

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Coach Billy Napier

Press Conference



BILLY NAPIER: When you're presented with challenges and adversity in life, I think that there's opportunity, and it's important that we operate in truth, that we keep it technical.

You know, when you try to help the players maintain perspective. I think that it's very important that you take full advantage of the things that come with an experience like this. It gives you a chance to recenter and certainly evaluate where you're at as a team.

So it's important to adjust, to adapt, to evolve, and certainly I've seen just in the few days here this group is sticking together. There's a certain loyalty that comes with this game, and I love how this group wants to do their job for the team. They want to do it better for the team.

So I think the big focus for our team is to get consumed with improvement, right? With our process, our routine, and execution. How can we improve in terms of how we execute?

So I challenged the staff to let's do our best work for the players, the level of detail that we can offer the players throughout the week -- meetings, walk-throughs, and practice -- and try to position in better place as we approach Saturday.

South Florida comes to town. Very familiar with Jeff Scott. As he's building a program, obviously inherited a little bit of a tough dynamic there being year one and COVID. But Jeff's a bright young coach, and his team is playing extremely hard. You can see the effort.

You can see the toughness, the week 1 to 2 improvement, certainly some of the changes they made on the staff from a defensive standpoint.

So Jeff's growing that program up, and certainly you can see it on the film. Tons of respect for what he's doing and how they're doing it.

They've got some really good players. I think there's probably 15 transfers in the two deep to go along with a lot

of really good returning players here.

So there will be a lot of challenges that come with playing South Florida.

What questions do we have here?

Q. You guys obviously strive to win them all, but are growing pains like the other night somewhat inevitable when you're in a rebuilt like this first year?

BILLY NAPIER: You don't get them back. That's what losing does to you. It makes you very aware that you don't get back -- there's no redos. You don't go back and fix those things.

It causes you to have a different perspective, I think as a coach and as a player. I think everybody in the organization taking ownership in their role, maybe what could I have done better throughout the week, that could have impacted the outcome.

It's critical that you learn from mistakes. I think it's critical that you have integrity, that you tell the truth, and you make the necessary changes. Then, hey, look, you've got to turn the page. I think part of this game is -- teaches you a lot of lessons, and quickly you've got to get focused on the next task. Certainly that's what we're going to try to do.

Q. Did you hear Anthony speak? After the game.

BILLY NAPIER: I did not.

Q. Because he took an incredible amount of accountability for the loss. How do you take that and translate that into improvement?

BILLY NAPIER: I think it just shows you what type of kid you're dealing with here. This is a guy who's got character. One of Anthony's special traits is he is a loyal guy. You're talking about a guy that really has a heart to do his job for his teammates, and I think that's one of the things that's going to make him a special player.

There is just one page in the -- one chapter in the book

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about Anthony Richardson. He has an opportunity. You know, he had one on Sunday. I told him, look, get up Sunday morning, pick the pen up, and write a great page in the chapter of this part of your life and this part of your career.

Still a young player. I'm excited to be a part of that and to observe that. He's a special kid.

Q. Billy, you talked about earning the right to win a game. Would you define what you think is earning the right? It's a pretty cool statement, but how do you define that?

BILLY NAPIER: Well, I think it's about kind of our formula to win. What's worked for us in the past, right? The top of that list is own the ball, attack the ball.

If you just want to take a bird's eye view of the game, that's where we didn't earn the right to win.

If you include the turnover on downs stat, we turned the ball over four times to their one, right, so we're minus three. We didn't play on conversion downs on offense. Had to kick a couple of field goals in the fringe so the four-point play red zone part of the field we weren't very efficient, so we didn't do enough on offense to win the game.

When I say earn the right to win, I'm talking about our formula and how we win. We play complementary football, and there were parts of our team where we didn't earn the right to win. It's that simple.

Q. You've known Jeff for a while. When you think back on your time together at Clemson, what jumps out?

BILLY NAPIER: Jeff's a football guy. He's been in football families the entire time. His dad, obviously, Brad Scott was a phenomenal coach and a great mentor to me early in my career.

Jeff's got great character. He was raised the right way. He has care for young people. He's in the game for the right reasons. I think he's got a program there where they're trying to impact people and use the game in a positive way.

He's got a great offensive mind. He's very organized, very much a CEO, got a good business mind, and a guy that I think is one of the bright young coaches in the game.

Jeff's been successful at all stops here, right? Certainly he's in the process of building a program there in South Florida.

Q. Brad was where?

BILLY NAPIER: He was at Clemson as a coordinator/assistant coach when I first got to Clemson as a graduate assistant.

Q. How is Jack Miller's status and some of the other injuries with Ventrell, et cetera?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, Jack is making progress. He's not quite ready for action, but he's in the process, getting closer. He's kind of moved in the next stage there of return to play.

