

University of Florida Football

Media Conference

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Mark Hocke

Press Conference



MARK HOCKE: How extensive and how good of a job ya'll do being journalists and covering us. So we really appreciate the work that you do.

We really believe that the guys work really hard and they're going to have a story that needs to be shared and that's where y'all fit into the puzzle, so we appreciate y'all helping share their story.

Also want to recognize the strength staff. So much has improved since we've gotten here, and I think it has a lot to do not only with the players hard work, but the strength staff members. So obviously this is a game of speed, and we're always trying to create more efficient movers. So I think of Tiger Jones and Ed Thompson. They're kind of our speed development guys offensively and defensively, done a really good job. The guys have done a good job buying into what they have been coaching fundamental-wise and just the hard work.

I think of Karmichael Dunbar. He does the majority of the training with the bigs. It's no secret, if you want to have success in the SEC, it starts up front. You got to run the ball and stop the run, and I think Coach Dunbar's done a really good job of training and developing the guys in the trenches.

And then I just think about the relationship aspect, how important that is. I think Alex Watkins, Frank Ogas have done a tremendous job creating those tight-knit bonds that's going to get that player buy-in you need in order to push the gas pedal and get them to work hard and get 'em to work consistently.

I think it's been a productive seven months really since we got here and really a productive summer. We call that phase of training the regimen. For me personally it's been great to see the overall transformation of the entire team from that first team meeting until the last team meeting, this past regimen, during the summer.

I think it all starts with believing, right? Belief is so important and we believe that belief is developed through

preparation. Coach Napier is a firm believer in the work, right? And that's why I love him and I think that's why his process works. The work is what we believe in. You can't train gladiators pillow fighting. That's why the relationship with Joe Danos, our director of athletic development, so strong. It's been my experience that sometimes guys in that sector want to hold back the work or water down the work. And that's why I love Joe Danos. I think he does a good job of knowing when to pull back and when to push even harder. So I appreciate him for that.

This whole process has been about changing how they think. Think about it for yourself. The way we think determines our entire day. So asking yourself, the way I'm thinking right now, is this going to benefit my job, benefit my many roles. And if it's not, then it's about changing the way you think to benefit your day and benefit your roles.

And then obviously for the guys if they're thinking right, they're going to train right. And if they're going to train right, the right results are going to come. It's about thinking the right way so you can have the right habits and ultimately the right results. At the end of the day it really comes down to one's example. Every player can ask themselves, you can ask yourself, is my example worth following? I've been really impressed with the leadership on this group. You met with some of 'em. At the end of the day, little brother's going to do what big brother does, right?

And it's about educating big brother and, really, educating 'em all so that they have a good example to follow and really how they communicate with one another. I think that's been really impressive over the summer, just seeing them encourage more, encourage each other more, and then also confront things that might not be in place.

So I've been really impressed with the direction they're giving one another and their encouragement they give one another. At the end of the day growth comes at the point of resistance, skills come from struggle. That's the purpose of what we do. That's the purpose of training. So we'll have written down: So what? Now what?

And that brings us to fall camp. We're prepared to wipe the slate clean and now attack each day like a new day.

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Excited to watch all these guys compete for jobs. Got a quote: It's not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive, but those who can best manage change.

You've got to love the challenge, and you got to love the work, and that's what this is all about. I think at the end of the day winners persist. I'll open it up for questions.

Q. Can you tell me about these curves I think that guys ran during the spring? I know they had done stadium runs here before. I don't know if that was an augmentation to that or if that was a new thing that O'Cyrus and Montrell knew was coming that maybe the guys who didn't?

MARK HOCKE: So curves is part of our identity phase, the off-season program in the winter or right before spring ball, and it's really just much like curves on a track, if you've ever been to a track. And it is definitely part of the conditioning that really will test the players mentally and physically, and it will expose the guys who aren't living right or training right.

Q. Real broad question, but what should people expect to see from this team just physically this year on the field?

MARK HOCKE: That's a great question. Football is a violent sport. It is a lethal sport. And if you aren't physical and you aren't known for being physical, you're not going to get the results you want. So that's something that we're going to be working on on a daily basis and we have been working on since day one.

What I've seen so far in spring, these guys are about it. They're not afraid to buckle up, and they're not afraid to thud, so I'm hoping that we see even greater transformation going into fall camp. Obviously we hadn't strapped up, yet but that's got to be one of the main pillars if we're going to have success in the SEC.

Q. You were there early on with Coach Saban at Alabama and saw his plan firsthand and how he goes about it, the blueprint, so to speak, that he's known for. What similarities do you see with some of the things Billy's doing here with that?

MARK HOCKE: Yeah, that's a great question. Obviously we are a collection -- or our experience and I think that's where Coach Napier really benefits from time with Coach Saban. I can even say for myself I've learned a tremendous amount from him.

I think Coach Napier is extremely diligent, right? When you look at the journey we take the guys on, every second,

every day is planned out, everything's quality controlled, so we're going to continue to improve upon that journey no matter what it looks like.

