everything that we do within the program. So you have to be able to self-reflect on all things that occurred up to this point. Why did we not go out there and be able to capitalize on the moment, on the opportunity that we have?

For us, that's what I appreciate. As a player, are you going to sit there -- you can't let one bad experience negatively impact the next experience. You've got to be able to learn from it, and you've got to be able to take that ownership, and you've got to be willing to apply the lessons that you've learned and go be better.

That's where -- like I said, it's gut wrenching when you come up short. Nobody feels good about it. There's not things -- the expectation of how we play and the effort we give, that's always going to be there. I'm proud of the team for who we are and what we've done to get to this point. I just don't want to have that feeling again.

So it's our job, it's our responsibility to apply the lessons and to go get better.

**Q. Kind of a non-football question, but three of your guys have teamed up to use their NIL for hurricane relief. For them to continue to give back and use that platform to benefit others, what does it say about them and this program?**

MIKE NORVELL: This is a program where we want to be known for service. It's something that's one of the core values. When you look at service, sacrifice, and respect, those are the three values of our program.

When there's times of need and opportunities to be able to make an impact to benefit others, last week at this time there was a lot of questions of what was going to happen in a lot of different places. It's unfortunate for every person that was impacted with the hurricane and the storms. Some people lost everything.

To have an opportunity -- I know there's a lot of people in this room too that have helped, that are taking an opportunity to go and impact others in a positive way that are going through adversity, I think it speaks to the heart, it speaks to the character, and I'm just grateful for those young men who are working to make a difference with the platform that they have.

**Q. You talked a little about the offensive struggles in the first half. Was the pressure of Wake against the defensive line, was it more of what Wake was doing, what they didn't expect, lack of execution along the offensive line? Along with that, Robert Scott seemed close to -- I know he dressed out. What's his status coming into the week?**

MIKE NORVELL: It's always a combination. Wake had their plan of what they wanted to do to create pressure. It's something that we've got to continue to do our job, and make sure that we trust our eyes, trust our technique, trust

our fundamentals up front in what we're getting and how to combat that.

They were able to get a good amount of push and sometimes disrupted the pocket for us. I know it's something that our guys have done a really solid job of protecting the quarterback throughout this year. We've played some very talented players throughout in really good groups this early part of the season. So it's something that we've got to grow from.

I know the depth of our offensive line, it's been challenged. When Rob went down, obviously Bless is out for the year, Kayden's out for the year, I mean, we've got guys that have had to play different spots and move around in new positions, but they're all capable. For us it's an opportunity to go out there and to improve and to grow.

With Rob, I'm hopeful -- he was able to get a little bit of work yesterday. Hopeful that he will continue to progress this week. Regardless of where his status is, we need to take that step. Like you said, we've got very capable guys up front, and I believe in how they'll respond.

**Q. Without giving away secrets, there's a play, I think it's second and 20 in the second half, maybe after the holding that backed you up to the 30, where it's a run play. I'm only asking this because people are asking me this. Why is he calling a run on second and 20 when you've got George Travis playing like that? Is that an RPO? Is that a decision that your quarterback is making? Is something that you felt you could expose? I was going to ask that because at the end of the second quarter before the missed field goal, I think you ran it five straight times, and Toafili had what I thought was one of the better runs of his career to get that first down. Were you trying to get physical with that defensive line and get some push running the ball like that?**

MIKE NORVELL: There's differences in all scenarios of what you try to attack each week. We study all situations and trying to -- we're there in the red zone. We just missed a vertical shot. So trying to get ourselves -- whether it's going to be a two down territory after that, just kind of where we were on the field range. So all of those factors speak into what play we're going to try to design and how we're going to try to attack in that situation.

I felt good about the thought. Guy did a great job getting off the block and getting Jordan's leg, and that's part of it in those situations. Ultimately, each sequence is going to have a thought process behind it.

That one didn't work out very well for us, but ultimately as

you go into each drive, if there's something that a team's trying to take away or if you're having success or you can find an angle or something that you can create an advantage with, then those are things that you try to exploit.

So we always want to try to establish the run. In the game, we called -- there was times that you watch their defense. They're fit in the box with nine people. Even though run play is called, you definitely, we're going to have a pass option behind it, and there's times we were able to create a look to give us a bit more space and some open lanes and windows. I thought guys did a solid job of taking advantage of that when we had it.

