

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Head Coach Mike Norvell

Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Good morning, everybody. Appreciate you being here. Coming off Saturday night, getting a chance to get back. It was a late night/early morning.

Going back and watching the film multiple times. Just disappointing outcome for the effort that our guys played with, the physicality that they showed. I really don't question any of those things.

I thought guys were ready to play. A lot of desire, a lot of belief. Played well in the first half. Still left some plays out there that had opportunities for explosives. Had opportunities to put more points on the board.

We weren't able to capitalize on that, but still going in 17-3 I was proud of the work that was done.

Coming out of the second half they did a good job in what they were doing. There was a few checks that we had, a few looks that we were trying to take advantage of that were beneficial in the first half that they tried to -- they left us on in a few, which gave us -- it wasn't negative plays, but a couple of plays that weren't probably the best looks of what we were trying to get into.

Then really in the second half offensively never could get into a rhythm, whether it was dropped passes, whether it was penalties, just different things. Just could not get a drive going. It really hurt us.

Defense was on the field for a long time. I thought the defense played well throughout the game. The first drive in the third quarter was something that we started off great coverage in our kickoff unit. Got them down to 16, but then they had an 84-yard drive. Had missed tackles that showed up.

They had the one back-shoulder fade that was a good execution, but we had some missed opportunities even in that touchdown or a couple of run fits that weren't as clean as what we needed them to be. That was one of their scoring drives.

Throughout the second half we didn't do a very good job of flipping the field when we did have to punt, and that was something that it's been a weapon for us all year, but just in this game we were not as good as what we needed to be.

Gave up some short fields. Had the turnover. It was just things that built off of each other in that second half.

Playing a good football team those things are going to show up and be magnified. They made the plays. They made the kicks when necessary, but for our guys and the effort that they put forth into the game and the physicality that showed, I mean, I was proud of them.

We just have to continue to eliminate some of those critical and costly mistakes that have shown up. Dropped passes really haven't been something that -- we've had a couple throughout the early part of the season, but I think we had as many in this game -- ended up having five dropped passes, and thing is all of them were on either third or fourth downs.

I think we ended up 5 of 13 on third downs, and to have that many missed opportunities, it's just those are critical, critical plays in the game that really swing the momentum that you have, but also just the rhythm that you are able to get into there offensively.

You look at the penalties there in the second half, it's something that killed us. There's a couple that were not right, but then there's something that we absolutely had control of.

We've got to make sure that we're doing the things that -- making the right decisions and with all the right intentions and giving forth effort, but playing with proper fundamentals, technique, doing all those things. We have to be better.

Like I said in the postgame, 15 yards, that was ultimately the difference in the game. We've got to make sure that we're taking advantage of that against quality opponents.

This week we've got a great opportunity. It's great to get back home. We have a primetime game. Obviously, we're

playing against a great opponent. They've done a really nice job throughout this year.

I think Clemson you see offense, defense, special teams, they really are playing at a high level. They're playing with a lot of confidence.

You see defensively they're one of the best defenses in the country. Their defensive front forcing unit, it's really impressive. They've really kind of honed in.

Gave up some big plays in a Wake Forest game just on balls being thrown down the field, but you can see that they're really settled in there in a defensive back field these last couple of games and playing at a high level as well.

Offensively you can see that the way that the quarterback is playing with a lot of confidence, he is really coming into his own. They have a great running back. Receivers have been making plays. Tight ends.

They present a lot of different challenges, but our guys are excited. Came back yesterday. Everybody was tired yesterday. When you get back at 4:00-something in the morning. I thought about pushing things to today, but I just backed it up a few hours, and we were able to go and get practice in and made the corrections. I thought the guys came out to work.

I was grateful for that. I love this team. I love the mindset of what they bring. Nobody wants to have a disappointing outcome in any game or in any play, but how you choose to respond to things is really what's indicative of the character that you have and the identity of what you are going to put out.

These guys, they continue to work, they continue to believe. We've got to have a great week of prep to capitalize on what's coming here Saturday night.

Q. You referenced a couple of penalties you felt were not right. Is there any follow-up to that as far as talking to the league? Is there anything you can do going further with regards to this?

MIKE NORVELL: The last two weeks we've sent in plays. It doesn't do us a whole lot of good to get the feedback that we were right after the fact, but I appreciate -- that's the one thing about the league is that they go and they re-evaluate. They do a nice job of with when it comes to officiating, great communication.

