

University of Florida Football Media Conference

Monday, October 10, 2022

Gainesville, Florida, USA

Billy Napier

Press Conference



BILLY NAPIER: So just after looking at the tape, no question, really quality team win. I thought we answered a lot of the challenges that we presented to the players and staff going into the game.

Defensively I felt we took some steps forward in a lot of areas. Then to finally to make a game changing play with the punt return. Then a good third quarter on offense to try to get control of the game and found a way to win it in the end.

So really proud of our players. I thought the effort was quality on the tape, the physicality was there. And we did just enough, when you combine the offense, defense, and special teams to win the game.

A big credit to Missouri for the way they competed in the game. A lot of great stories in the game, individual stories. I thought Ventrell Miller was fantastic in the game. I thought that Jaydon Hill obviously made two huge plays in the game.

Offensively, I thought up front and on the edges we really probably played one of our better games against a really good front seven of Mizzou. So a lot of good things on the tape. Always good to win, especially in this league and certainly to get our first one, I think, was a big step in the right direction.

Excited about the challenges that come with playing a really good LSU team. Certainly when you play LSU, you know they're going to be unique mismatched players on the field, and they've got lots of them. We've got a ton of respect for Coach Kelly and the staff that he's put together.

Again, it's a great opportunity for us to be back at home and play in The Swamp at night, and we look forward to it.

Q. Billy, you said at the game that you were going to dig in on the third downs and what happened there on the long third downs. What are you seeing in the money down, so to speak, that you guys are struggling with, and what can you do to mitigate some of those?

BILLY NAPIER: I think it's all very correctible. Some of it's missed tackling. Some of it is pass rush lane integrity. Some of it is leveraging coverage. And then some we're just not -- maybe we're not in a great call here or there.

So it's a combination of a lot of things. I don't necessarily know that there's one thing we can pinpoint, but it's certainly something we have done really well at times week to week, and Saturday was an area where we struggled a little bit.

We'll go back to work there and evaluate it objectively and try to put our players in better position and then try to get the players to execute much better.

Q. What is the level of frustration when those things happen?

BILLY NAPIER: Any time it's third and long, if you know the numbers, you're anticipating you've got a good percentage chance to win. But I also know that it comes down to execution, right? Missouri had well-designed stuff at times. Their players made plays at times.

So it's a combination of a lot of things, but when you get 11-plus, those are the ones you anticipate winning. For me as a head coach, those are the ones you struggle with a little bit.

Q. Billy, you're going to face a quarterback who's really good getting outside the tackles and creating a problem for your guys in the secondary, whether to come up and tackle him or let him run. How do you set the edge because that's been a problem with all the cornerbacks so far?

BILLY NAPIER: That's a great question. It's one of the very specific things about this game when you talk about the dilemma that you have relative to the amount of skill players that they have. I mean, at receiver they've got some dynamic players both inside and outside.

So you pair that with the ability for the quarterback to break the pocket and scramble -- you know, you think about



statistically, when you look at their team, this quarterback has made significant impact on the game with his feet. So they're certainly going to be a big part of our planning and the dilemma that you have on defense.

I think it's a great question and one that we'll be working hard on this week.

Q. He throws the ball very well too. Is it an equal problem if you just keep him in the pocket because he does throw it so well?

BILLY NAPIER: You're thinking you're picking your spots. You try to mix it up. Ultimately, you've got to play good at all three levels. So there's a number of ways to go about this.

I think we'll have our way. We'll surely have ways to change it up in the game. That's a great question. And anybody that's played this team will tell you that's one of the biggest challenges about playing against them.

Q. Your two best running backs are from the state of Louisiana. Do you sense anything extra from them? What does it say about the state? You were there for a long time producing quality running backs like that.

BILLY NAPIER: We reaped the benefits of it at Louisiana. And certainly I think that we've got a handful of Louisiana kids on our team that are going to be excited about it. Any player that's from the state that we're competing against is always excited about playing in front of their home team.

When you talk about per capita, when you talk about player production in the state of Louisiana, it's as good as there is in the country. About 100 Division I players a year, and certainly we had our fair share of them at the previous stop.

