

Transcript

Sunday, August 8, 2021

Mike Norvell



THE MODERATOR: Football kickoff. Today we have the Atlantic Division. And this morning we will get started with Florida State. We will introduce head coach Mike Norvell to the podium. To start us off here on day number two, a little bit different of an opening. We will have Coach offer an opening statement.

COACH NORVELL: Well, good morning, everyone. Just wanted to start off and, you know, our thoughts and prayers are with Coach Bowden, Ms. Ann. The news came out yesterday about the condition with Coach Bowden. And I just wanted to reference, you know, his words. As he's at home, as he's resting, he talked about being at peace. And I think that even speaks to the legacy of who he is and what he's all about. Because that's what life is about. To be able to go through a journey and to be in a challenging place and a challenging moment and be able to be at peace because of the impact that he's made, because of the man that he is, the coach that forever changed a university and a place, but just a tremendous example. I'm so grateful for the opportunity and the relationship that I have and have been able to form with Coach Bowden and just for who he is and the impact that he's made. And to Coach Bowden, we love you. We thank you. And as he's resting there at home, I mean, just to know that we're thinking about you and just so grateful for the impact that you've made, that you continue to make by who you are and, you know, just wanted to open up with that from all of the Seminole family. To Coach Bowden and Ms. Ann and the entire family, we're thinking about you. We love you.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. Folks, as we have done yesterday and we will continue to do today, we have microphones that are roving throughout the room. If you would, please identify yourselves and the agency that you are with. Coach may or may not know you. But we can say that with the bright lights up at the top, it can be a little bit hard to recognize you because the room is fairly dark from up there. So our microphones are set. We will move to our front row here. Coach, to your left, right at the edge, for our first question of the morning.

Q. Coach, your first year at Florida State, a pandemic year. Just what you can say about navigating through that first year and what you can really take from it because it was such a unique year and, at the same

time, you were trying to, obviously, establish some culture there for yourself?

COACH NORVELL: Absolutely. I think unique is an understatement to the year that we just experienced. But, you know, I'm grateful for this year. And, you know, people can easily point to the challenges of what we experienced and the things that we had to go through. But, you know, I'm grateful to be able to have been a part of it with this team, with the guys that I get to coach. And, you know, as we come in and -- you know, there's been a lot of change at Florida State over the last few years. And to be able to be with, you know, my players and with our coaches. It provided an opportunity through each challenge to be an example of how you respond. And that was something that we talked about throughout the course of this last year, something that we still talk about today is -- is how you respond to all those situations. There were moments in this last year that we saw great highs. We had a big win, a top five win. And then there were moments of great lows. There were things that we had to adapt, adjust. But, you know, we were able to do it together. And I believe that's really helped set the foundation of -- and build the trust throughout our team of who we are, what we're going to -- what we're aspiring to do and where we're aspiring to go. And so I'm grateful for the challenges that we've got to experience, and I'm grateful for the relationships that have been built through those challenges and what that really sets us up to do here moving forward. But we're extremely excited about the year that's ahead, excited about the personnel that we have, the guys that we get to coach and the opportunity that's in front of us to help get Florida State back to where it deserves to be.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, to your right. About the fifth row.

Q. Thanks for taking some time this morning. Talk about the two quarterbacks, Milton and Travis. You know, what do they bring to the table for, you know, the offense?

COACH NORVELL: You know, they're two incredible players but also incredible young men. And who they are on the field, I mean, they're playmakers. And I think you've seen that throughout the course of their careers. You know, Jordan this past season did some remarkable things through some -- through some extreme challenges, you



know, dealing with injuries, missed time, you know, continuing to -- to grow and respond throughout that year. And, you know, with McKenzie and his story, I mean, just somebody that I have great familiarity with, you know, having to compete against him but now, you know, getting a chance to coach him day in and day out. They're two young men that -- they bring it every day. The appreciation for the opportunity, the appreciation for what it takes in the process to grow and develop. But then also an appreciation for who they get to do it with. There's a lot of guys that go through college football with just a sole focus on themselves. Those two young men, they care about who they get to -- to be with and who they get to represent on their journey. And, you know, they're a joy to coach every single day. And, you know, to see them compete with each other -- you know, the quarterback position is unique. And those guys are both battling, you know, bringing out the best of themselves and bringing out the best of each other in how they -- in how they grow and how they develop and what they do, you know, on the field, off the field, in the weight room, you know, on the practice field and really tremendous leaders for our program.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, to your left, third row, right in the middle.

Q. Good morning, Coach. Florida State -- school of Peter Boulware, Reinard Wilson, and some of the all-time great pass rushers in the ACC -- had barely one sack a game last year. Would you talk about the impact of Jermaine Johnson on your pass rush and getting the heat on the quarterback in traditional Seminole style?