Q. You talked about the players in terms of those who can best manage change and you've been around them the most over the last few months. So how have you seen the team sort of manage that change. Gervon talked about the different disciplinary things that Billy Napier's brought in. How have you seen the team sort of adapt?

MARK HOCKE: Yeah. I would say much like life, it's a daily battle and a daily challenge that we all face in our own journey, but as a team, I've been really proud of how they have come together in just a short period of time, seven months of training.

I've seen them maybe react to some of the those things quicker or better than maybe when we first got here. I think there's a little bit more buy-in. But it's still, it's a one-day-at-a-time battle, right? Like, they're going to come in really excited about camp, but it's about being able to maintain it and work consistently at that high level.

Q. How important are those little things? Gervon mentioned the socks. You have to have the same socks when you're walking around. How important are those little things to the team?

MARK HOCKE: Yeah, I mean, it kind of goes back to that saying, how you do anything is how you do everything, right? So I think Coach Napier has some of those little things installed to force the player to kind of think, Am I going to do it the team's way or am I going to do it my way? And really that's how it comes down to. You got to get out of yourself, into the team, and be coachable and do what's being asked of you.

Q. You can't get a player up on the podium without them mentioning the change in discipline. How do you define discipline in your shop? Was that an example of what you just gave there?

MARK HOCKE: Sure. So probably we could talk discipline for an hour, but I'm going to spare you. I think the best quote that I have on discipline is Mike Tyson said it. You got to do things you hate to do like you love doing it.

And I think that's what we do in the weight room. They come here to play football. They don't always come here to do the conditioning, running, the sprints, the heavy lifting, waking up really early. They don't have a problem waking up and playing in front of 90,000 on Saturday night,

but what about at 6 a.m. on Monday morning after the weekend, that's a little bit different waking up for that. But it's doing what you don't necessarily love to do like you love it. And that's what I can say about this team. They're learning to love it and the second you learn to love the hard work is the second you got a chance to separate because at the end of the day, you can't play in the SEC unless you've been blessed ability-wise.

But if you can get a group of guys that love the hard work too and are all great examples for each other in that locker room, that's when you're cooking with hot grease.

Q. Football's an injury sport and often injuries are unavoidable. What's your philosophy as far as injury prevention and what have you guys done in terms of the stretching and that sort of thing?

MARK HOCKE: That's a great question. So we kind of believe that we should be doing one of two things in everything we do, and that's either developing the guys, right, so making more efficient movers or stronger or more powerful, or preventing injury. So we actually have a DARI system that we started implementing, which is a camera approach, and it's objective analysis of their movement, and we do that twice a year and based on that we can kind of create an individualized development plan.

So we have a blueprint on how we're going to train the guys, and I'll tell everybody, I don't see a weight room, I see a football field, so we're trying to develop you to be the best at the position you play, and we have a position coach in the weight room that works hand in hand with your position coach on the field.

But we also do that movement assessment twice a year because that's going to be unique to your movement patterns. And then based on your unique movement patterns, we can put together an individualized approach that kind of benefits you. Maybe you're stiffer in the ankles or the hips and maybe we can catch and be proactive and catch an injury before it happens.

Now, we all know football's a violent sport and it's part of the sport that you're going to have injuries in here or there, but for the most part we want to prevent as many as we can.

Q. You had mentioned Tiger Jones. Amari Cooper sent a video message to an unnamed recruit basically saying that he should come to Florida because of Tiger Jones. How instrumental has he been to this team's development this off-season, especially when it comes to speed?

MARK HOCKE: Amari Cooper is great. We actually coached him together there. He's obviously still doing it at a really high level.

So that's where I first met Tiger too is when he was at Alabama and then obviously working together now. He was with us at Texas A & M and UL, the last spot. But Tiger does a great job, first and foremost, of developing that relationship. He's a guy that's been in their shoes, been in their cleats, done it at a high level.

And then when we talk about skill development, he played receiver on the college level. He played receiver professionally. So he knows what these guys are going through and he does a good job. It's nothing out of the norm for him to throw on them cleats and show what he's looking for.

Q. Which players do you feel like have made the biggest strides from when you first met them to where they might be right now?

MARK HOCKE: I kind of look at it holistically. Just from a team standpoint, and I want to reemphasize this, I can vividly remember the first meeting we had with the team. I believe it was like the first week or second week of January when Coach Napier addressed the entire team to where we are today. I think holistically we've come such a long way and we're starting to see what a team looks like.

Now, with that being said, there's a lot of work left to be done and some can say that fall camp in itself is some of the most challenging days. So we're going to have to buckle up and do it one day at a time. But holistically we're starting to see what a team looks like.

Q. Are there any individuals physically with weight changes or how they have improved physically that stand out to you from these last couple months?

MARK HOCKE: Yeah. I guess I could start with the first guy y'all met with, Gervon. He's been really excited. I think he's done a tremendous job working with our nutrition staff. Kelsee Gomes does a Grade-A job. And Gervon did a great job of committing to the plan that they put in place, and then working really hard with Coach Dunbar, and really everybody in the building too. I think he's in a position to have the best season he's had yet and he's confident and excited and he's earned it. He's done the hard work.