Q. Are you surprised that Trevor has picked things up so quickly for a guy that young and so forth?

BILLY NAPIER: I think he's a little bit of a unique young man relative to his brother. I think his brother having the success he had, having the insight to his routine, his discipline, his training, what college football is going to be like.

I also think that he comes from a fantastic family. Education is important. Character important. Really good hard working, down to earth people. If you've ever been to Jennings, Louisiana, you know what I'm talking about.

But no surprise to me. I mean, I had a chance to get to know him, and he's always been a sharp, mature kid. I

was impressed with the work he did in the spring semester before he got here. I thought he really worked hard, and he was well prepared upon arrival.

You're talking about a football family. You're talking about a kid who he's intelligent, he's mature, he's got character, and he's continuing to get better. I thought we saw that Saturday.

Q. Anthony didn't run the ball a ton Saturday, maybe even missed a few opportunities to run. Are you at the point where you maybe need to encourage him to do it? Especially early in the season you tell him not to run. Are you finding yourself trying to urge him to run more?

BILLY NAPIER: I don't necessarily know that any of that is accurate, but I do think that he's using his instincts and his judgment relative to when it's right to run and when it's not.

I think when you're a passer and it's a passing down, that's when there's some decisions to be made, and I thought in the game Saturday he did a good job. The fourth and two was a good example of that. I thought the third and five or six on the left hash where he broke the pocket to the right.

I think there's some calculated risk relative to when to take chances, when to not, and I think as of late he's been making more good ones than bad ones.

Q. The passing game and just the progression over six weeks, where that's at right now.

BILLY NAPIER: Good and bad. I think we do it really well at times, and there's a lot of times we can do it better. So I think we're working towards more consistency.

A lot of things contribute to throwing the ball. I think you're seeing the trend in the NFL right now. If you just look at Sunday and look at the statistics and all the quarterbacks in the NFL, you've got to protect the passer. Then you've got to have precision in the routes. If it's zone, you've got to space the floor correctly. If it's man, you've got to separate, you've got to get open.

I mean, there's tons of variables here. So I think much like a lot of parts of our team, we've done things well at times and then we've struggled at times. I do think it's an area we work hard on, and we'll continue to get better as we go forward.

Q. How do you coach mental toughness? That's something you talked about on Saturday, helping with the close games. How do you coach that in the off-season to develop that?

BILLY NAPIER: You're talking about relative to close games? I think your off-season program is where you create these intangibles. I think if you're intentional about -- what I say is it's design difficulty. Everything that we do from a training perspective is both physically and mentally, we're trying to design difficulty for the players. It's the only way that you can create growth is to make it hard. Harder is better.

I think we work hard and try to do that in the off-season program. I think specifically, when it comes to game day, the football component comes in there. If the players have a good understanding of what's happening, why it's happening, what went wrong, what went well, I think that's where your in game adjustment process is important, how you review the series, you anticipate what's next. A language that your players speak.

Sometimes if players don't understand what's happening, there's a little bit more anxiety. But if you can come off the field and say, hey, we need to redirect the protection there. We get our back out there before we got all three levels in the route, we've got a better chance. They know, hey, we can fix that. So there's a little bit more poise. There's a little bit more focus on the technical part.

I think you've got to keep it technical, and you've got to have good coaches and good players that understand what's happening on game day.

Q. Devin Moore didn't play Saturday. What's going on with Devin?

BILLY NAPIER: Got a little banged up late in practice on Wednesday. Nothing major there. He'll be kind of a work in progress this week, but re-aggravated an injury from the past and one that made him unavailable for the game.

Q. First time in this position you'll be going up against a first time SEC coach.

BILLY NAPIER: It's the whole body of work relative to the evidence. You look at the play callers on both sides of the ball relative to Cincinnati, relative to Kansas City Chiefs, Kentucky, Notre Dame. We spend lots of time on this independent of this week.

But I think you do have a little bit smaller sample size, especially when you consider Mississippi State, their offense, the differences there. When you talk about New Mexico, their offense and the differences there, the number of plays they play against Southern. There's a lot of variables that contribute to the sample size that you have.

But I think that's where your off-season research and summer scouting comes into effect.