COACH NORVELL: That was something that was a big focus for our staff, you know, as we were going into this year. We know that we need to -- we need to have that impact, you know, there on our defensive front. And Jermaine is a young man that has shown the ability to do that at a very high level throughout the course of his collegiate career and an opportunity to come to Florida State and to be a guy that, you know, can truly help be a face of the defense. And, you know, the embrace that he's had, you know, much like we just talked about with the quarterbacks, you know. It's easy to point to the opportunity that he's looking for. But the thing that's been most impressive to me is from day one, you know, he is -- he has really poured into those guys on that defensive front, talking about the expectation, talking about the challenge, talking about the investment in being able to make an impact in everything they do from the practice field to the weight room. Because, you know, that has to be a strength for us. It is -- you know, when you look through the years of our program and the great history that we have, that has always been a staple. And it needs to --

it needs to return to that. And I think Jermaine is a guy, the sky is the limit for what he can accomplish. You know, people, you know, look through his career, you know, there at his last institution, and you saw the pass rush ability. You saw the impact that he could make. The thing that I've been most pleased with is his commitment in the run game and how hard he's practiced and the physicality that he's shown. You know, he's truly looking to be the complete player and helping bring guys around him that are going to help elevate that, like Keir Thomas, like Fabian Lovett, like guys on the defensive front that have great talent and have an opportunity to get us back to where we need to be.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, to your right. The only way I know how to describe it is the phone on the monopod to the far right.

Q. Hey, Coach Norvell. Going into your -- going into your second year, how important is it to get, you know, full spring practice, summer camp, fall camp? How important is that for, you know, your team and yourself?

COACH NORVELL: You know, it's been great to kind of get into that rhythm and the daily expectation of what's -- of what's to come. You know, this summer was -- was really just a joy to be a part of, to see our guys going through that eight-week program and, you know, getting that time with Coach Storms, our director of strength and conditioning. You know, the work that they're putting in together, you know, it's -- it's something that's necessary because it's each of those experiences, the opportunity to invest the work, you know, that's how you build the continuity. That's how you build the relationships. You know, we've got -- we've got a handful of transfers and freshmen that have come in to join this program that, you know, they're building their way and they're -- you know, being able to invest and go through the challenges of the workouts, go through the spring practice and, you know, really put on display their identity and the impact that they're going to be able to make within our program. And so, you know, I'm grateful for the spring and all that we were able to accomplish, you know, leading that into summer and really excited about fall camp that's ahead.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, your last two questions are going to come from the front row to your left. We're going to go back to Dan first.

Q. Coach, to go back to McKenzie. Going up against him in the American, just what you can say about what really fit in that conversation that you had with McKenzie to bring him into Florida State and why it worked for you and why you feel like it's going to ultimately work for him potentially?

COACH NORVELL: Well, you know, McKenzie is the ultimate competitor. And we had some of the greatest games I think in college football history, you know, going against each other. And just seeing the way that he would respond. You know, getting to see the impact that he made not only, you know, on the field with his physical ability but also, you know, making guys around him better. And, you know, the person that he is is what -- what truly makes him special and, you know, kind of how he helped change a culture there at a place and the success that followed that. And, you know, when McKenzie and I got a chance to connect and talk about this opportunity, I mean, that's -- that's what I promised him. I promised an opportunity to come and compete. Right? That's -- that's what he was looking for. And that's what we were looking for is somebody that could come in -- you know, the leadership that he provides, the -- the way that he embraces that process. You know, I think it makes everybody around him better. And, you know, last year, we were the youngest -- the youngest football team in all of college football. And to be able to get -- to bring in guys like McKenzie, like Jermaine, like Keir, you know, that have come in and played a tremendous amount of football and have had that success, but also the way that they embrace the process of growth and preparation. You know, I think it's really provided a great example for our young guys and what they can expect and what they can do there in that locker room when coaches aren't around. And so, you know, we're all excited about that opportunity. And, you know, I definitely believe McKenzie is going to make the most of it each and every day.

THE MODERATOR: Staying on that front row but a little bit further to your left.

Q. Coach, just want to get your thoughts on the opportunities via NIL and some of the things you emphasize to your players in talks about their approach to these opportunities?

COACH NORVELL: I'm grateful that these guys have an opportunity now to benefit off their name, image, and likeness. We've tried to be very proactive at Florida State with our Apex program. We were -- we were on the forefront of that and pushing that program, helping provide the education for our student athletes. I'm grateful for the state of Florida and the proactive approach that we've had as a state in being able to push this and really change the entire dynamic of college sports. And, you know, for these guys, they are now -- you know, they are now their own business. And, you know, building that brand and understanding what they want that to represent, you know, beyond just the collegiate, you know, opportunity that they have. But, you know, being able to -- to manage and make

the decisions of where they want to invest that time, you know, what they're looking to do that might benefit in a short term but also the things that they're still continuing to invest for what they want to do in the long term as college football players, as student athletes, as the men that they're growing and developing to be. So, for us, it's all about the educational aspect of it. And, you know, I'm excited about the opportunities that have been provided for our guys, some of the things that they're already getting to benefit from here in a short period of time. But, you know, I think it's exceptional for them. And, you know, it's exciting for what the future holds.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, we thank you. We'll switch places now with Jermaine, so you can have a seat.

COACH NORVELL: Thank you guys.

THE MODERATOR: And we'll bring Jermaine Johnson up to the podium.