

Florida State University Football Media Conference

Monday, October 24, 2022

Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Mike Norvell

Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Good morning, everybody. Hope you had a good weekend. Appreciate you being here today. Coming into this week coming off the bye, I thought it was a good work week for us and what we were able to accomplish.

Tuesday, Wednesday were good days. We got quality work. I think it was also good that guys got a few days off, being able to kind of rest their bodies, refresh their minds. It's been a pretty good stretch that we've been on.

I really like the guys' mindset and approach coming in yesterday, came in, got a good workout in the weight room. I thought really pushed the tempo and pace from meetings to out there on the field with our normal Sundays.

So excited about the week that's ahead and the opportunity, being back at home, getting a chance to go out and just work on being the best us. There's been a lot of lessons that we've learned throughout the course of the year as we go into this back stretch of games. It's really about the consistency of our application, going out there and playing a 60-minute game to the best of our ability.

Our guys, it's fun to be able to kind of sit back and watch other games throughout the weekend, and you see the importance of the fundamentals. You see the importance of the details, the discipline, just from an outsider's perspective. Being able to make sure that we maintain the focus on what we need to go out and play a disciplined brand of ball, making sure that we're owning the football, making sure that we're creating take-aways and being on point in those situational moments because we've seen where that's worked really well for us, and we've seen where that's cost us at times this season.

I think that having those few extra days is going to be able to help. It was good seeing Fabien move around, very hopeful for what that's going to look like this week. You'll continue to see with Tre Ward and where that's at as he's progressing throughout this week.

But all in all, I think it was a very positive time for us with a

bye week, and I think our guys got quality work.

Q. Can you sometimes see how players handle that freedom maybe during a bye week and what that tells you about their state of mind and where you're at as a program?

MIKE NORVELL: I think the overall mindset to work is something that's important. When you don't have something pressing in that immediate week, really just how guys approach it tells you their passion or hunger, their desire to get better and to fix some of the issues that have shown up.

I thought the work week did that, but also we had a lot of guys that stayed in town this weekend. The athletic training room, sometimes when guys get a break -- and we try to intentionally give them a break. We wanted them to have moments to really decompress but still do the things necessary to work on their bodies and their minds.

We had a lot of guys that stayed in town, had great treatment sessions. I thought it was -- I thought that made a statement too, to just that sense of urgency for improvement and for guys to be the best that they can be as we jump into this week.

Q. Is this an opportunity to, I guess, set a tone for the final stretch of the season?

MIKE NORVELL: I think every time you step on the field is that chance to really put on display this team, their response to the mindset of what we're going to take, to the opportunity that's at hand.

You sit there and you watch Georgia Tech, they've had their ups and downs. They went through a coaching change. They win the next two games. They've been playing really well on defense, making some very impactful plays. Even though they came up short the other night, I thought their defense played really well offensively. They've had some challenges that presented themselves just with different injuries and things that have shown up and some missed opportunities.

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This is a team that's very capable. You see that. I think they're playing hard. Coach Key has done a good job of kind of rallying the troops. It's a really good coaching staff. I know a couple of them personally, and it's a lot of respect for who they are and what they do.

This week is still about us. It's about our improvement in all areas, but just specifically to those critical situations, the importance of the detail, the importance of the discipline, the importance of being able to execute with our fundamentals in those critical situations. I mean, that's what we need to see. I think our guys understand that, they embrace that.

So, yes, this week will be an opportunity for us to go out there and push to show our best to be able to make a statement of that's who we are and that's what we desire to do in our continued improvement.

Q. Coach, you had the big recruiting weekend with Clemson, a bunch of recruits in town. How big is it to have a week right after that to be able to go see some recruits and build some momentum?

MIKE NORVELL: I thought last week was good for us. To be able to get out on the road, be able to get to a variety of different high schools, seeing different games. It's something I don't ever take for granted after dealing with the year and a half of COVID, of not being able to leave the office.

It's really we try to capitalize on every opportunity that we get to get out in schools. I thought it was well received. I mean, just I'm grateful for all the coaches and the time that they provided to be able to sit down and discuss their prospects but also just to give their perspective of what they've seen from us.

