

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Mike Norvell

Press Conference



Florida State - 41, Georgia Tech - 16

MIKE NORVELL: First off, really proud of our team. Coming off the bye week, to be able to come out and to get the win, doing the things that we needed to do to win that game.

We won it handily, but there's times -- just like I told the team. You sit there, and there were so many opportunities throughout that game to really put it away earlier and to play our best. I thought there was a lot of great performances.

I thought Jordan Travis played maybe as good of a game as he's played since he's been here. His control, you see the work, you see the -- I said it during the week in practice. He was almost angry in how he prepared, and it was impressive to see him carry that over. He threw for almost 400 yards. Had great command, control, had some missed opportunities that were left out there.

I thought defensively in the first half was phenomenal. Only thing we gave up, we had a turnover and gave up a short field. They were able to make a stop.

But there were things that showed up throughout the game. Offensively, like I said, had some dropped balls, way too many penalties just as a football team. That's something that we've got to make sure that we maintain our control, our composure, and all things, and executing to the level I know we're capable of.

For us to be able to go and win that game and still not play our best -- this is one of those times where there's things I'm really unhappy about that I saw today, but I'm definitely glad that we got the win. Really proud of our guys. We were able to play a lot of different players, get some great experience, and do the things that were necessary there at the end.

I thought it was a good day. Proud of our guys. I appreciate the work. I appreciate their response and just the way that they compete on a day in, day out basis, and

we're going to continue to get better. But you do see the growth. You see the steps. We've just got to continue to make sure that we're cleaning up those little things.

Q. As you said, you guys had at least one or maybe a couple games this year where you've had an opportunity to put teams away and didn't do it and it came back to haunt you. When they did cut it to 21-10 and you guys pulled away, what do you think was different in that experience?

MIKE NORVELL: It was a really good opportunity for us to respond. Sometimes you need those things to show up. You sit there and you look at it, and it was a couple of uncharacteristic plays where we gave up the surprise onside. We felt like we were pretty confident that was going to happen at some point. Just a teachable moment for a young player.

Those are things that -- then they go down, and they're able to score a touchdown on their opening drive. I was proud of the response that we had, the way we were able to overcome the negativity -- the negative plays or the negativity that showed up throughout the course of the game and be able to respond to go and finish.

It shows growth. It shows the buy in and investment in the work that allows you to overcome in those situations. We've been through a lot, and this is still a relatively young team with a lot of guys that are getting that firsthand experience throughout this season.

So it's good to see them respond and go out there and do what's necessary to win the game going away.

Q. You mentioned that Jordan practiced almost kind of angry, I guess. What went into this week of practice for him, and what was that chip on his shoulder or whatnot?

MIKE NORVELL: Jordan's played really well this year, but there's been plays or there's been moments where maybe he didn't -- where he wanted those plays back and he wanted the opportunity to go out there and just be better.

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He's worked at an elite level throughout this season, but when you continue to stack those good days upon each other, and then even though there have been some times that maybe he didn't have the best play or things didn't work out the way that he wanted, but when you continue to make that investment, then you see that constant growth. And that's what he's done.

He was ready, and he was prepared to go out there and play at a high level today. Like I said, we put a lot on Jordan. And it's a fun offense to play quarterback in, but it's also a challenging offense because of the things that we ask him to do and the things that he does in the run game, the things he does.

Q. (Video froze.)

MIKE NORVELL: Eyes not where they needed to be, weren't getting the signal. Just take a deep breath.

Just go out there and don't try to do too much. Just trust your coaching, trust your training, trust the things that you've done at practice all week. They did that, and I thought played really well.

Q. Defense allowed 24 yards on 24 plays in the first half, eight tackles for loss. Just talk about that, how important that was to start off the game for the defense that way?

MIKE NORVELL: It was huge. I thought the defense played at a really high level. I love the plan that Coach Fuller came in with. The guys attacked and were able to make a lot of impactful plays early.

That's what you want to see. Really the only points we gave up was after the fumble, where they didn't get a first down and we were still able to hold them to a field goal.

I like seeing that potential from our defense, like I said, in the second half there was a few things that showed up that we got to clean up and continue to get better at. I know those guys will do it, but all in all, I thought they did a really nice job.

Q. Coach, obviously you got Fabien Lovett back today. I'm sure you had him on a little bit of a pitch count. What did you see from him today, and how much does he impact that defensive line?

MIKE NORVELL: He's an incredible impact for our team, for our defensive line, for everybody. His size, the ability, the physicality, it's definitely felt. I thought that having those guys up front did a great job of stopping the running game, forcing them to be more one-dimensional, allowed

us to kind of tee off there in some situations.

And just Fabien for who he is, the way he works, the way he shows up and impacts this football team. Whether he was playing today or last handful of weeks where he wasn't available, he still was always there making investments. There's a joy to see him out there making plays and did a really good job for us.

So I'm glad to have him back. He was limited today, but as each week goes by, he'll be able to gain more and more.

Q. I know you said that C.J. Campbell was ahead of schedule, this far ahead of schedule maybe we didn't expect. How cool was that to see?

MIKE NORVELL: It's remarkable. I'm sorry I announced him for being out for the year at the end of fall camp. That's what we thought.

I don't know if I've seen a rehab and just a belief that's gone better than what his did. You saw the reaction when he scored a touchdown. This team, he is a special, special young man, and I loved every second of seeing that, the celebration, and just his joy at practice.

You guys that are out there, you feel it, and it's contagious, and that's what I love about that running back room. That is a group that really pours into each other. They believe in each other, even through adversity. It was an emotional time when C.J. got hurt just because of what all he does.