The officials throughout the game, whether I agree with the call or disagree with the call, our officiating, they will communicate. I've got a lot of respect for that. I've got my

opinion from what I see, and I don't always see things right either.

You always submit after the game. There were a few plays that here these last couple of weeks that I guess they would, in further review, see our perspective on what we thought.

Ultimately, it's for us to be able to help build upon it. Anybody can look back and complain about a call or this. I mean, you can do that in coaching calls. You can do that in all things, but for us it's just about how can we help teach our players to play the game the right way so they have confidence in what they're doing and how they're doing it so that we don't find ourselves in situations where you're getting penalized. Especially those critical ones, those are game-changers.

As long as we can continue to coach our players and teach them the right ways to do it, and then in the moment they've got to apply it. If we can do that, it will put us in the best position here moving forward.

Q. There seem to be moments in the game after play Jordan seemed to get frustrated, Whether he was frustrated with himself or what exactly what was happening in the moment. I guess, as a coach how do you handle that in the moment in talking to Jordan, whether it's to focus, calm down, what have you? Then, I guess, do you address that with him in meetings moving forward this week?

MIKE NORVELL: Playing this game, this is an emotional game. There's times you look at a game whenever things are going your way and then when things are not going your way. Where do you let those emotions go?

One thing I always try to tell quarterbacks, all players, just when things aren't going -- maybe you're making good decisions and putting the ball in good spots and maybe not getting the return from that, just keep playing, keep encouraging, keep believing.

Jordan has done a really good job of that throughout the year. Even Saturday trying to encourage guys: Hey, we have to finish making plays. Trying to lift up teammates.

I know after the interception the other day, nobody wanted that to happen. It wasn't a great play-call into that look. I can tell him that. I could tell anybody. They had a good play-call defensively for what the play that was being run, and with all the right intentions and everything, probably made the decision that nobody wanted to have happen. In that moment it's just, hey, come over, take a deep breath.

You can always let frustration get the most of you, but you can't let one play carry over and affect the next series or the next play. Just trying to get to that point.

I think that's a job as a coach. How I coach on the practice field is much different than how I coach during the game because if it's a focus issue, if somebody is not -- if there are those things, you'll see me get animated with players in how we communicate.

But when it's on game day, it's about communication. What did you see? What was the thought process? This is not just for quarterbacks, but for all positions so that you can communicate and help them make the adjustment that's necessary as you are moving forward.

I think Jordan, he does such a good job in understanding what we're trying to do and where we're trying to go and the things in that regard, so just trying to help him.

I thought in the Wake Forest game I thought there were some times there in the second quarter where he is pushing, he is wanting to make that play, and some things around him weren't necessarily going the way we wanted it to. It was probably one of the best in-game transitions for him to really slow down in the second half. I thought he went out and you saw everything slow down. He made the play. He continued to push forward.

Ultimately, he has done that. That was frustrating. I know it's frustrating. You sit there, and you get in the second half, and you're not able to get anything established, for whatever reason.

He is a level-headed and can think and process with everything that's going around. That's all that I that try to communicate with him.

We talked about it, all things are still up in that game. Whether it's a game that you come out successful or a game where you come up short, what are the things that we can do to improve, to improve in communication, to improve in thought process, improve in calls, improve in our reactions? We talk about it all.

I think Jordan handles himself extremely well. I appreciate the leadership that he shows because he does it the right way.

Q. You mentioned after the game that the game was on you. Going back and watching the film, what did you see that you need to work on as a coach to get you guys that win?

MIKE NORVELL: There are some situational things. If

you put together a game plan, offense, defense, special teams, it's what shows up on film? What shows up in the game?

The things of how we execute, it's all on me because it's my job to have this team prepared. It's my job to make sure that we come into the game, and they're confident in the plan, they're confident in the adjustments, they're confident in the things that we need to do.

I go back and I look at it, and I'm, like, okay, as the team make some adjustments and if the team starts disguising things a little different, where can we get our guys to where they're playing confident in that, that they're trusting what they're seeing, the adjustments that we're making, that you can see them be quickly executed throughout the course of a second half or whatever that adjustment needs to be made?

I think we've done a good job of that throughout the course of the year, but then what were the reasons that we had the missed opportunities? What were the reasons that those things showed up? Is it something that we did in our preparation?

It's a big picture approach, but it all falls on me. It's my job to make sure that I'm doing the things necessary that you don't have a second half where you go out there and you have a result of what we put on display.

I can coach it better. We can continue to grow and help our players in the things that they need to do to be able to execute it better, but it's the ownership of it all.

