

# University of Kentucky Football Media Conference

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## Mark Stoops

### Press Conference



MARK STOOPS: Very difficult way to lose a football game. It's been a crazy year, and this season is going to be different. It's going to be difficult playing a ten-game SEC schedule, and games are going to be close.

We have to make those plays in critical moments to win us football games. I was proud of the way -- the game was a struggle. We knew it was going to be. We went through some patches where we overcame some adversity, got the game into overtime, and then to lose it that way is difficult.

As I mentioned, it's just we have to find ways to execute better in critical moments. We did that for a large portion of the night. Any time you rush the ball for 400 yards, you usually feel pretty good that you're going to have a good opportunity to win. This offense was extremely explosive, extremely fast. They get you off kilter. This week and next week's going to be like that where it's a different style of offense.

You have to get stops in critical moments. We did not play very good defense tonight. That's on us. We have to get them in position and play better. Offensively, I thought we did some good things at times, certainly controlled the game and ran the ball very well.

Terry was efficient, 14 of 18. But we just -- we've got to make plays in critical moments and play better as a team to get these victories.

**Q. Mark, where do you go with the kicking situation from here? Obviously, PATs have been an issue the last two years. Just kind of where things are at with that.**

MARK STOOPS: Yeah, we'll continue to work both guys. We'll continue to work Matt. We'll work Chance. If we feel like Chance gives us a better opportunity, then we'll go with him.

**Q. Mark, could you talk about what impact it has when A.J. makes a mental mistake and then a physical mistake so early like that in the game, you go ahead**

**and go back to him. What does that kind of say? Does that send a bad message when you've got a guy like that that does that?**

MARK STOOPS: Yeah, it definitely doesn't help. We've been a very unselfish football team through the years, and that's a mistake that you can't have. A.J. means well. He's a great young man. I'm not going to give up on him for one mistake. We will certainly point out and show him, and he understands that, that it's not acceptable. That's not how we do things. That's not how we're going to do it.

Fortunately, we got the ball back in great field position and went back and scored, but it definitely has an impact. It's definitely not the right message. It's not okay, but I'm also not going to give up on him for one mistake.

**Q. Mark, especially the second half, was there anything in particular that Ole Miss was doing that was giving you the most trouble?**

MARK STOOPS: They were doing what they wanted to do, to be honest with you. They really had us off balance. They spread you out. They go extremely fast. We've got to play better. We got it to a two touchdown lead, and then from there, we really played poor on defense, and they scored so quick that momentum can shift.

You're going to go through stretches in these games this season, again, with the margin for error is small. You have to do things right, and you definitely knew that going into the game that a team like that could put the foot on the gas and go extremely fast. Again, it will be very similar this next week.

**Q. Hey, Coach, obviously last week Terry had the high number of pass attempts. Coming into tonight, it seems like he had really great rushing. Was that something you guys wanted to bring into the game plan coming in, or was that something that just started working at the end of the game and just wanted to keep with it?**

MARK STOOPS: Yeah, I think just like you said at the second part of the question. It was working. We had to stay ahead of the chains. Certainly, every possession, as



you know, in a game like this, possessing the ball, getting yards and scoring points, they're all important. With the way we were rushing the ball and creating explosive plays in the run game, it gave us the best opportunity, and it certainly added to that when we played such poor defense.

It kind of puts pressure on myself and on the offense to where every possession was so important. Possessing the clock, but also scoring points is important. There comes a time when you get off balance like we were, you have to play as a team. I thought our offense responded several times tonight. Obviously, there's things they could do better, but there were times they responded really well, where they had long drives and gave the defense an opportunity to kind of get over there and do some adjustments and try to get their feet up underneath them and play better.

We just didn't play very good in the second half. We're holding them to 14 in the first half. We felt like we were just ago at this point.

**Q. Mark, you've already said to us that the team that wins the rushing yards is in pretty good shape, and almost all the SEC games over the years. You've done that two weeks in a row in a pretty dominant fashion. Do you feel like this is kind of an anomaly, or is something changing in the dynamics?**

MARK STOOPS: Both. I think both. Certainly, with this style of offense and next week -- next week it won't matter as well. Time of possession won't matter in the -- obviously, you want to possess the ball, but you need to score points, and we need to be explosive.

When we were stopped tonight, if you really look at it, it's hard for me to be exact here right now. A lot of things are running through my head. But there are times we shot ourselves in the foot, whether it be a penalty or one or two drives way backed up.

We came up a half yard short early in the first half. There's more plays and yards out there. It's important, but it's not the end all, be all. We know that. When you're playing Ole Miss who can go as fast as they can and they're so explosive. But they're very balanced. They're a team that they rushed for 139 tonight. That will be low for them. They'll rush for -- they're generally going to be a team that rushes for around 200 and throw for around 300. That's what they've been averaging.

If you look at their coordinator, where he was at UCF, and what they want to do, they put pressure on you in that run game, but they also can throw it and get explosive plays outside.

I think that was still a good recipe for us. You rush for 400 yards, it's going to give us an opportunity to win the game. However, we have to play better defense than that, or you're not going to win. So we had our opportunities and got to make some stops.

**Q. The television cameras at the end of the game showed you chipping back at officials. Was that just an accumulation of officials or something that happened in that instance?**

MARK STOOPS: I just wanted to talk to one of them about a specific play, but no.

**Q. Kelvin's a guy that you guys have obviously had high hopes for, and you still do. It seems like in these first couple seasons he's done a fair amount of chattering and has had some struggles when it comes to the actual plays, especially in the end zone. What have you said to him about that? I know you want corners to be confident and that swagger is part of what makes them good, but just the balance that you're looking for with him.**

MARK STOOPS: You were cutting in and out, but I think I got the gist of your question. He, like a lot of our players, we need to play better and more consistent. I thought he did good things a week ago. Tonight just watching it out there, they were so extremely fast. I know there were some plays that stand out in my mind right now that he needs to do a better job of.

I agree with you as far as that goes, really across our whole team. We don't have time to get into it with chattering. These opponents, especially with teams that go so fast, you've got to focus in on your job and taking care of your business, and I've got to do a better job of coaching our team on that.

**Q. Mark, obviously, 0-2 is not the start you wanted. How do you feel about the leadership on this team? Do you feel like you've got good leaders that can pick guys up and get them ready for next week?**

MARK STOOPS: I do, John. I said just that in the locker room. I expect our leaders to step up. We knew it was going to be a challenge. Our players knew it was going to be a challenge. It's going to be a challenging year. I'm going to lean on them, and we have to get back at it and get to work on Monday.

We play at home next week again. It will be good to be back home, and it will be another challenge, as it will each and every week. But that's also what makes it exciting.

Every week is a big game, and you really, truly got to look at it -- and I also told the team this. If it went the other way, and we're in there celebrating and dancing and having a good time and everything, you've still got to go right back to work on Monday.

It's going to be a long, challenging year, and you'd better have your feet up underneath you and be focused and come to work each and every week. We'll get our team back and get them ready to play again next week.

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