

# University of Florida Football Media Conference

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## Coach Billy Napier

### Press Conference



**BILLY NAPIER:** It's certainly been a good open date, good to give the staff and players a little bit of a break over the weekend. With Saturday off, able to get a little bit of prep last week to get out in front of a very important week this week, but certainly just mentally I think really good for everybody.

But players worked extremely hard last week. I think you're kind of at that midpoint, and I think this time of year in the second half of the year really challenges all the self-discipline of each individual, each part of the organization, and I think the key here is that we continue to stay focused on what we know winning football looks like.

I think that's what the open date uncovered for us, is that we understand where we're at, why we have the results that we have, and what we need to do to improve there.

I think just an unwavering level of discipline and commitment to what we're trying to build here, and certainly starting today we'll get a little bit ahead here.

We'll actually execute a Tuesday practice today with the players, and a certain level of intensity and urgency and focus is required. We've got a tremendous amount of respect for the University of Georgia and the football team that they have. Kirby has done a fantastic job going into year seven.

They continue personnel, the identity, a lot of players that we're very familiar with.

Defending national champs and the No. 1 team in the country, so it presents a great opportunity and certainly understanding the history and tradition behind this game at the same time, so we look forward to it.

**Q. How dirty did you get your hands on the defensive side of the ball during the bye week, and how much are you maybe getting more involved moving forward?**

**BILLY NAPIER:** Yeah, I think with the way we're built and the way we're put together, the way we operate the entire

year, I think I'm getting dirty over there all the time, if that makes sense.

We're very intentional about how we put our team together. This is not like hey, you guys handle the defense, we'll handle the offense, you handle the special teams. We're very much a team approach relative to playing complementary, winning football.

I think we understand what the issues are. Throughout the year we've played really good at times, and then we've played very inconsistent at times.

I think the key here, what are we looking for? We're looking for all the things that we can control. We're going to continue to focus on improvement.

I don't want to make it more complicated than it is. It's technical, and certainly I don't think it's one specific thing. I think it's a combination of a lot of areas, and certainly our guys are working hard.

Nobody cares more than the players do. I know you guys got articles to write and our fans have got things to talk about around the house, but there's no one that it's more important to than the people that work extremely hard and take tremendous pride in what they do.

That's exactly the approach that they've taken.

We've got a lot of football left here, and we're going to do our best to help the players improve and help the staff improve.

**Q. Is it shocking where it's at? I know we've hammered the defense a little bit, but is it shocking where it's at? Got a chance to be historically bad here. Given that there seems to be some talent -- it's not like this is devoid of talent. There's some NFL guys on that side of the ball.**

**BILLY NAPIER:** No, I think statistically there are a lot of areas where we need to improve. I don't know what you want me to answer to that, but we're right in the middle of it. There's nobody that's ignoring the problem.



I think we've got a group of people that really care about doing their job better, and that's what they're going to try to do.

**Q. It's been a season of highs and lows, obviously. Where is this game as a measuring stick for kind of where you guys are at right now?**

BILLY NAPIER: I think every game that we've played, to some degree, for me, I'm just speaking personally, in particular when you play other teams in our league, I think is a measuring stick.

I don't completely comprehend it until I'm out there on the field with them, if that makes sense, relative to where you're at and what's going to be required personnel-wise, how you put your team together, whatever the case may be, what you need to do that game to position your team to have success.

I think each SEC game for the most part has been a little bit of, okay, hey, where are we at. Certainly in your division and with a team that you're going to have to play every year, so far each one of those games I think has provided us a lot of good information.

**Q. This one being, as you said, No. 1 team, top ranked, this team is hauling in five-stars, five, six a year. The talent is immense. Do you kind of see the gap at that point? It's like, okay, this is where we've got to get to?**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I mean, I think we all understand that. I think there's work to be done in a lot of different areas when you're trying to put together a football team. But personnel is part of that. I think we all understand the value of acquiring really good players. And then having a culture and a development plan, once they do arrive, there's lots of things that contribute to this game. So there's no question the evaluation and the recruitment process is pretty well-documented, not only Georgia but a lot of the teams have done a really good job in those areas.

It pays off. We all understand that.

**Q. How would you assess their talent level compared to other teams you've seen? You haven't seen them yet personally, but as you said --**

BILLY NAPIER: No, there's no question their personnel is really good. All the things -- we're all from the same tree, height, length, the verified speed, the line of scrimmage, body types, the edge players, the match-up players. There's no question that they've got really good personnel.

**Q. During the season, each week is like game prep. You get an off week, you have a chance to make adjustments. Did you see adjustments that you could make, and was this a successful week as far as getting adjustments made?**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I don't think there's any question. If anything, it's just you're out of the -- I wouldn't say we're out of the grind, but we're not on the task at hand. There's time for quality control. We've got a pretty extensive process that we go through relative to evaluating where we're at, areas that need to get better.