That's where I've got a lot of confidence in what we're going to be able to accomplish and what we're going to be able to do. But, ultimately, what you see, that's on me to make sure we do a better job.

Q. In the last two games you've had a really poor pass offense. In the first half against Wake and in the second half against NC State. Can you point to specific things, but is there anything bigger picture, or is it just fixing those little things?

MIKE NORVELL: Really in both times it was we have to be able to have the run game established, and I think you saw -- if you would have told me in the NC State game that we were going to run for over 200 yards against a really good defense that has not given up that type of production, I was very confident in what it would end up looking like.

There were times in the second half where they did a good job. They penetrated. They were able to create some disruption there in the run game. We missed a few



opportunities with that. Just weren't able to sustain things.

That showed up in kind of both of those games where we've had really good production in the run game overall, but there's just those key moments. You couple that to not converting on third downs in those segments of time, that's what makes offense go.

We've been a very explosive offense throughout the year. I think we've been a very productive offense throughout the year, but we've got to eliminate those segments where we've kind of gotten into a lull of just back-to-back series where they haven't -- where we haven't been able to get that rhythm established.

We showed a good response there the week prior in Wake Forest. Obviously, it was there at the back end of it in the NC State game. You see even that last drive, obviously, you get the first down and then here we go. We're able to put together a string of plays together. We just can't have those segments to where we kind of stall out there just from our lack of movement.

Q. I'm not trying to get you fined, I promise. You kind of already touched on it. You talked about a couple of plays you sent in. I couldn't tell what happened on the Gibbons play. It kind of looked like he got his feet tangled. What is the teaching moment you tell Dillan there. Then also the Mycah Pittman penalty, it looked like he was trying to rip the ball out as the kid runs out of bounds. Obviously, the former one was crazy, but those other two in particular I was just curious.

MIKE NORVELL: Ultimately, we've got to make mature choices as we're playing this game. I love effort. I love physicality, but we can't put our team in a position it have those negatives.

When it comes to plays on the sideline or plays at the end of plays, we have to be smart in those situations. Those are two of the best guys that we have on this team when you talk about care and want-to. Ultimately, if it's that 50/50, you are putting a judgment call in somebody else's hands.

I think that with all the right intentions, we've got to show our growth and maturity in it as well. Well, I don't think it is or I do think. Those decisions, that's part of a team's growth and controlling the things that we can control.

I don't want guys to pull back and not play physical, but there's also moments that we've got to use that greater sense of exactly where we are and where it is within a play because those were two critical penalties in the game, and I know we can be better in that.

Whether perspective, do I think it should have been or should not, I know we can be better in those situations.

Q. Injury-wise in that game, I know Robert Cooper left early. And then moving Dennis Briggs inside, I guess, how did that kind of come about, and how did he kind of -- I know he has been there a few times. How did he kind of do there in the second half?

MIKE NORVELL: Dennis, his versatility is big for us. I'll say this. Leonard Warner, Patrick Payton, those guys being able to grow and develop and what they've been able to bring for us to the edge. Getting Jared Verse back, that allowed us the flexibility to move Dennis in.

We went down I think it was three defensive linemen -- three defensive tackles in the course of the game at different points. We got forced to having to put Dennis inside, but that's what he played.

He played that primarily last year. Was playing inside before he got injured. So being able to utilize that skill set, it's something that is great for us just being able to have him and the opportunity to do that.

I thought he did well. We need to continue to utilize that versatility as we move forward.

Q. It was kind of overlooked because of how the game ended, but there was a play in I think it was the first quarter, maybe either second where Johnny Wilson is called for offensive pass interference on a play that would have had you guys pretty deep in their territory. What did he do wrong on that play? Is that another teaching moment, or is that --

MIKE NORVELL: There was definitely something teaching schematically within the play that could have put -- I don't want to get into all the details, but yes, there were some things that we can be better at.

It was bang-bang on it, but you sit there and there's enough of those critical plays in those moments. You're pushing towards the Red Zone. You have momentum. You're in good shape. Then you go from what would have been right there at a first down to now you're in second and 20, 25.

Those are those plays you look back. The next play we have a drop on a third down, and we're out of field goal range, and we have to punt the ball away.

If you sit back and think of all the plays in the game to come up with two plays short or two points short in a game,

there's just so many of them that came up. We've got to be better.

I'm not going to point to any others. There are so many different sequences of what you can look back and reflect, and that's what we do as coaches, and that's what you point out to players.

