

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Billy Napier

Press Conference



BILLY NAPIER: Simply put, a lot of lessons to learn from our experience in Nashville. The laundry list of things that contributed to not playing winning football was way too long, and certainly as the head coach, all those things are my responsibility. We certainly can do a lot of things better.

Simply put here, we've got to get up off the ground, dust ourselves off, and get back to work, fight for each other, work hard for each other. Quickly turn the page here in a short week to get ready against a good Florida State team.

A ton of respect for Coach Norvell and his team and how it's improved. Certainly when you watch the tape, you see that improvement year one to two to three, and certainly they're playing really good football right now.

So a lot of challenges. We've got to go play at their place. We're right in the middle of the prep today. I thought we had really good meetings and walk through yesterday with the players and know our players are anxious about this opportunity.

When I was growing up, Florida and Florida State were dominating college football. It was Steve Spurrier, it was Bobby Bowden, and pretty awesome to be a part of this game. Certainly having been at ACC for seven years and played against Florida State in the past, a ton of respect for that place and the history and tradition there.

So I'm excited about the opportunities that come with this game. Certainly we all are very aware of the history, the tradition, the rivalry, and the things that come with that. So what questions do we have here?

Q. When you look at the league right now, you've got a pretty good feel of it, what do you make of what's happening around the league? When you look at Ole Miss, Tennessee, Florida last week, South Carolina the week before, Vanderbilt's winning games. Is it more parity maybe than before? And if so, why?

BILLY NAPIER: I think -- you know, I actually talked to the

players a little bit about that yesterday. College football as a whole, if you just look at the games and the scores from Saturday, I don't know if parity is the right word, but I think having the ability to perform on a consistent basis.

I think for our team it's handling success and handling failure, remaining steady and consistent with our approach, our mentality, our thought process, our methods relative to getting our team ready to play, as members of the organization but also as individual players. I think we live in a time where you just see a lot of inconsistency.

But, yeah, when I got home, I'm watching that Carolina-Tennessee game too, and then I'm seeing Ole Miss-Arkansas, and a number of games that probably much closer than expected.

I just think there's a number of challenges that come with roster attrition and retention, the addition of players -- all those things that contribute to your stability of the program. I think things can change dramatically in a hurry.

I do think in this era there's more information out there earlier. Recruiting is a completely different dynamic than it was maybe even early in my career. So I think the game continues to evolve.

Bottom line -- and I told our team this yesterday -- I really have confidence in the work that we did throughout the week, but when the ball's spotted and the first play begins, you got to go earn the right to win, and you've got to go execute, you've got to do your job. There's hundreds of people that contribute to that in this game, and I think that's the challenge, right?

That's what I love about the game is the leadership challenge that comes with getting the organization and the team to perform on a consistent basis. Great question, though.

Q. What were some of the things that stood out to you after watching the film from the game, just some of the main lessons?

BILLY NAPIER: Turnover on special teams. We had a



few injuries there at returner over the last couple weeks. We had a short field turnover that led to a touchdown, really 14 points there in a matter of minutes.

Two red zone opportunities early where we had to settle for field goals, so missed opportunities from a points standpoint but also momentum.

I also think that the penalties were a major factor. I think for the first time since we've been here, penalties had a significant impact on the game. Three third downs, where they get earned first off of penalties. We had two explosive runs that were called back as a result of penalties. Those are five significant plays in the game. One of those runs is down to the 4 yard line.

Then we were 0 for 2 on the two-point conversions. We missed a PAT. The hidden yardage was a disadvantage in the game. A couple weeks in a row there, we did what was required to win, and we did not do that Saturday.

Q. What did you see in the run game on tape in terms of the execution of that? Was Etienne even banged up during the game, or was there a reason for the carries?

BILLY NAPIER: No, I don't necessarily think that had anything to do with it. I think we probably had less carries in the game than we have.

I think early on in the game there was some time of possession differences, and then once you got behind, it became, okay, we've got to get back in the game. Two explosive runs that got called back, throw those in the mix, and I think the numbers are a lot different.

We also threw it to the perimeter at times. We did not block well on the perimeter. We dropped a few. Like I said before, when we rush the ball really well, every position contributes to when you rush the ball effectively. So I think as a whole there a lot of things across the board we could have done better.

Q. You said that Clark Lea kind of designed something to make Anthony make decisions that he maybe shouldn't have. What do you see, some weeks he runs with ferocity, some other weeks maybe it's not quite as assertive. Is that accurate?

BILLY NAPIER: You're talking about running the ball?

Q. Just week to week running the football.

BILLY NAPIER: I think there's not many plays where he's not involved in it. I think much like a pass pattern that you call, sometimes the coverage dictates where the ball goes.

Anthony was forced to hand the ball off quite a bit in the game.

So the design run, we came back with a few of those in the second half, but to some degree -- and that's happened before. I mean, when Montrell and Trevor get handed the ball and they have success, typically he's eliminating one player by reading that defender. So I think the key there is that we continue to take what the defense gives us. So nothing significant on that end.

