

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Billy Napier

Press Conference



BILLY NAPIER: Certainly having gone back and looked at the tape, a lot of respect for Georgia's football team. Kirby is obviously in year seven and done a great job there building depth on the team. They've got a lot of good players.

The summary of the game, we dug ourselves a little bit too big of a hole and got behind in the game.

Certainly really proud of the way our group responded at halftime. I think that's one of the things I respect the most about this group is they really care. They want to do their job for each other and certainly have showed that throughout the year.

Not good enough. Same comment I said after the game, feel the same way. There's lots of areas where we can do better, and we'll continue to learn and grow as a result of these experiences.

I think that's important that we remember these experiences and we make the most of each opportunity. Certainly that's what we're going to do.

Turning the page, Jimbo's got a really good team at A&M, very talented group -- personnel, rosters, deep, certainly height-length, verified speed. Not many chinks in the armor when you look at the personnel match-wise.

I know it's been a bit of a revolving door with the quarterback, but he played well, the rookie played well this past week. Certainly when you go play here at their place, there's a lot of challenges that certainly go with it. We're going to need to be at our best, and we're going to need to have a really good week here.

Q. Coach, obviously you've had a lot of history with coaches that you faced this season. Jimbo is another one. Can you talk about your guys' past and interviewing with him at Florida State, just your time there?

BILLY NAPIER: Jimbo, couldn't be more thankful for --

Jimbo gave me an opportunity. I was actually with him for five or six weeks there before accepting the job at Alabama. He had tremendous success at Florida State, won a National Championship, evaluated, recruited well. He had some fantastic coaches there and did something there that hadn't been done in a long time.

Very thankful for that opportunity. It's pretty well documented what Jimbo has been able to accomplish in his career.

Q. Could you just comment on the situation with Brenton and his status.

BILLY NAPIER: I appreciate you asking that question. Brenton, we've kind of decided to move on here. I think -- you know, I think that being a football player at the University of Florida is a privilege, right? There's certain expectations and standards that come with that.

Brenton's been here in his third year. Obviously he's done a lot of good things for the University of Florida, and we wish him nothing but the best.

Sometimes you have to make decisions in the best interests of the team. Certainly Brenton, we're going to do everything we can do to help him with his transition, but as simple as that. I think we've decided to move on.

Q. Did he throw a punch at the end of that game against Georgia?

BILLY NAPIER: Not that I'm aware of.

Q. So what was the issue here? You're talking about just moving on. Like what did he do or didn't do that prompted this decision?

BILLY NAPIER: I don't know that we would get specific relative to the -- to what caused the decision. I think it's more of a cumulative effect here. We keep that in house.

Q. Year one at Louisiana, obviously had ups and downs, like you're going through here. Do you see some similarities with what's going on? What do you

hope to do this final month to get that momentum that you want?

BILLY NAPIER: I think there's a ton of similarities relative to the things you learned, right? The challenges that comes with starting over. New group of people, staff, players, administration, community. Typically, when you get one of these jobs, you're there for a reason. There's things that need to improve. It was that way at Louisiana. It was that way here.

Ultimately, these are great opportunities. These are challenges that you embrace, that you take on, that you look forward to. And there's no shortcuts. These are things that you've got to go through and that you've got to do.

We're very fortunate that we've got an incredible administration here, that we have an unbelievable experience to offer the student-athlete here. This is one of the iconic places in all of college football. We have a top five university. We have history. We have tradition. We have a passionate fan base. This is a place you can do it.

I think this is all part of -- this is a page in the chapter in the book. I think, and you guys will probably all agree, struggle is healthy, right? I think majority of the growth in my life, and probably in yours too if you thought about it, comes from adversity, comes from challenge. There's failure along the way, right? I think the key is that you capitalize off of those things. You learn your lessons from those things, and you adjust, you adapt, you grow.

Certainly that's what we're doing. You don't just flip a coin and get this thing going the right direction. It takes lots of people, lots of hard days' work. Lots of tough decisions, and we're right in the middle of it.

Q. How important is this month for some players' futures, really, to put it bluntly? To show what they can do, just to prove that they should be here next year and contributing.

BILLY NAPIER: I don't necessarily think about it that way. I think this is more about just this team still searching for their best. I still think that we've got a lot of individual players that are growing, that are improving. We have certain position groups, units on our team. I think it's more about finding a way to win a game one week at a time to create some momentum.

But there's only one way to do that. You do that one day at a time. You do that one task at a time, with a great focus. You try to do your best for the people around you. I think that's what this group's going to do.

Q. How do you replace Brenton moving forward?

BILLY NAPIER: We've been playing a handful of players in that position the entire year. I think -- so A.P. and Lloyd and those guys will do a really good job. They've been playing in each and every game for the most part. I know Lloyd was out this past week, but we'll just continue in that direction.

Q. To follow up on that question, Billy, are there any kind of milestones or markers along the way these last four games that can kind of tell you you think the program as a whole is moving in the right direction? Are there things that you look for?

BILLY NAPIER: I think the resiliency that I see. The main thing that I would say that I respect is we've got a lot of people that care about doing their job for the people around them. So there's a certain loyalty required in this game, and I think that I see that from some of our players. We've got a group that really cares. They've showed that throughout the year.