Q. Florida is unique in maybe the number of rivals it has. Do you do anything different rivalry week or treat them any differently?

BILLY NAPIER: I think it's about awareness. I think in conversation in front of the team, it's important that you educate the players a little bit about that.

I think we're fortunate that we've got some Gators in the building that have a pulse. Certainly this one is -- we've got a lot of Louisiana ties in the building as well. I think there's some awareness here.

These kids, they follow college football. They know it's a big game.

Q. One thing the media speculated a lot about last year is would Billy Napier be a candidate at LSU? There's a lot of conjecture and stuff. Can you, I don't know, shoot down any myths or realities on whether there was any interaction with LSU and how you ended up here as opposed to there?

BILLY NAPIER: I don't know that's something you talk publicly about. I think we're all well aware of chaotic times in college football when you get to November, December, January.

I'll tell you one thing. I'm grateful for the opportunity I was given here. For the administration here, for Scott and all the people that contributed to that decision to have faith and confidence, do their homework on me, give me an opportunity to lead here.

I can't imagine being at a much better place. So we were very patient the last few years. This path was right. That's what I would say. There's not a day that I woke up and said am I at the right place or not? I've got conviction about that.

And the more I'm here, every day that I'm here, the more I'm confident about what we can accomplish here. So it's a blessing to be at the University of Florida and represent such a great place.

Q. Following up on what Jake was asking, what's your assessment of the offense as a whole compared to where you'd hoped it would be at this point?

BILLY NAPIER: I think we've got some good. I think we got a pretty good highlight tape we could put together. I'd like to have a little bit more consistency. I think there's --

we've got a lot of missed opportunities on the tape, and then there's some bad ball on the tape.

I think there's a lot of things that we could do better. We play team football. So I think offense contributes to defense, defense contributes to offense, special teams is certainly a percentage of the game. So we do what we think is required to win the game.

I think at times this year we played really good on offense, and there's times where we've been very average and below average. So I think we're working hard to get better.

Q. What's your mid-season grade for the Gators? No incompletes.

BILLY NAPIER: I'm not into grades. I'm into winning.

Q. You're 4-2 right now and could easily be 6-0 or even 1-5 right now. How do you impress on these guys that, okay, go back and look at this, and in each game, 5 of the 6 games, we're a handful of plays one way or the other from being at one end of the spectrum or the other?

BILLY NAPIER: I think that's a great assessment of where we're at. I think there's a lot of days you wake up and you're thinking, man, I'm glad we're 4-2. But you also think about the potential and that we're a very capable team. We've been in the fight every single week.

I heard a coach say one time that you're always really close to being a very good team, and you're always really close to being a very bad team. And that describes our team in a lot of ways.

Where we're at, I think we have a very capable group. What I'm hopeful that we see here is we start to minimize error a bit better. We start to be a little more efficient. We start to believe a little bit more.

I think our practice habits are improving. I think that the chemistry, the morale of the group is improving. So there's no easy outs in this league. We've got a tough slate ahead of us. Complete focus on this LSU game and what we need to do to position the team to win this one.

Q. How would you assess the balance on the offense right now? There's been some big passing games, running games, et cetera.

BILLY NAPIER: I think every possession in the game, every matchup week to week, you do what you think to do for the team to win. So we'll continue to do that.

Q. Anthony on Saturday mentioned that he was starting to feel a lot more comfortable and maybe even taking favor to some of the shot plays that you guys have designed. How much does that benefit your offense specifically with the way you like to run the ball and maybe take the top off of the defense if you can really start to get comfortable within those?

BILLY NAPIER: We're getting there. We like to rush the ball effectively. We like to throw completions. We like to execute at a high rate on conversion downs. We like to create explosive plays. We like to score touchdowns in the red area. And we like to play turnover-free and penalty-free football. That's how you win games.

We've done some of those at times, and we need to do them better at times. So just keep working.

Q. It's Tom Petty weekend. Are you a fan?

BILLY NAPIER: Absolutely I'm a fan. And the Heartbreakers, man. Are you kidding me?

Q. What's your favorite?

BILLY NAPIER: Long list. I've got Pandora in my office. Feel free to come check it out one day.

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