Q. You have these ferocious comebacks in three games that could have resulted in winning the game. How frustrating is the inconsistency that you can't get that kind of effort and that kind of production earlier?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I agree with you. I think about that at times. You know, I think that you're -- until you get in the middle of the fight, I think that's one of the things, kind of what we're talking about with Mark's question relative to performing with consistency, handling success, handling failure, being a consistent competitor.

I think ultimately, when you see that, you kind of flip that switch in times when you get behind or maybe you're behind the eight ball or it's a closer game than expected. Those are the things that I'm talking about from a maturity standpoint. As a team, I think that's a little bit of where we're at.

But I think it's a great question and one that I think about often.

Q. Talk about the maturity there. Is understanding that you're good enough to play with these guys part of the equation here in getting these guys to understand that, okay, you're as good as the teams you're playing?

BILLY NAPIER: I think we've got a lot of young players that have developed confidence as the season's went on. I also think we're a team that can be very average and we're a team that can be elite. I think that it comes down to doing it when it counts, right? Put the ball down to go execute and go do your job.

I think consistency is the -- that's what we're searching for. Certainly Saturday was a little bit of a reality check in a lot of ways.

Q. Billy, what's the message you would send to the fans right now who are obviously discouraged and disappointed about where you are?

BILLY NAPIER: I think -- that's an interesting question. I

would tell you we've got a lot of folks working extremely hard, a lot of people that care. There's nobody that cares and works like this group of people -- players, staff members. The time that these people spend relative to doing their job at a high level, I would say that one day at a time, one person at a time, this group, we're going to get it done.

Q. A lot's been made of staffing with you guys. How does special teams fall into that? Who's running it? Because there's not like a special teams coach. Is everyone involved in it? How does that go?

BILLY NAPIER: We're doing it much like we've done in the past. We have all parts of our staff contribute to special teams. We've got two coverage units. We've got two return units. We've got the two PAT field goal rush units. Each coach is assigned one of those that needs a point person. Chris Couch provides the leadership there, the organizational part of that. We game plan together.

And those guys execute the plan in the meeting and on the practice field. So it's the same blueprint we've used in the past and one that's been very effective for us. It will continue to be effective for us.

Q. Florida State having played Louisiana last week, can that be beneficial on some levels for the guys, the coaches who carry over?

BILLY NAPIER: That's a great question. I think there's pros and cons to that to some degree, if that makes sense. I think you may get some insight to the team that play against them, but they also win against a similar structure the previous week. There's pros and cons on that each week for sure.

Q. When it comes to Marcus Stokes, I don't know how much you can comment on that particular incident? Maybe just in general. Is there a policy, when something like that happens --

BILLY NAPIER: We can't comment on it. Per the NCAA rules.

Q. To the challenge of the roster, what's the message that you send to players after a loss like this? Maybe in terms of ones that you have to recruit back next year or ones you're trying to recruit here just in general.

BILLY NAPIER: I think so. We spent extensive amount of time with people relative to what we do and how we do it. We're, much like many staffs in the history of this game, we're in the first year. We've got a lot of work to do.

I couldn't be more excited about what I'm observing relative to the improvement. Now, obviously didn't get the result that we wanted Saturday, but we got a group that's working extremely hard. We made improvement in a lot of ways, and certainly we've got a bright future in front of us.

It's more about the body of work at that point in time.

Q. You had mentioned on Saturday that you guys would take a second look at Ventrell's targeting penalty and consider a potential appeal. Have you guys had a chance to look at that, and how are you planning on proceeding?

BILLY NAPIER: We did extensive research on this. I think all those things are done behind closed doors with the league office and different people. So we've got great leadership in that area, and certainly it is what it is. Certainly there's challenges, good and bad, that go with that, right? They've got a tough job to do, much like we've got a tough job to do and you've got a tough job to do.

Q. Just wanted to ask you real quick, now that you've had a chance to see how the group has responded after some losses, how have you seen them kind of improve in handling those things, maybe not just from an emotional standpoint, but moving on to the next opponent? Especially now that you've got a short week.

BILLY NAPIER: I joke around to my wife, the kids are more resilient than the adults are, truth be known. This group, it's one thing that I think we all can be proud of is how they responded. Not only after difficult experiences on game day, but also within the game.

I think that this group has showed some resiliency. It's a tough group. It's a group that cares about each other. It's a group that's worked extremely hard for a long time. There's no question they'll be ready to go.

Q. The rush to judgment everyone makes in these situations, what's your kind of big picture view of that? Whether it's us, fans, whatever. Like you say, we're in year one, you guys. So what's your feeling on that? It's being evaluated all the time on Twitter, and every week the sky's falling.

BILLY NAPIER: I think you've got to get consumed with the things that you know are under your control. You've got to get consumed with improvement, efficiency, refining every part of the systems that you run, what you do with your time.

We've been through this before, right? This is a process, right? These things aren't -- you don't just flip a light switch and the house is built. I think it is truly one day at a time and it's one person at a time.

I think that there's lots of things that contribute here, but we've been here before. I've got a ton of confidence in what we do and how we do it.

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