Then you can evaluate each game, and okay, what contributed to each game. Why did you win the games you won? Why did you lose the games you lost? Essentially that's probably what gives me comfort is we know why we've lost games. I think we know what winning football looks like, and the games we lost, we didn't deserve to win.

**Q. What would you say is the most common themes in the losses or maybe the wins that you guys were able to identify throughout the last week?**

BILLY NAPIER: I mean, it's the same things we talk about up here every week. I think turnover margin. Every week, right. I think turnover margin, explosive plays, minimizing negatives on the offense, conversion downs, red zone touchdowns, you know, covering kicks, creating game changing plays in the return game. Football is football. I watched a bunch games this weekend. It's the same game.

We know what winning football looks like. When we gotten beat this year, there is pretty evident -- you guys write about it, why we got to beat. It's not complicated.

**Q. No one team in the country again before you mentioned, the rivalry game. How much do you present this as opportunity and do you think that can spill over as motivation?**

BILLY NAPIER: I don't think anybody that's walking the halls in this building, most everybody understands the things that come with this game.

You know, I grew up in the state of Georgia, grew up watching this game. Our players are well aware. We've got a good percentage that have played in this game. We got another percentage that grew up watching the game.

So we all understand the history and tradition behind this game.

**Q. You had more opportunity this past week in terms**

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**of recruiting. Where do you think you stand in the '23 class. Just kind of big picture.**

BILLY NAPIER: No, I like the group that we've got committed. We need to finish, obviously secure the ones we have and then close on a few others, right?

So we worked extremely hard at it, not only the recruitment process, but the evaluation process. So far so good. A lot of work left to do. Critical about coaching seven, eight weeks, something like that. So I think a lot of that work has been done and will continue to be done.

But it's part of our organization and we'll continue to get better. I think we got a lot of people getting more familiar with the product we have here. We're getting more efficient with our time. Got a lot of new people.

And not just '23, it's '24s, '25s. You got extensive work around the clock every phase of the year, right? So those all those people are taking a lot of pride in their role and certainly have been effective so far.

**Q. On that note, what are your thoughts on players reclassifying? Is there certain positions where that's easier and what are those conversations like?**

BILLY NAPIER: It's hard to believe that that's the case, but I think there is a handful of players out there that are capable. I think about reclassifying the other way. I weighed 92 pounds, I'm getting ready to be a 9th grader. My dad said, hey, you're going to have to stay back, big guy. So grew six inches and gained 50 pounds that year. I wouldn't have played college football if I didn't do it.

We live in a world now where they're trying to go forward. I needed to go backwards.

**Q. You mentioned growing up watching the game. Have you ever been to a game in Jacksonville?**

BILLY NAPIER: No.

**Q. What are you looking forward to the most? I'm sure you've heard a lot about it from guys on the staff.**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I think we'll cross that bridge when we get there.

This is why you coach college football, why you come to the University of Florida, to play in this league, play in those types of games, and certainly this game has been around for a while. I think for me, the week is about -- I don't know I'm quite prepared to answer that question because I'm focused on trying to get our team ready so we

can play with confidence in the game.

But it's why you come here, these types of challenges.

**Q. The fine folks of Chatsworth, when I spoke with them, said this is the one game of the year they're not pulling for you.**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah.

**Q. So what is that dynamic like? Have you heard from anyone back home? Do you hear what people are saying? I know one of your brothers at least is in town.**

BILLY NAPIER: No, I just think that's why college football is a great game, right. You got this cutthroat -- but, no, I mean, I think it's a fun game. Certainly we got a lot of people that have passion for their teams. We'll have our fair share in the stadium Saturday I can promise you.

**Q. You talked about how at Alabama you learned not only from Saban, but with the assistants. What was your time like with Kirby, watching him work as defensive coordinator and did he rub off on you as a recruiter?**

BILLY NAPIER: No, heck, I wouldn't have been at Alabama if it wasn't for Kirby. Our dads were high school coaches in Georgia. There was some familiarity there and certainly his influence on that with Coach Saban. He had a lot to do with me being there. I will always be thankful for that.

Kirby is a heck of a football coach, man. I think you think about what he's done at going to good. I'm going back and evaluating kind of each year. Year seven, what was year one, two, three, four, five for him like? He's done a fantastic job.

I told him that the first time I saw him at the SEC coach's meeting. Had just won the national championship and it's pretty well documented all that goes into that. So he's done a -- he is a competitor and certainly a ton of respect.

**Q. Did you consider yourself 1-0 against him?**

BILLY NAPIER: No. I think there is a lot of -- heck, we're fortunate to have all the people that we have in our organization. Certainly thankful for Kady.

