

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Coach Billy Napier Press Conference



Florida Gators Orange -10, Florida Gators Blue -7

BILLY NAPIER: We would have played overtime. Absolutely. All right, guys.

I think just to start here, I want to thank Florida Victorious for sponsoring the game. Without question, I want to thank our fans, our students for showing up. Over 40,000 there tonight again. Two years in a row. Thursday night. Great venue.

Not as clean as you would like today, but I think defensively probably had a lot to do with that.

But overall really proud of this group. It's been a very productive offseason. Players and staff, right, I think we've worked hard. This is a little bit of a halfway point. It's kind of like the midterm exam to some degree. So a lot of work left to do. Two summer sessions and a training camp. Time for this group to come together.

I think contentment is the enemy, right? We have lots of players that have made a lot of progress, but certainly more work to do. Very encouraging by what we see. We're not there yet, but I like this team. I like this group of players. I like the attitude. I like the work ethic, camaraderie.

This group likes to be around each other, and they embrace the work. So we're going to give them a couple of days off here and then kind of put it to bed and move forward into phase four and reload and try to finish strong academically here.

They get a couple of weeks off. We'll be back at it late in May. What questions do we have here?

Q. Billy, you said defense might have had something to do with it? How much do you think was the defense, and how much do you think was the offense just not firing on its cylinders?

BILLY NAPIER: I think the pocket was a little muddy

tonight. That's one thing I would say. Standing out there behind it, I think the defensive line, the pressure created issues.

Got some unique players. Kingsley was out today. Obviously struggled a little bit with some consistency as a result of that, some things that caused issues with the flow of the game. Overall, that was the big issue in my opinion.

I didn't think the pocket was very clean. So I do think they made some plays as the pocket broke down. They had to make a few plays with their feet, but overall it was fast, it was physical out there. I think defensively in particular we tackled well, and I think they did a good job mixing it up. You know, the pressure was a factor tonight.

Q. Did you see any quarterback separation? Were you hoping for some, or is that about what you maybe can expect from a spring game?

BILLY NAPIER: No, I think that both guys did some good things, and I think there was going to be a lot of things that each guy can learn from.

They both had an opportunity to play with two groups of players. Not only with the first and second unit, but they're going against a different defense, right? I think there's certainly a difference there.

But, overall, both guys did some things well, and then certainly there's some management, game management, things I think they could do better, but there's no price for that experience, and I think we'll be able -- we have really good film that we have an opportunity to teach from.

There's nothing like putting the ball down and playing the situations as they come, but I would say that it wasn't quite as clean on our offense as maybe what we've been seeing in a practice setting for sure.

Q. You weren't joking, you would have gone to overtime, just to be clear?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I think we would have put the ball down. I was discussing that right there at the end. The



white team did a good job of making a few plays there and putting themselves in position to kick a field goal.

Yeah, I do think we would have put the ball down and played. I think that group right there, they wanted to win. They wanted to compete. And I think if you asked them what they would want to do, they would want to play overtime.

Q. Newcomers, Nunnery had a bunch of plays, Jackson, George, Carroll, a couple of big runs early. Can you talk about the infusion of kind of talent that you got from the portal?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah. No, I think that's probably the take-away for me as I go home and sleep tonight is a lot of new players making a significant impact. You can see it in the game, right?

We've been observing that group. I think that there's talent there, but there's also -- it creates competition and that dynamic, that new energy, 27 new scholarship players.

So I think they not only bring talent and upgrade their roster, but they also create competition and urgency in each room, and they're making the players around them better because they've got to fend for themselves and they're competing for a spot and playing time.

So, you know, Banks, Kelby Collins, Nunnery, Cam Jackson, I mean, there's --

Q. Spurlock had a tackle.

BILLY NAPIER: Spurlock had one of his better days.

Q. Searcy.

BILLY NAPIER: Searcy had a sack. I don't think there's any question anybody watching that game could see that this group of newcomers is going to make our team better.

Q. This time of year, break-out players, what about Marcus Burke, two big catches tonight?

BILLY NAPIER: You know, Marcus is -- I love Marcus, right, and Marcus is a talented young man. I mean, he is tall. He is long. He is fast. Marcus is learning how to be more consistent as a person. I'm proud of him and the progress that he has showed, right? He is a guy that's always been one of the more talented guys, and I think he has grown up this offseason in particular. He has taken some steps forward just in terms of being dependable, being accountable, being a guy that not only the staff can respect, but also his teammates, his consistency.

He has been banged up here a little bit at times, but for him to be healthy and be out there and make a few plays, I think that's going to help his growth. And our team needs -- we're better when Marcus Burke is playing his best football.

