

Florida State University Football Media Conference

Saturday, November 26, 2022

Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Mike Norvell

Press Conference



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MIKE NORVELL: Just to start off, what a game. What a game. That's what this game is supposed to be. Energy, passion, incredible atmosphere. To all our fans, I mean, just wow. It was an unbelievable environment to be a part of a college football game.

To our players, the heart, the effort, the physicality, the toughness. The game was back and forth. We made a lot of mistakes tonight, especially there in the first half. I was just so proud of how our guys responded. We talk about that response all the time. It's something that has to show up.

It's one thing these last four weeks where we've responded really well to success. Tonight we had to respond to adversity. There were some mistakes that we had, some things that we gave up. But guys continued to believe.

I thought the third quarter was remarkable, just seeing the guys, the way that they came out and they fought, executed at a high level. It was such a big part in the game.

Obviously they made their run there at the end. Ultimately we did all the things that were necessary to finish that game one score better. Jordan Travis was remarkable. Wow, just the way that he played, the things that he was able to do, throwing the football. Obviously with his feet.

Offensive line was able to create some seams. Our running backs ran really hard, made plays when we needed to make plays. It wasn't always the cleanest thing when we were throwing and catching, but there at the end we made the plays that we needed.

Just so proud of this football team. Defensively thought they battled. It's a talented offense that we faced. It's one that had a lot of explosiveness. I think the quarterback did a really nice job. We were able to slow it down a little bit

there in the second half.

What a great college football game. To be able to finish tonight 2-0 here in the state, that's big. Those two games, you guys are around this program, you know how important it is. We don't sell it short. It's critical for us to go and play well in these games, to go win these games, to be able to finish up as the state champs.

I'm so proud of our guys. To be able to get our ninth win, that's something that is not ultimately what we wanted. We wanted to win every one of them. But especially with how the things went, just to see our guys never give up, to win the last five.

It's a special group of young men. Some of those guys in that locker room just played their last game at Doak Campbell Stadium. What a memorable way to be able to go out.

A lot of those guys helped build and set the foundation for where we're going. This is just the beginning. It's exciting to watch this team compete. It's exciting to watch them believe. There's a lot of areas we need to continue to improve in. I'm just so excited for what the future holds here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I'm sure it would have been more fun to win by 30 or 40, but how gratifying was it with some of the guys you had in the first quarter on defense, so many guys contribute?

MIKE NORVELL: Our depth got tested. Guys that were very limited even throughout the course of this week in practice, crucial moments were out there because they were what we had.

Games like that, that's where your heart, your character, your identity has to show up. Our guys battled. That's who they are, though. This is not an easy place to come play college football because of the standard that we have. We push. We challenge. We want our guys to go above and beyond in all things so that when those moments show up,



you can go out there and execute and get the job done.

That's where these guys, they've embraced that. They've embraced it throughout the course of the season, throughout the last few years. It was really special.

That game needs to have those type of swings. It's what makes this rivalry a special one. Definitely feels good coming out that one score ahead.

Q. When you talk about response, was that personified by Johnny Wilson, but making the catch, and Jarques McClellion getting called, then...

MIKE NORVELL: That's what it's all about. That's the picture, man. Johnny, probably not one of his best nights, but in the moment of truth, when we absolutely needed it, he rose up. He's been battling. Last week was very limited. He was limited in practice as well. You see when we needed a play, he made a play.

(Indiscernible) was another guy, barely even practiced this week. He was dealing with an issue coming out of last week's game. To be able to respond after the PI penalty, not to hang his head, but continue to play, help finish it there at the end, was huge.

Q. You mentioned Jordan's game, passing. Can you go in-depth how gutsy this was for him?

MIKE NORVELL: He battled. It was everything. There were times that he had to extend plays. Some of the things that he did out there on that football field were just truly special. To be able to take a negative and make it into a positive, I mean, I thought he located the ball really well throughout the course of the night.

You just see his leadership, you see his confidence. There's nothing that's moving too fast for him. He's able to control himself and go out there and play at an elite level.

He broke the rock tonight. A lot of guys that did some great things, but he was special.

Q. You talked about how important this win was. As a program for the three years you've been here, how big has this season been for you?

MIKE NORVELL: It's about that continued growth. We want to show it's a football team and a football program that's building, that's obviously going in the right direction. I don't know how many people at the beginning of the year, what their thoughts of this team was. I knew who I had in that locker room. I knew the heart, I knew the work. I watched them throughout the off-season.

Being able to help them understand what they can do and what they can accomplish, these experiences are just going to set us up for our future and where we're going.

But it was big. We needed to see those positive steps. Those players in that locker room, they are confident. They're confident because of the work that they've invested and also the experiences that they've had.

It was big for the program to get back to where we're now in the national conversation, to be able to be ranked, to be able to play well, put together consistent weeks of playing at a high level. Even in challenging moments where maybe you are not playing your best throughout the course of a game, you're able to overcome that because of the response.

It's a 365-day process. We are all in on that. A lot of areas we're going to have to continue to get better. I'm so excited about bowl season, an opportunity to get back on the practice field to help some of these young players we have to continue to grow with some of the older players, have them continue to grow.

The future's bright here. It's because of the commitment that these young men are making. Just so proud of 'em.

Q. The atmosphere from the kickoff was crazy good. At the end of the game the fans storming the field, how big was that?

MIKE NORVELL: I didn't actually see them coming down, I just felt them all there (smiling). It was pretty wild.