That growth, the improvement, the competitiveness, the heart, the energy, the compassion our guys play with, that's not going unnoticed. We've got a lot of excitement from prospects around the state, prospects around the region. This is -- players, coaches, everybody involved are taking notice of everything that's going on here in Tallahassee. We're excited about who we're recruiting and just making sure we're evaluating finding those right fits for Florida State as we move forward.

Q. With Fabien Lovett, what sort of impact do you see from him when it comes to stopping the run? And what kind of improvement do you see once he's back with just the team all together?

MIKE NORVELL: Fabien is one of our best leaders. He's a guy that plays with great passion. He's very talented.

He's an All Conference defensive lineman that can stop the run and also impact in the passing game.

We feel like our depth has been tested, and that's been a position that's really been challenged. You look at guys that have missed time, whether it's missing games or missing periods of games, there on that defensive front, especially in that corps, and I'm excited about the growth that we've seen and young guys stepping up and showing that they are capable.

But when you have a guy that has Fabien's experience, leadership, size, strength, and speed, and just that overall mentality, it's something that's big for our team. I think he's been -- his involvement, even when not being able to play on game day, has been something that I've appreciated. He continues to earn the respect through some of the challenges and adversity that he's had to face.

We all know how bad he wants to be out there on the field, and I know he'll make a great impact when he's able to do that.

Q. Their offensive coordinator Chip and you go back a while. Can you maybe talk about your impressions of him and just that whole kind of chess match when you know a guy and he knows you and you don't want him to know what you know and all that kind of stuff.

MIKE NORVELL: Chip's a great coach. We've known each other since we were in college. We actually competed against each other in college, and you develop that relationship through healthy respect of each other.

We got a chance to work together for many years. He was my first offensive coordinator at Memphis, was able to go on and do great things at Notre Dame, and has continued on in his coaching career.

When you go against talented coaches, whether they know -- they know a lot of the foundational elements within the program. It's still being true to who you are and making sure that you're tying everything to the players that you have. There's always going to be a little bit of give and take when you go against somebody that has that type of familiarity, but got a lot of respect for him and the job that he does.

We know this year for them, with a lot of the injuries and things that they've had to try and overcome, there's been some challenging moments, but you also see the potential that they have. You see some of the explosiveness that's shown up. Especially in the last few games, the last two that they've won going on the road at Pitt to get a big win, having to rally there, and then obviously against Duke was



another very close game where those guys had to step up.

So definitely very capable. I think they're getting some guys back. We'll see how all that plays out, but a lot of respect for their coaching staff.

Q. Year to year to see such a wild swing from how successful you guys were in the red zone offensively to where you guys have been this season, during this time, the self-scouting, are there things -- I know you probably won't give specifics, but do you feel like there's things you guys would have done differently or mostly execution-type issues?

MIKE NORVELL: You look at it, and it is twofold. What has been successful for us this year? We've had successful drives. We've been able to score touchdowns, not at the rate we want because there's some missed opportunities. There have been some pretty common factors that, if you look at -- I watched, I think I mentioned last week, went through and watched all of them. Times that we've been in the red zone and not, you know, either scored points or scored touchdowns, usually one of three factors showed up.

It was a penalty that showed up. It was a missed opportunity maybe with a dropped pass or there was just a focus issue where, again, missed assignment or a mistake that had shown up in that moment.

So a lot of self-inflicted issues that have shown themselves. It's not really the series that we're scoring. It's not, oh, this is that much different. Just we've got really talented players. We've got guys that are very capable. I don't think we're far off. I don't think that it's some -- it's the glaring issues. Well, it's this on this player. Those self-inflicted issues that show up down in the red zone, they're going to cost you.

You're tighter in your spaces, obviously the importance of every down in that area of the field, and those things have kind of got us.

So you're always reflecting, always making sure that we're doing all that we can to put our guys in the best position to be successful, but those are things we have to clean up, and that's all a part of that consistency.

I've got to make sure that I'm putting our guys in the best position in those situations as well. So it's always twofold with it.

Q. Was there a point that you saw -- I know you guys have had confidence in Lawrance as a back since you signed him, but it seems like between the tackles he's

more aggressive and more physical. Is that something that just comes with the weight room work, or what's been the development?

MIKE NORVELL: It's a twofold confidence. I mean, really, it's confidence in his body and his strength and his size and his speed, but also in his experience. Knowing where he wants to end up, knowing -- having confidence in the tracks, having confidence in the plays and the schemes of what we're asking him to do. You see a -- he's really coming into his own.