You know, he is a guy much like I'm describing. He has made some progress, but he is not there yet, and he has an opportunity here in the next couple of months to continue to earn opportunities to play.

Q. Overall did you see the progress this spring that you anticipated a little bit more, a little bit less?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I think that we saw a ton of growth just overall. I mean, I think we improved. Everybody. I think staff and players, we've made a lot of progress.

Tonight I think offensively I would have liked to have seen a little bit more, but I think based off of what we've observed in practice, our team is a much better football team at this point in time.

Q. I know it's still early, May 1st hasn't arrived, but are you anticipating much activity in the transfer portal?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, we're under 85 scholarships, so we have -- we're going to have opportunities to potentially add players to our team, but those will be much like they've been in the past. They're a case-by-case basis.

It's been good to us so far. I think our guys have done a really good job in the back room. The personnel department is doing a really good job, and the staff has been able to execute and go recruit, so we'll evaluate players. We find some that we like, we'll recruit them.

Our roster is not complete, and certainly we could add some players in the future.

Q. You have spoken about the strategy with this game being on a Thursday for recruiting purposes in the past. Could you speak from what you are able to see tonight where ultimately it was able to benefit you a bit?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I think we had close to 300 kids here, a number of which we've offered scholarships to. I think it also gives you an opportunity to get a lot of young players here. Some for the first time.

It's no competition, right, and I think that that's the thought process behind it. I will say, just to be completely transparent, last year we did it as a result of Easter

weekend, Good Friday, trying to get as much student involvement as we could. It worked.

Now, did it work as much? I think we'll quality control and kind of get an idea would we have been better off Friday night or Saturday? I think each year is a little bit different based off of your footprint, who else has a game, and it worked.

It don't matter when you play at the University of Florida. If your staff is working really hard, there's a lot of talent that can get in the car and drive here. We'll make a decision each year in what we think is the best from a recruiting strategy standpoint, and I think it paid off today.

Q. Billy, you mentioned the quarterbacks getting to work with different groups tonight. I'm sure they've gotten to do that throughout spring. How key is that component in the evaluation process to see how they elevate the other guys around them, and what will be key to you moving to the offseason with those guys?

BILLY NAPIER: I think tonight I was probably a little bit frustrated with how the players around them were playing to some degree. I think just in terms of the cleanness of the game, but overall there's no -- I mean, just the experience for both kids interacting with both sidelines, both offensive units, being in that setting, responding to the good and the bad. I mean, there was a ton of adversity out there tonight, and that gives each guy some experience in that regard.

You know, you would like to be a little bit cleaner, but they managed the game as best they could. I don't know that we threw it to the other team tonight. Did we? I think we had one turnover. A couple of turnovers on downs.

Overall, it could have been better on offense tonight, and the quarterback play -- I say this to you all the time -- sometimes they get too much credit. Sometimes it gets too much blame. Ultimately for a quarterback to play well, the players around them have got to play well.

We'll watch the tape. I'll be able to give you more feedback next opportunity we get together.

Q. The offensive line, I mean, touching on that, you already touched on Kingsley being out, but how did you feel about some of the new guys in new spots? Is that a little bit of a concern tonight? Eight sacks.

BILLY NAPIER: No, we gave up pressures tonight. There's no doubt. The quarterback pressure, sacks, without question. I think some of that, the defense is contributing to that.

You have new combinations of players as a result of a couple of guys being out. Overall, all very correctible. Just having stood out there behind it, I can tell you what happened.

Some just flat-out individual matchups, defensive players winning, and some things from a schematic standpoint we can do to help the players.

Got to give the defense some credit. They made it hard today.

Q. You mentioned the transfer portal before. You mentioned going to have four scholarship quarterbacks. You don't have that right now. Will you be in the market for a quarterback when the portal opens up?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I think that process is underway to some degree. I think we'll know more pretty soon. That's what I would say in that regard.

Yes, we anticipate adding a player to our team at that position.

Q. Sometimes teams go into games, spring games, playing vanilla, and especially on defense. The ground rules about blitzing. Did you have any of those with the defense? It didn't look like there was much of a governor on them.

BILLY NAPIER: I think that to each his own. I think we did pressure tonight. I think that's the personality and temperament of the play callers. That's their decision.

It's one thing good about this game is you've got four guys calling plays, so it creates opportunities. But, yeah, there is some agreement in terms of the number of variables that you present. I mean, offensively, small menu for both sides, and certainly the same on defense.

You know, we are what we are, right? It's going to be more about the execution of the call than the call. I think tonight was a good indication of that.

All right, guys. Thank you all.

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