No, we got an incredible fan base. I love it. It's such a special place to play college football, to coach college football. It's about the people. It truly is. Who we represent, what we stand for, that's what makes Florida State special.

People can say that wherever, but until you're here, until you get to live in it, be around it, man, it's remarkable. When you feel that energy...

Yes, today the atmosphere was unreal. You feel the energy every single day when you're in town just around this place. Grateful for the opportunity. It was definitely a celebration that was well-deserved, celebration that was needed.

I'm happy for our fan base that they got a chance to experience that, just some of the steps we've taken this year.

Q. After halftime, what was the message to the defense?

MIKE NORVELL: Coming out early, no matter how much you try to coach it and to emphasize it, we were emotional coming into this game. There was a lot of excitement. Everybody wants to do well. There's not one player that desires to make a mistake. But we had some mistakes that showed up early. One was communication, just alignment. With all the right intentions, but not being able to maintain that focus in that moment.

That's where we just got them into halftime, call them up before every halftime, for as many mistakes as were made in the first half, take a deep breath. We're down three, let's go play our ball. I thought Adam and the defensive staff did a good job of changing up a handful of looks, keep their offense off balance.

It was just a well-executed game, and the players did it. They went out, were able to calm down, went out and played at a high level coming out of halftime.

Q. Trey Benson, huge game. How big was he down the stretch?

MIKE NORVELL: He's been wonderful. You see the confidence. You see the toughness. He's such an explosive back. He just battles. With each carry that he gets, he's coming into his own.

When you get to know the young man, I mean, he's just one you want to root for, too. That running back room, Treshaun Ward, Rodney Hill, C.J., all those guys, it's one of the closest rooms that we have. Just the way they support each other, the way they encourage each other.

To see Trey going out there and having the success he's having, it's what we expected when he came here. It's so rewarding to see the path of the journey that he's had to take, to see him have that type of success.

Q. You mentioned getting this program back to a bowl game. How important is that for this team, for the growth?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, no, it means everything 'cause it's about continued development. When you have those practices, when you have another spotlight and a stage to be able to go and compete, it's big.

We get to go compete to try to get our 10th win. That's very important for us. These guys, you take them one at a time. But we can talk about it now because we've done the things necessary. We got one more step. We'll give them

a couple days off here this weekend, but we're going to be back on the practice field this next week. That's part of it.

I can promise you, you know those guys in there, they're going to embrace that because that's what they've done. Whether we've had a good game or a bad game, they've embraced the work.

Everybody talks about it, but it's another thing to show up and do it. This team, I mean, they're willing to push. I'm excited to get to compete with them one more time for this season and this team.

Q. So much of this season has been about watching this team grow. There's been opportunities for the coaching staff to grow. What about coaching this team has made you and the coaching staff better at their jobs?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, we have the same expectations of ourselves that we have of the players. It is the growth. It is making sure that everything we're asking them to do, times of making ourselves uncomfortable, right, trying to do the right things and put our guys in the right situations, to take the accountability of sometimes things we do well and things we don't do so well.

Being able to have that ownership and be honest with your players, to be able to develop trust. I said the very first day that I got here, I told the players I'm never going to ask them to trust me, all right? All I ask for is an opportunity to prove that I'm trustworthy.

You have to do that through actions. They have to see it. It can't be one day here, the next day there. You have to be able to go through that process with them.

I think as a coaching staff, we continue to understand the identity of this team, try to put them in the best position to be successful. Even with some good plays, good games, some bad plays, bad games that we've had, you see an offense, defense and special teams that are among the best in the country.

I'm really proud of the coaching staff and the work that they've done. It all goes to the players for their belief in that throughout the journey.

Q. (Question about the response from the team.)

MIKE NORVELL: One of the things we talked about in our last team meeting before we came to the stadium. The response, that defines who you are. It's not always going to go -- I can't tell them exactly what this is going to look like, but there will be a moment where you got to rise up.



It's been that way through success, but it's shown up tonight in some disappointing plays where we had to just continue to believe and go back to the communication, go back to the fundamentals, go out there and play the way we're capable of.

For it to come down to one drive, one possession, it's pretty special for this game, but it's also special for the players 'cause they can. It's a wonderful group. Just that response is critical.

Q. What was the like seeing their faces in the locker room? What kind of response have you been getting from recruits over the last month?

MIKE NORVELL: Those are the guys, why you do it. When you see the joy, when you see the excitement... I know the work. I know the investment, the challenges. There's times I've been hard on these guys. There's probably times they don't understand the why, but they see it then. They see what they can do, what they can overcome, then you see the joy that they get to express.

It's not just about the individual. We got great individual players here, right? It's who they get to do it with. That's what makes the journey worth it.

I'm just honored to be a part of this group. I'm honored to be able to give everything that I have for them to have that type of success. It's really special.

When it comes to recruiting, it's remarkable. Tonight we had a great group of young men that can really be special difference makers for this program. A lot of them are committed, some we'll continue to work on.

As we sit there and go through it, it's still about finding the best fit for Florida State. We've stayed true to that since I've got here. You see how that's carried over to where you have a football team that plays together. Great talent, great ability, but it's also great heart.

They care about who they represent. They care about this university. We're going to continue to work to build that by bringing in the next right fit to be a part of this family as we're moving forward.

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