So it's just an ebb and flow of it.

**Q. I think you guys -- according to the stats, I think you guys targeted Johnny around nine times. I think, when people see his size and athletic ability, people ask, well, how about ten more? What goes into that in terms of what were they doing defensively with him? Especially in the red zone, could he get more opportunities down there.**

MIKE NORVELL: I thought Johnny did a good job. There was good chances for him in the passing game. We tried to put him in a good spot of how we were trying to attack with that.

In all reality, Johnny's been working through some things even with his body and coming off of being limited early. So we're still bringing him along with that, but he's an incredibly tough individual, and the way that he prepares, the way that he works, I think that our receiving corps is playing at a really high level.

Even coming out of that game, you look at Johnny did a great job in the opportunities that he had. Mycah did a great job in the opportunities. You see Malik had a catch down in the red zone.

It's not that that group is having one area of just, oh, this guy's not making a play or this guy's not doing that. I feel like it allows us to play a lot of guys, and definitely Johnny is going to be a key playmaker for us.

Each week we're going to try to get our playmakers the ball in a variety of different ways, and he's taking advantage of the one that he's getting.

**Q. You entered the week at kicker with the same approach, where you'll give Ryan opportunities in game, and if things don't get executed, you'll pivot in game.**

MIKE NORVELL: We're going to go into this week and continue to push, continue to evaluate. Last week Ryan made every kick in practice. I felt very confident. Watched pregame, made every kick. Missed a 29-yard field goal right there before the half. I fully expect him to go out there and make it.

Obviously just like with other -- all other positions, we're going to go into practice. We're going to work. We're going to push and challenge guys. Everybody gets evaluated. I promise you we're going to put the best guy out there that we feel is going to give us the best opportunity to go win games, and Ryan has been that guy.

We're going to go into practice, and I have the utmost belief that he is going to be that guy because I've seen him do it. I've seen him go out there and be able to execute in the moment.

For us, just like there's times where you see receivers that might struggle at finishing a play or a guy that gets in his head in coverage, or something on the offensive line or defensive line, it's all part of the game and having to work through different situations. That's something that Ryan's working through.

But I definitely believe he's going to respond the right way this week in practice, and he's got to go and apply into game time.

**Q. Obviously you have one of the best quarterbacks in the country, one of the best quarterbacks in the country who's throwing it really well. One of the elements of his game, though, is his legs, and through five games he's got 50 yards rushing. If you could unleash that a little more, how much could that open it up for your other running backs?**

MIKE NORVELL: It's not a secret that Jordan can run. People are aware of that. You get a lot of challenges. If you allow Jordan to get out on the perimeter and allow him to run, that's a challenge for defenses. So I think people have a good understanding of that.

There are some times that we will look to try to create and maybe even force that a little bit. You alluded to one of them earlier. It's just one of those things that you continue to work through each game plan and finding, hey, where are the times? How can we create some of those explosives?

And Jordan's done a good job of extending plays. Sometimes there's different options that are involved in each play and just taking what the defense gives us. What

I don't want Jordan to do, I don't want Jordan to start trying to create something that's not there either.

Ultimately you look, and I think our backs have done a good job in what we're asking them to do. There's been some good run seams for us. I think we've been able to establish that. Ultimately, we've got to take what the defense gives us. If they don't want to account for Jordan, it will be really good for seeing him on the edge. We've seen that at times in the past.

Ultimately, we'll see what shows up and just continue to work through it.

**Q. Thinking about your various hires, analyst Darrick Yray, people that have helped you as far as roster management, recruiting, transfer portal, how has the operation to you formed a better program -- you hired Darrick, I think, in January or so. These last nine months, how has it kind of made Florida State better?**

MIKE NORVELL: Just the efficiency of our work, the detail, the evaluation process of making sure, yeah, it's such a new age in college athletics where the high school players, you get transfers, you've got all the different elements of what it is to try to manage your own roster.

But just the staff that we've been able to bring here, I think it's a great staff. Whether it's the development of our scouting -- some of our scouting roles on the offensive and defensive side has helped in season and in game, even looking at opponents and having that advance -- even a more detailed advance scouting of what's ahead and what we're playing against and some of the other rosters that we're facing.