He was very limited today as well, but it was good to be able to see him get in there at the end and have that touchdown, have some really good runs. You saw Rodney Hill, a young running back that had some great runs, and Rodney has continued to build that confidence.

I'm excited about what I see. The relationships is what makes this team special. This group really does care about each other. They care about who they play for and how they represent Florida State. We're going to continue to push and get better with all that we do. These guys, they embrace that work.

Q. You talked about the turnover that set up GT's first score. I know there's been a few instances of turnovers on the goal line this season. How do you kind of evaluate when to call the trick plays, the jet sweeps, the wildcat, things like that on the goal line? How do you evaluate your goal line play as a whole?

MIKE NORVELL: I don't call those trick plays, though. It's not -- ultimately a speed sweep, it's just something that it was a productive play on the one before. We've been in

wildcat before many times and scored a lot of touchdowns and had good plays. Ultimately, we had a running back started leaving a little early, snap was just a little bit off, it's a combination, and we can't have those things.

It goes to the big picture approach of guys trying to do too much rather than just staying true to what it needs to be. Ultimately, we've got to be better, and we can't make those mistakes at those critical moments. That has cost us at times, but it's also been successful for us.

Q. I think there's a part of the game where you guys converted eight straight third downs. I guess offensively, what are maybe the common themes when you guys are really firing on all cylinders versus maybe when you guys struggle to finish drives and stuff like that?

MIKE NORVELL: I think you saw it today. You go through the self scout, and it's still hella true today. When we get down, if we don't have the self-inflicted penalty, dropped pass, obviously turning the ball over, if we can stay away from that, our guys, they build confidence throughout it.

We were able to put ourselves in good situations. We were able to have good balance. I think we ran the ball well, and really today some of that, the passing game opened up some more seams for the running game there late. That's part of the game.

But we want to be balanced. We've got great playmakers. I'm really proud of the offensive line. And that's a defense that you look over the last three weeks and throughout the course of the season, they've done a good job. I thought our guys really approached the work at a high level, and they were able to come out and do what's necessary to get the win.

Q. How big was it after a month to just, those players to feel a win again, to be in a happy locker room again, to break a rock? What does it mean for this team moving forward? What can it mean?

MIKE NORVELL: It's big. We've had a challenging stretch, and I'm not talking about you look at three games that you lose. I'm talking about seven games to play. We played a really good schedule. We've had good, competitive opportunities. Some's gone well. Some we've come up short because of a variety of different reasons.

You play to go and experience that success. Just like I told our guys, I'm so proud of them to see them do what's necessary. It's great to feel the energy and the excitement. But I also like the fact that they understand what standard we're pushing for. They know that we didn't play our best

game. I can coach them hard even in that moment where you're excited about the success that was just had, but we all have to answer to the fact was that our best?

Now we need to take the steps moving forward. This week that's ahead is huge for us. It's huge for our program. It's a game that you come to Florida State to come and play in. But for us to go and play the best that we can there, we still have to clean a lot of these things up. Our guys embrace that.

Really proud of them. It was great energy in the locker room but also a sense of expectation of where we need to get better, and I respect this team for that.

Q. On a lot of plays, Georgia Tech right before the snap often would shift their defensive front one way or the other. What were they trying to accomplish doing that, and how did you fight that as the game went on?

MIKE NORVELL: They're a multiple defense, and they shift and move, and they did a good job of -- we expected that to show up. We had a few communication things that happened. Ultimately, they're trying to keep a disguise on what they're doing in their front, trying to keep our linemen a little bit more hesitant.

They've done a good job. They've done a good job throughout the season with it. I thought our guys handled it well for the most part. We had some issues that showed up that we've got to get corrected. But you have to give them credit on the things that they do and for us to continue to get better.

Q. Going back to Lawrance Toafili after he had the fumbles, did you guys intentionally want to get the ball back in his hands? What does it say about him to come back and have that play? The other question was getting the young guys in the game, just getting that opportunity for a lot of those young guys, Rodney Hill particularly and some of the other linemen? If you'll indulge me.

MIKE NORVELL: That's really a third question, if I will, so yes (laughter). Now I've got to think back to what the first question was.

L.T. was -- I love that young man. You see his growth as a player. Very disappointed, he was very disappointed in turning the ball over. He's run for such tough -- and you just saw at the very end, as he was going down, that elbow separated, something we harp on a lot. He was as pissed as anybody in the stadium that that happened.

But you show your identity by how you respond.



Immediately getting back in there and making a huge play, right when he comes off the sideline, that's how you respond, man. That's what it's about, to be able to elevate yourself even in times of disappointment. Don't get stuck on the last play and let it affect the next one.

I thought that speaks volumes to who he is and really speaks volumes to this team because that's what they push towards. Every day is not going to go just exactly how you want it to, just like every game. I've never seen a perfect game. When guys can overcome the negative and go make a special play, it's really great to see.

For the young guys, I mean, I think it's big. That experience, there's nothing like getting out on the field and having to go out there and execute against quality people and the different looks that we were facing. I thought that was big.

I was really proud of that young offensive line group there at the end. For those guys to get in there, you saw Jaylen Early, Julian Armella, a lot of those guys up front that maybe haven't got as many reps, Bryson -- I know I missed somebody. But just going through it, it was impressive to see them go out there and establish a drive. I know it was late in the game, but we wanted to see them finish. When those guys took the opportunity, seized the opportunity, it was an impressive drive there at the end. Great opportunities for all those guys.

Rodney, I know I mentioned earlier, but excited about those continued steps. There's still some areas he knows he's growing in, but he's putting forth great work and he's part of a great room that's there helping him and excited about what his future holds.

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