**Q. Full circle game for Anthony. How do you gauge this process through seven games?**

BILLY NAPIER: No, I think he continues to grow. There is

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no doubt the comfort level with all the things that contribute to quarterback play, not only our system, but what the other side of the ball is doing, being able to speak that language. Just a ton of growth relative to where he's at and the level he's processing at.

So I think he still working hard on mastering what that process looks like Sunday to Saturday unwavering commitment to what's required to play and win.

So that's where he's at. Seven games in and continues to get better.

**Q. From a health standpoint getting the week off, where are you now as far as getting your team back to full strength and getting over some of the bumps, bruises and tiredness that comes with playing seven straight weeks?**

BILLY NAPIER: I think it was good. I think we will, I'm pretty confident, get a handful of players back that maybe didn't participate last week. Cy-Bo (phonetic) in particular will be in practice today. Handful of others that continue to improve. We'll benefit from it for sure.

**Q. Back to the bye week and defense a little bit, do you have to caution yourself from wanting to do -- trying to do too much, make wholesale changes? There is some so much you can probably do with a few extra practices.**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I think it's a little bit more of identifying the problems on communication errors, fundamental errors. You know, conceptually what's been good, what's not been good. Then you take a whole list particular, okay, let's look at the big picture in some of these areas where we need to improve. What's the scouting report. Not that we don't do that each week, but you got more time to say, okay, based off what we know what can we change or improve.

Oftentimes playing defense is not about what you're doing, it's about how you do it.

Yeah. So, again, I can't say it enough. It's not one thing. It's a number of things that contribute. We been through this before. We inherited a similar situation in the past. All you can do is focus on the things that you know contribute to playing better. That's exactly what we're going to do.

**Q. Have you been a coach that's made personnel changes during a bye week and seen positive effects from that?**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I think each week you're evaluating

personnel based off not only performance in the game, but also what we observe every day. I mean, I think there is more than just that handful of plays that we see on Saturday.

What is each individual like from a self-disciplined standpoint, how they're living their life, what's their approach in the weight room and the training room, every meeting, walk-through, practice, rep that they take. We spend a lot of time with they guys. I think that's always very fluid and we're rewarding what we see.

There is a number of players that have benefited from doing to the right way.

**Q. This week they put out a press release, will they move that whole story. Kirby as concern is he loses a recruiting weekend?**

BILLY NAPIER: Right.

**Q. Is that a concern for you looking down the road? Do you lose much by playing a game in Jacksonville, recruiting-wise you think?**

BILLY NAPIER: I think the big thing here is that I think maybe for the first time this year the home team gets tickets maybe. You know, I think we've come to an agreement there. There is precedent for that. Maybe this game is the one that provides precedent for neutral site both teams to get tickets. Maybe that's the case. There is no question that Game Day and in particular these type of games create recruiting opportunities.

So this environment, this experience for a player, can have a significant impact on a player's decision. So I mean, I completely understand what Kirby is saying. Every other year he's missing out on what he knows will be a fantastic venue and Game Day experience.

It being right down the road, it's really for both teams to some degree there is some advantages and disadvantages here.

But I think we'll continue to put our heads together, not only the coaching staff, but the administrations. But I think 1933 the game has been played in Jacksonville, so a lot of history and tradition there.

**Q. (Regarding McConkey.)**

BILLY NAPIER: Heck, I know his whole family. You know, his family, heck, I can remember his dad playing. Fantastic player. His sister grew up in my neighborhood. Heck, I know him really well.



**Q. The house is right nearby, right?**

BILLY NAPIER: Couple blocks away.

**Q. You were talking about Kirby a minute ago. One through seven when you look at the big picture of his career, what jumps out to you?**

BILLY NAPIER: I mean, I think it that there is no shortcuts. I think that the same things I've said about where we are and what we need to do. It gives you good perspective about what's required. It doesn't happen overnight.

I think the key here is it's one day at a time. Again, go back to what I said earlier. Don't get discouraged by continuing to make good choices and decisions and create good habits and good systems in house. Keep going about it the right way. Make sure you're sound in what you're doing, one day at a time, one person at a time, and ultimately that's what we're doing.

**Q. Going back to 2011, can you walk is through Kirby's impact, whether it was vouching for the analyst position or how that went down.**

BILLY NAPIER: Heck, wouldn't be standing here today without him. I think that a number of people in the building that were on that staff, Burton Burns, Chris Rumph. We had a lot of people in the building that I had prior relationship with. I did not have a relationship with Coach Saban.

Kirby, we don't know each other extensively, but because of our dads being coaches, seeing each other on the road, I mean, heck I was 29 or something like that.

So I mean, if that had been my first job in college football I would've been blessed and certainly benefited from it for sure.

**Q. Did your dads know each other or coach against each other?**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, no question. Different parts of the state, but I think that in that circle, certainly with all the ton of connections here, right, too many to talk about.

**Q. Did they play against each other?**

BILLY NAPIER: No.

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