Q. I want to go back to regimen. Coaches said that that's basically designed to prepare the players for training camp. What do some of those workouts entail and how do you feel like the guys responded to some of those difficult workouts?

MARK HOCKE: Yeah. Sure. I think every phase kind of segues into the next phase, if that makes sense. So naturally where a regimen falls, it segues into fall camp. So I think the biggest thing is, obviously, like I mentioned before, making 'em more efficient movers. We want to make 'em faster, not only just straight line, but multidirectional, especially at the position that they play. So giving them a taste of that.

Also, it's no secret the humidity that you face in the summer. So them getting a taste of that is going to prepare them for the humidity that they will practice in during the August.

And then just the overall fundamental and skill development that they get introduced during the summer also helps prepare for the on-field training that practice presents.

Q. Within the regimen, you guys also have the players split into teams. There's captains that are selected and you guys even have these standings that you put out every week. Just what does that do to create ownership and create competition to where those guys feel a sense of pride when they're going through these workouts?

MARK HOCKE: Yeah. It's a great point. I think all these guys to their very core are competitors. So I think that's just another thing that you can add into your potion or your blueprint, if you will, to even up the ante a little bit as far as competition's concerned.

Also, there's a bunch of other benefits to it, just player engagement crossover. So there's some buy-ins. Guys get to draft guys based on who they think are disciplined, who they think are accountable. That kind of sets the record straight to where if we're telling a player, hey, we can't count on you. No, this is coming from your own teammates, right, because you got drafted first or you got drafted last.

And you can't fool them. All the players are smart as the coaches, so I think that kind of sets the record straight at the beginning of the draft. And then there's a lot of crossover as far as you got different positions kind of working together with different positions. Instead of just O-line with O-line or just defense with defense, there's some crossover.

And then you kind of create some leadership opportunities for some of those guys that do draft their team, and then force them, just like in life you're going to have to work together in small groups to kind of accomplish a goal. So it

kind of, it brings that to light as well.

Q. You mentioned you being a new comer and all. How is that culture in that weight room? How is your energy with those players?

MARK HOCKE: Me personally or them?

Q. You personally.

MARK HOCKE: Yeah. It's a good question. Like I kind of hinted at earlier, I think what we ask of them isn't normal, and I think we ask a lot of them as far as the intensity of the work and then the consistency that we wanted. So I think we just try and have kind of an upbeat or intense or exciting atmosphere. And obviously there's rules and we're going to confront them whenever rules aren't being followed.

But I think you can work hard and still enjoy it, and that's kind of our saying. We love it. So I want to create that kind of atmosphere to where they're not dreading, not only coming into work, but dreading the people that they're going to be around, if that makes sense. So if we can get 'em to fall in love with the hard work, like I said earlier, you can separate. So that's kind of the environment.

Q. Having been at Alabama, Georgia, A & M, three juggernauts, how close is the weight room that you're going to inherit soon to being what you need to have to get done what you want to get done?

MARK HOCKE: Sure. Yeah. At that point, I think you're losing any and every excuse because, not just the weight room, that whole building is going to be really impressive head to toe.

I think Coach Napier's said it before, that that's going to get us in the ballpark or conversations to where that can be the premier facility in college football. And at the end of the day, if you want to be the best, that's what your resources need to be too.

So really excited. I think the players are really excited to move into that here soon. I've always kind of felt like, man, I just need any kind of weights, mud, sticks, bricks. We're going to find a way to get it done. But when you have a place like that, how can you have a bad day, right? Show up and do this every day, every day's a good day.

Q. Does the strength and conditioning coach, does he get a cot there? Is your office going to literally be like 20-hours-a-day-type place?

MARK HOCKE: Yeah. I was actually joking with my wife



because that's kind of camp. That's what it is for you. You're going to be here early in the morning until late, late at night, and I think it is a practice by many coaches, not just here, but around the world, that during camp, there might be some blowup beds or cots or you might just make your floor a bed some nights.

But yeah, if that's what needs to happen, that might need to happen.

Q. Is the ring on the right index finger significant of anything?

MARK HOCKE: Yeah. It's just an Oura Ring. So it's something that, I don't know if it got released yet, but it's just another measure that we're using and just wanted to be a good example to the guys that are wearing it on the team. All it does is it's another piece that our performance team, Coach Danos and Coach Ogas presented to the team. And basically it measures your sleep quality, so how long, how you been sleeping, what your efficiency of the sleep, and really it just helps create an awareness.

They say the best growth hormone is God's given growth hormone and that's sleep. So you always have athletes and people who say, What supplement can I take, hey, what protein should I take, all this.

And it's like, well, have you gotten eight hours of sleep? Let's start there. And then we've talked about how hard they're going to work. Sleep's going to be really important to recover so you can wake up the next day and push the gas again.

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