

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Billy Napier

Press Conference



BILLY NAPIER: Before we get going here, I just want to thank our student body for their support. Sold out the season tickets for the students. Without question, I think if you talk to opponents, our student section is a factor, and they can impact the game, and we're certainly excited about what they're going to bring, the energy, and how they can influence the game to certainly help our team.

Today is day 1 of a 22-day training camp. School starts a little later for us, so this is going to be 22 days of work. It's our sixth phase.

We've got a lot of momentum. Been very impressed with the progress that we made from the summer. Coach Hocke and his staff continue to do a really good job, and there's a lot of people that contribute to the development of our team in the summer.

When you start talking about Paul and Toney and his staff and Kelsee, her staff, Joe Danos and his crew, to go along with Mark, that whole performance team and their working relationship I think is a big piece of the puzzle.

We individualize our development plans for the players, and we've seen strides there. I think we've made a ton of progress in the testing component, the strength level, speed improvement, the body composition numbers. Really good things there.

I think we grew. Our culture grew. I think our rookies were kind of introduced. This is the first time we've done this with the veteran players, but I think togetherness, the chemistry, the morale, and overall the level of discipline improved the accountability. Our future leaders program was beneficial for some of those guys.

As we get going here, I think in training camp it's almost as if you've got to stay present, you've got to treat each opportunity throughout training camp as a very competitive event. Whether that's sleep, what you eat, hydration, each lift opportunity, each recovery opportunity, each meeting, each walk-through, each practice. There are lots of opportunities to improve, to put yourself out there, to get

feedback, to make the necessary adjustments.

Each player's best relative to the things that they can control. We're talking about their discipline to execute, their effort, their toughness. We're talking about acquiring knowledge. It's going to be a lot of information put in front of them.

They can improve their fundamentals. They can improve their techniques. Really big focus for me in terms of galvanizing our team and being a great teammate. What do your peers say about you relative to your role on the team?

Our team, like I said, at SEC Media Days is very much a work in progress. We've got a lot of roles that are to be determined. It's going to be highly competitive. I think not only with the starters at some positions, but even within those twos and threes, we have a big chunk of our roster that has very little experience here.

It's a critical time of the year. We want to work really hard, but we're going to work smart. How we execute the plan is the most important part. Everybody is going through training camp. It's going to be our diligence when it comes to the discipline and the detail, taking feedback.

It's one thing to know. It's another thing to do. I think we've got to take the hearing, and we've got to do the doing. You have to have information. You've got to have application.

I think we've got to be really intentional with our actions and really deliberate in terms of how we practice, create intensity as an organization, the urgency, the detail, the focus that's required. This training camp is going to be difficult. It's going to challenge the intangibles of not only the players, but the staff as well.

I really love this time of year. You're really developing the identity of your team. Individual players are developing their identities as competitors. Position groups are taking form, each unit, the six phases of the kicking game here.

We want to develop a tough-minded team. I think we all

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understand what we're getting ready to take on from a challenge standpoint. We want to have a tough-minded team that can handle adversity and overcome obstacles. I think that's one of the things that's critical is that we galvanize the team and we prepare to play through and prepare through and practice through the gauntlets in front of us.

We have to build mental toughness during training camp. It's designed difficulty. We've used that term before. We've got to get comfortable with getting uncomfortable and breaking through barriers, and I think training camp presents those opportunities.

First time for us to do training camp here in Florida. Really having high expectations and set the standard. We've got to hold each other accountable. Coaches, players, all the people in the organization doing their best and taking pride in their role. You know, really living life with some integrity here. Taking ownership. We're going to make some mistakes along the way, but making the necessary adjustments here.

I think that our team is excited about this opportunity. We're going to work hard to build a strong foundation here, and overall, this is one of the best times of the year. Really the first opportunity for this entire group to work together at the same time if you really think about it big picture-wise.

What questions do we have?

Q. Billy, what's the most significant change you've seen in this group since your arrival, and what needs do you want to see change these next few weeks or evolve?

BILLY NAPIER: I think we probably know each other a little bit better is what I would say. I think the relationship piece is important.

I think the connection inside the building, that's one of the things we've really focused on. I just think there's a certain loyalty that comes with this game. There's a human element.

When you have a relationship with the people that you are competing with, when you know their story, when you've had in-depth conversations, when you know what to say to motivate, you can push a button. I think it's critical for the leadership on our team going out of your way to connect. To sit down with someone that you don't know. We make everybody learn everybody's name, their hometown. We've got little things that we do. We shuffle the deck in the locker room. We pair them -- their roommate for training camp will be somebody that they don't really know.

We do all types of things. We're very intentional about the human element of the game. I think there's something to be said about developing loyalty and galvanizing the team.

I think we've made progress in that area, but this group will be the first time we've actually done anything as a whole cell. Hundreds of people contribute. We've got students in equipment, in training room, and video, and every part of our organization. They can be the difference, whether their role is really small or their role is big.