I'm excited about that. I thought the game against Clemson, you saw probably his best down in and down out performance as a running back. I think that's something we're going to continue to build upon.

He's done a remarkable job, and just his knowledge, the confidence in what he's been asked to do, and really just the ownership of this team. He's one of the most selfless people when it comes to his time and helping others and trying to bring guys along.

He's done a great job with Rodney Hill, who I think has an incredible future in front of him. Just seeing L.T. help him along, I mean, this is where I was when I was your age. Just seeing him take that time to help guys through those experiences is something I ultimately respect.

Q. You guys talk about emphasizing take-aways. Is there something more that the secondary can do, or does it have to be an attacking forcing unit? Is it a collective?

MIKE NORVELL: It is. It's really top-down. The more pressure that you're able to create, the more opportunities that are going to show up there on the back end.

I think effort, physicality, pursuit. Being able to make offenses uncomfortable, to be able to create those situations, and then there's times that we played teams in the last few weeks that have done a great job of taking care of their controllables. You sit there, and you watch this past weekend, and balls were all over the place, I mean, that weren't necessarily great created plays by a defense, but just lack of focus.

So we're all capable of that at times. For us, we've got to control things we can control. We've got to create pressure. We've got to disrupt things at the line of scrimmage. We've got to make sure, if we get opportunities on the back end, we take advantage of them, being in the right place, making sure our eyes are where they need to be. Then it just comes down to effort, physicality, and pursuit.

If you put those things consistently on display and you're making sure that you take advantage when the ball is in jeopardy, then you're going to create more take-aways, and that's something that we try extremely hard to emphasize, and I think we've been close on some things. Obviously, that's got to be better as the season continues.

Q. You guys got Ja'Khi Douglas back last week. Don't remember how many stats, but a good number. How do you think he came out? He talked about building that conditioning up. What do you see from this past week?

MIKE NORVELL: I thought this last week was really good for him. We did some developmental work with guys through last week's practices. Some of the guys that have played a lot of snaps were a little bit more limited in just the overall workload. You guys that are on the lower end, we kept out and got some extra repetitions. Ja'Khi was one of those guys.

He embraces the work. He embraces the process of growth and development, and I thought he went out and played fast against Clemson. It was good to see him out there. He did score the touchdown and took advantage of that opportunity.

I think that, as the season progresses and he continues to build upon that shape -- I mean, he's so much further along than where he's been, and you really see the confidence in how he's playing and how he's practicing. We need him to show up big because he brings a great dynamic to this offense.

Q. Georgia Tech obviously losing a quarterback and just had a lot of issues in that game last Thursday night, but they have beaten Duke and they have beaten Pitt. Is that something you have to stress to the players, or do you expect them to figure that out?

MIKE NORVELL: When you turn on film, you see ability, you see talent, you see potential. Those are things that you know are there. For us, you live off of experience. Our concern is not necessarily the opponent we're playing, it's really going to be on us. We've shown that we're a very capable team that, if we're not handling ourselves to the best of our ability, we will not play our best.

We need to play our best game. Ultimately, this is a team that does have talent. They have beaten people. They do have experience on their football team. You look, both sides of the ball have shown that they're very capable.

So for us, we've just got to go out there and be focused on

what we're here to do, and that's to get better. That's to go play our best football game. That's what our guys have been working for through the off week, and now as we jump into game week, it's got to be that continued push.

Q. You've talked about it before, but the charitable efforts from Dillan and some of his teammates, but for them to go down to South Florida during the bye week and hand out checks and supplies, what do you think when you see that?

MIKE NORVELL: They're such respectable young men. To be able to utilize their platform and the opportunities to be able to positively impact others is something that I'm proud of them for and what they do, and just the willingness to make an impact.

Whether it's going to South Florida obviously with the hurricanes, a lot of people that lost everything, and to be able to utilize a platform to make an impact there, to the guys that are here in Tallahassee and doing the same thing and being able to give of themselves just to bring a smile to a young boy or young girl's face by just spending that time, this is a team that really does embrace the service element of life and the opportunity that we get.

So I'm grateful for them and what they're doing, and those continued efforts here as we move forward.

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