So I think it's allowed us to be even more efficient with what we're doing. I think we've got a very talented staff, great people that really enjoy what they do. Whether it's a game day experience of recruits when they get on campus to some of the finer details of what it goes through in our evaluation, in in-season recruiting to out of season, what we did in summer camp, all that matters, and I think they're doing a great job.

**Q. How did Jared Verse come out after that game? Did he feel good yesterday moving forward?**

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, he did. We knew it was going to be a game-time decision at the beginning of the week, just with what Jared was working through. He was going to be very limited in practice, and really the first work he got was on Friday. But what he did a remarkable job was just his mental preparation, whether it was the walk-throughs, all the things he was doing up to that point, he was very

locked in and engaged.

Went through a walk-through, and I was -- he looked good in what we saw throughout the week as he was coming along. I wasn't going to put him on the field unless he was ready to go. Whenever he got done with pregames, said he felt great. He looked good the day before, all the things that kind of led up.

So we put him on a limited count basis. I think he ended up getting 23 plays in the game, something around that. I thought he came out well. He felt good yesterday. Just a little soreness after coming, just like anything, when you're off for a couple weeks dealing with an injury. But I expect him to have a good week in prep and continued rehab and hopefully be able to get even more out of him as we're moving forward.

**Q. Do you have an update on Fabien Lovett is doing and how he's progressing? And also we saw Jackson West on the sideline with crutches. What's his prognosis? Will we be able to see him this season?**

MIKE NORVELL: Both guys, we fully anticipate will be back later this year. Fabien is doing a really good job with his rehab, and we'll see as things go. Jackson, his availability here in the next week or so, we'll probably get a better sense of that. Both of those guys are coming along and excited to be able to get them back out there soon.

**Q. What did you learn about NC State against Clemson, and what are your overall impressions of them?**

MIKE NORVELL: They're a really good football team. Probably one of the more complete teams. They're very talented. Their defense is one of the best in the league, in the country. They've done a really nice job just with how hard they play, the scheme of what they run.

Coach Gibson, I've known for a long time, and I think he does as good a job as anybody in what he does just to showcase the talents and abilities of his players. He's got big, strong, fast players, and they play at a very high level.

Obviously you flip that over to the offensive side, and their quarterback, Devin Leary, has unbelievable arm talent, can locate the ball all over the field. He's got a variety of receivers, whether it's guys of great size that can push the ball down the field. Their slot, No. 5, we've watched him for the last few years. They had a great game against us when we went up there last time. He's a really, really good player.

When you sit there and you watch the way that they utilize

him and just the way that they're going to -- very much like they're going to try to establish the run game. That's something they're going to do. They do a great job in their schemes and how they try to attack, but you've got to be able to account for them pushing the ball vertically down the field. They're great in their spacing concepts and able to attack if you're playing zone coverage.

The quarterback makes it all go. He can locate the ball in very tight windows and is a really good football player.

They've showed this year what we know, they're a good football team. I think their ranking speaks to that. They went into a very tough atmosphere in Clemson last Saturday night, and they played their butts off. Like us, they came up a little short and fell a little short.

So I think you'll find Saturday night that they're both hungry and will give everything they have to get the desired outcome.

**Q. That's a tough stadium to play in and has traditionally been for Florida State. It seems like you guys played very well at home early this season. What did you like about the approach when you guys went on the road earlier in the season, and what's the key to doing that?**

MIKE NORVELL: The key is focus on things you can control. There's going to be a lot of things Saturday night that we don't control. It's going to be a loud atmosphere. It's going to be -- I'm sure it's going to be an exciting feeling to be able to play in that game, and there's going to be a lot of passion that's out on the field.

We've got to make sure that we control us. We don't get distracted by all the things around us, and you go out there and play your game. Our guys, they understand that mindset. We try to -- it's part of even going back to fall camp, it's one of the reasons we go to Jacksonville, we take them away from home, we try to make them uncomfortable, and we try to find challenging practices where it comes down to them.

They've got to bring the emotion, the focus, the detail, and I think that's helped us here early in the season. It's going to be a great challenge come Saturday night. We're going to have to make sure that we bring those lessons that we've learned and what we can do away from home and try to apply them there Saturday night.

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