I think that's the big thing here is having an appreciation for everybody's role and what they bring to the table. This will create opportunities for us to continue to improve in that area.

Q. That's a unique answer. Anthony, speaking of one player, you spoke at Media Day about a lot of talk about Anthony Richardson. You see it all the time. I saw he was No. 4 pick in next year's draft. He started one game. How do you go about tempering expectations? How grounded have you seen him with all this buzz going around him?

BILLY NAPIER: That's one of the things I'm learning about University of Florida. We probably get more media coverage. It's like being an NFL team in the Northeast, if that makes sense.

I think part of the job of a player like Anthony and really any player that's had success or any player that maybe has made a few mistakes, maybe didn't perform the way they wanted to, is really not allowing some of this noise to affect your process in terms of how you prepare, your character, your values, your expectations, your standards.

I think when your standards and expectations are much higher than anyone on the outside could have for you, I think that gives you an opportunity. I think Anthony is very aware. That's one of the things I really like about him. I think he has good awareness, good self-awareness that he is an inexperienced player, that he has potential, but also, that he can improve. There's lots to learn.

Getting comfortable with his role as a leader. The importance and value of his example to the other players. I think quarterback in particular, there's a certain level of responsibility that comes with that.

Anthony is focused on the work, and there's certainly a lot of work to do. Improving as a leader, growing and maturing as a person, very much a young person. Increasing his football intelligence, developing his skill. There's just so much more out there for the young man.

Anthony has lots of work to do here. I think he is fully aware that, understands that, comprehends those things, and has worked extremely hard. I think his focus is on the work, and that's exactly where it should be.

Q. (Inaudible) -- just the discipline and how it's improved throughout the offseason, and even with guys and how they wear their socks a certain way. What are some of those little things that you have seen them pick up on, and how does that carry over into camp and make a difference on the field?

BILLY NAPIER: It all matters. I think the key is that you provide structure and routine, that you define expectations for the players.

And there are some detailed things we ask them to do, and they do matter, but the most important part of those little detailed things that we ask them to do is they have to make a decision to do it, if that makes sense.

It's an opportunity to say yes to the expectations and the standards and for everyone to buy into the team concept. Individual players don't make a great team. I think that we have a lot of really good individual players on our roster, but if you are going to have an exceptional team, then there's got to be a certain level of detail and discipline on the roster and a buy-in.

One of the great things about this game, we could take Gervon Dexter and put him as X receiver and take Justin Shorter and put him at right tackle. Crawshaw could play quarterback. Anthony could play outside linebacker. Ventrell can't play running back, right?

This game requires different skill sets. I just think that puzzle, a reality that, hey, look, I'm nothing without the others. Coming to grips with that fact.

The gray area is the enemy. That's what I would tell you. We want to have very structured routine process for our players. I think players develop confidence from that. I think routine and great preparation, that breeds confidence. When I know what to expect, I execute my plan.

I think we have an organization of people that just providing the information and wisdom in terms of how to improve. Any person that's had success in life, discipline is a direct part of that.

I think these things carry over into life after football, too. That's one of the great things about the game of football. These things apply in a lot of different settings. It will be a big part of what we do and certainly a big part of our

success.

Q. Digging in a little bit on the team-building stuff. How often do you shuffle the deck in the locker room to get these guys to know each other? How do they know everybody? How do you get them to learn everybody's hometown, and do you know everybody on the roster's hometown?

BILLY NAPIER: That would be a challenge probably, but I would be pretty good at it. I don't want to take a quiz, by the way.

I think that a couple of times a year we're going to rearrange the locker room, if that makes sense. We did it in the beginning here. I just think interaction -- there's a term called propinquity. I challenge you in the next press conference we have, you can give me the definition of that. I'll work on my hometowns. You work on propinquity.

I just believe in that part of the game. It's one of the things that you really -- when the game is over and you are sitting around here down the road, that's what you are going to remember. You are going to remember your teammates. You are going to remember the things that the game taught you.

It's a team sport. I think as much as we can do to create that culture, the better.

Q. Just to follow up on that, the belief is that if you know this guy and you know a little bit about him, you're going to play harder for him?

BILLY NAPIER: Absolutely. 100%.

Q. Just general assessment of the depth of this team and how many players you think are ready to step in if the starter gets down and compete at an SEC level because you've talked about roster-building. How close are you to getting to that level to where you can lose a guy and plug a guy in?

BILLY NAPIER: I think all those things are very much to be determined. I think we've got a core group of veterans. If you really evaluate the experience, how many plays have the players played in games, I think we've got a core group that has some experience, and then I think there's a big chunk of the roster that has minimal experience. Maybe that's just on special teams. Maybe there's little experience at all.

Then you have a group of rookies that just showed up. I think we kind of have three categories of players. I think that's what we're getting ready to find out. That's what

we're getting ready to try to coach and develop and try to get players in position.

I don't necessarily know that there's an answer to that. I think it's to be determined.

Thank you, all.

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