You reflect on yourself as a coach. What are we doing in how we're teaching and making sure the guys can carry from practice field to the game field, making sure all those things are on point, but then you show it to players, and these are the details. These are the things, those little things, that show up big at the end. Especially in those close contests.

I'll say this and I probably don't say it enough, I love coaching this group because they see it, they understand it, they take ownership in it, and then it's, like, all right, let's go get it better.

There's no complaints that I have about the work and the investment and the effort, the physicality. That's showing up. It's the consistency in our details.

It's something we talked about when we first got back coming into fall camp. We need the consistency to show up in those areas because sometimes you get away with it against a lesser opponent or in a moment. The last two weeks you're playing top 15 teams in the country. This week we're going to play -- I don't know what they're ranked, but probably pretty high.

You sit there, and you play teams like this. Those details, the consistency of your execution, the importance of every play, that's going to be magnified.

Our players, they embrace that. I've got so much confidence in where this team is going, where this program is going because of it because it's one thing to have a disappointing moment and start hanging your head and start looking, or say, damn it, sorry, I'm going to go fix it. I'm going to take ownership. I'm going to go and do everything in my power to make sure that that does not occur again. That's what I enjoy about this team.

Sunday night it's late. Everybody is tired. Coaches, players, we're all going through it.

You stand in front of them and say, look, these are the things that I have to do to get better. These are things that we need to do to get better, and these are things that you've got to do to make sure that some of those plays don't show up again because I want it all for those kids.

They're a great group. I know we're going to go to work and put everything we have in this week to be a better football team than what we were. If we can accomplish that, then I know we're taking the steps that's ultimately going to pay off to what we all desire.

Q. In the second half until that final drive every drive you guys had had a third and long that led to the drive being stalled. But I'm wondering, why do you think there were so many third and longs, and how do you try to balance trying to get to third manageable and also being aggressive on early downs?

MIKE NORVELL: It's two-fold. It was penalties, missed opportunities. We struggled with some of the things in the run game there in the second half where they did a good job of creating some penetration. It was tough to be able to get that rolling. It was a combination of really all.

When you sit there and look, if we can play ahead of the chains and be in those situations, it's something we're definitely trained to do, but ultimately, it's two-fold. Things that they did well and things that we didn't do as good of a job as we needed to, which kind of forced us into some of those longer yard situations.

Q. How did Treshaun Ward do? I wonder if there was any sort of testing. Will he possibly be valuable this week?

MIKE NORVELL: We'll see as the week goes on with him. Tre is extremely tough. The way that his durability is something that's been such a strength, and he has been such a constant impact for us.

We'll see as this week goes on. He will do everything in his power to be available, but we'll see as things play out throughout the week.

Q. Kind of got, I guess, lost in the second half, the punt return decoy late in the first half. We saw it in practice last week. Was that something on film you thought might be able to exploit? Was that something just you have got to prepare for it in case the moment presents itself? I know they caught you saying "Be Smart" to Pokey on the broadcast. Just how he played that play?

MIKE NORVELL: I thought he did a great job. You sit there and there are certain things that you see or think you request take advantage of. You don't really know if the situation is going to present itself, but that was kind of the perfect situation.

We needed to try to create an explosive. Wasn't a whole

lot of time. I thought defense did a good job being able to get a stop allowing us to utilize timeouts and try to get the ball back forcing the punt.

For Pokey, it played out. We got the right kick that we needed. Mycah did his job, and everybody within the return unit -- I mean, that was one of my favorite plays of the game. Not just because of a result, but when you go back and watch it.

Go watch Sidney Williams. Watch Brendan Gant. Go watch the details of it. Sidney is coming back. There's a chance where he could possibly take a shot on a guy and put himself in jeopardy of getting a penalty, but you see him lead with his hands, make a good decision.

You see Brendan Gant, same thing. Just the tempo that he plays with. Watching all the guys take in the fundamentals of away we teach and apply it just in that play was something that was great for us to see.

Those are the plays that just give you so much encouragement for what's coming because you see guys that are growing up in their own journey.

I think Pokey did some great things throughout the course of the game. Had his plays that just like all of us we would like to have back, but he has been a great spark for us this year, and I thought that was a big play. Was able to set up and have Ryan get an opportunity for a big field goal.

And that was something in its own right that you talk about somebody that's working his tail off to kind of break through some of the experiences that he has had earlier in the season. At that moment it was a big kick, and I think everybody saw the joy in the team just rally around him in that.

I'm excited to see how he will continue to build upon that because we need all three phases to play big here this week.

Thank you, guys.

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