When backed in a corner, they've always kind of stood up and get up off the ground and kept competing and playing with effort, trying to do their best for their teammates.

Q. I know this team's been pretty good protecting the quarterback all year -- three sacks, ten hurries in the game against Georgia. Were there issues in blitz pickup? What were some of the problems, do you think?

BILLY NAPIER: A combination of things. Individual matchups, that's a good group. I think they do a good job of creating one-on-ones, and certainly they've got some good players.

Not necessarily one thing, I think a combination of all those things. Some individual matchups, some communication, some technique. I think they all contributed to those plays.

But you're right. And partly a lot of down and distances where you're in that mode, right? You're in that drop-back mode where you're standing in the pocket. So I think the key there was to try to stay on schedule and avoid those situations. Certainly we weren't able to do that. That's one of the reasons why we struggled in the game early.

Q. You had a problem again with the chunk plays, the passes. They get 237 yards, yet Stetson is only 11 for 30 for 79 yards on those plays. Is that a sign of progress that you have so many short plays and incompletions even though you do give up the chunk



plays?

BILLY NAPIER: We did better. I thought we covered them better. There were some fantastic plays too, right? We were close on a lot of those that went the other way.

There's no doubt that in the back end we were cleaner. We still can improve, but I do think that we did what was required to create some negative plays, to create some take-aways. We certainly at times defended them well.

But the big plays obviously that you're talking about, those are the ones that hurt.

Q. Kicking a guy off the team is obviously a last resort. Is this a situation where it can maybe set the tone for years here in terms of there is going to be a line in the sand that, if you go too far, that's going to be it?

BILLY NAPIER: I don't know that I want to get into all that. I think these are -- these are hard things, right? So I think we'll just keep all that in house. I think that we want to do what we can do to help Brenton going forward, but I think it's a healthy thing for our team.

The important thing to understand here is we make every decision in the best interests of the team.

Q. Two more real quick on that. He'll stay in school, and then would he be welcome back for Pro Day, assuming he's going to go pro?

BILLY NAPIER: We'll cross that bridge when we get to it.

Q. What are the challenges, besides replacing his production on the field, that you associate with removing someone from the roster at this point in the season? He probably has just friends in the locker room, the dynamic that can create. What are the challenges you would associate with that?

BILLY NAPIER: Again, we'll keep all that in house.

Q. Billy, how important is it for this program to get to a bowl game?

BILLY NAPIER: Well, I think it's one of the benefits of going to a bowl game is that you get additional time with the players from a development standpoint. More meetings, more walk throughs, more practice opportunity. There's no question this is a developmental game, and you do that in a practice setting.

Certainly it's another opportunity for your team to compete

and play. So more experience for players, opportunities for players to increase their value relative to their career. And certainly an opportunity to celebrate some of the positive things that come from the year.

Q. How difficult has this SEC schedule been thus far? If you just look at it purely on paper the next few games, the records aren't quite -- I mean, you've played some heavyweights so far. How difficult has this stretch been?

BILLY NAPIER: I think it's exactly what we signed up for. It's what we expected. I think we've got a pulse of where we're at and what we need to do going forward.

I think we've also been in the game with all these teams as well, late in the second half. I mean, it is what it is. I think that gives us a good barometer of where we're at and what we need to do to position ourselves in the future, to have better success.

Q. You've also faced a lot of talented tight ends this year. How would you assess the team has improved in covering that position?

BILLY NAPIER: That's a great point. I think games are a matchup game. Each week is a little bit different. Some weeks you play a team and the tight end isn't necessarily a factor.

But I do believe that tight ends can be very effective, in particular if there's other skill players around him that are a problem, if that makes sense. I think, when you've got to pick your poison -- I think that you put a good run game, you put an elite player around or outside of those guys.

Much like the National Football League, each play you're kind of deciding where you're exposing yourself to some degree. So I think tight ends, when we have played them, they can present a number of issues, especially if the other players around them are very capable.

Q. Going back to Louisiana, you were 4-4 after playing Appalachian State, which was the top team in your league. And you just played Georgia, which is the No. 1 team in the country. What happened to turn the season around at Louisiana that may be helpful to turning this around too? Because you had such a strong finish there.

BILLY NAPIER: I think you -- you're playing kind of like App State at that point, they were the team in the league. They had dominated the conference to some degree at that point. Then you go -- we went in there, and we were very competitive. So I think that at that point, I think the

players felt like, hey, we can do this.

I think there was a moment in time there, even when you lost, you felt like, okay, I think we know where we're at and what we need to do going forward.

I'm not big into comparisons. Obviously you guys are comparing year one there to year one here. But the one thing I do know is that those years were full of challenges and full of opportunities. That's certainly the way I feel about this situation, just like we did there.

Q. On a note of the tight ends, the guy that's drawing the assignment for you defensively is Amari Burney often. Can you talk about his development this year, especially when he went through in the last game, getting the deflection and it not going his way and the way he bounced back in the third quarter?

BILLY NAPIER: Amari is one of the best players that we have, big picture-wise, relative to his attitude, his energy every day, the consistency in which he shows up and works. He's playing injured to some degree too. He's managing an injury.

So this is a guy that has the respect of his peers. He's a smart player. He's a really good communicator, and he's really a versatile player. He's been very productive for us.

Nothing but respect for Amari in his overall approach.

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