As far as other injuries are concerned, we'll give you that update on Wednesday.

Q. And your defensive line rotation, just how are you feeling that's coming along at this point?

BILLY NAPIER: I thought we took a step forward in this past game. I thought some of the young players really -- you saw week 1 to week 2 improvement, and you think about for them in their career it was game one to game two improvement. So we're starting to get better play from some of that second tier.

I thought Gervon in particular really was significantly better in the game. When I say that, I'm talking about alignment, discipline, fundamentals. Across the board there we were much improved.

Q. Anthony talked in the first game about just kind of being jittery and his emotions getting to him, and then last Saturday he said after the game that kind of his confidence got shot. How much is that something that he still needs to work on, you work on with him, just between the ears moving on to the next play?

BILLY NAPIER: I think it's part of being a young player. It's part of being a guy who's not very experienced. I would say that we're all that way, right? As a young coach, as a young position coach, you're that way, right? As a young play caller, you're that way. As a young head coach, you're that way.

Remember when you were getting your start in the profession? That's reality here. Anthony's a young player. He's getting his first opportunity to be the guy. I just think this is part of the story. This is part of his growth.

And he'll use that. This guy's a competitor. He's motivated, and I think he's going to take full advantage of the experience he's had, both good and bad so far. Again, it's important to evaluate each game and each

performance and each play independent of the outcome. Are you doing everything that you were supposed to do the right way?

Sometimes you get a great outcome and you didn't do what you were supposed to do. Sometimes we sack the quarterback and we busted the coverage over here and we could have gave up a touchdown. So sometimes I think in this game you can get two consumed with the result. What you've got to do is control the things that you can control, get consumed with preparing, and go execute and do your job for the team.

Q. You've talked a lot about operating in truth. What does that look like? How important is that for the players, especially coming off a loss and not lying to themselves about something in the game?

BILLY NAPIER: It comes back to really evaluating the game independent of the result. Is the effort good? Are the fundamentals good? Is the communication where it needs to be? If we're having execution issues, why?

I think each individual player, each position group, each unit, right? What is each part of the organization relative to is preparing for the game throughout the week.

So many people contribute to a football team, so a loss gives you a chance to hit the reset button, recenter. Everybody kind of gets hit in the gut, and I think sometimes it's healthy.

The key is that you don't waste it, right? That's when I say operate in truth. I say, hey, let's call it exactly like it is. What caused us to get the result that we had there, and what can we do to position our team.

Myself, what do we need to do to position our team for success in the future?

Q. Was part of Anthony's struggles were opponent dictated Saturday night?

BILLY NAPIER: That's a good question. I think a lot of Anthony's issues are he can fix. I would say that most football games are that way to some degree. You're going to run into a really good player and a matchup. You're going to have a matchup issue one side of the ball or the other on special teams. But most games are lost; that's reality.

I think the big thing here is there's lots of plays where he can do better and there's lots of plays where a lot of players on our team can do better, right? I think Anthony is the quarterback, so everybody likes to talk about the

quarterback.

But everybody can do better. There's certain players who played better than others, and they know who they are. What I see is all very correctible.

Now, there are a handful of four or five plays in the game where we didn't put the players in a sound concept, right? When I come back in and I'm evaluating the staff, that's what I'm looking at. Are we in a sound play? When we walked in the room today, did we have the answer? We can say, hey, if we'd have done this, we'd have been fine.

A few too many of those in the game for me. Four or five, that's too many. I don't want any of those, right? But I do think that there's opportunity for Anthony to play well in the game if he executes at a higher rate.

Some of that has to do with other players around him playing better, and I think that's usually the case. When he plays good, it probably has to do with some of the players around him playing well too.

Q. If that number is zero, do you win the game? Instead of four or five.

BILLY NAPIER: Probably not. Yeah. I think we made a few too many mistakes. Not only did we turn the ball over, they were significant. They were immediate points. There's a compound effect to that.

Most turnovers on average turn into about three points, if you just do the research. When they're seven or lead to seven, there's a compound effect of that and the momentum that comes from that.

You think about, I think it's 16-7 with three minutes to go in the second quarter on the first one, and then it's a tie game in the third quarter there with the second one.

So those -- if we don't have that, we don't have the fourth downs that we're going for and we don't end up -- we're playing with a lead and the game's completely different.

Got to earn the right to win, right? Turning the ball over, that's not part of the equation.

Q. You talked a lot about the family approach and environment as well as handling adversity. When that was tested on Saturday, how do you feel the team responded, especially when it comes to supporting Anthony?

BILLY NAPIER: Couldn't be better. I think I can't compliment the guys enough on that. They've been great.

I think sometimes the kids are more resilient than the adults are, truth be known.

This group is (no microphone.)

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