

University of Florida Football Media Conference

Thursday, April 13, 2023
Gainesville, Florida, USA

Graham Mertz Press Conference



Florida Gators Orange-10, Florida Gators Blue-7

THE MODERATOR: Joined by Graham Mertz.

Q. Just give us your thoughts. If you are assessing your play tonight, how would you rate yourself?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, I mean, I'm sure initial postgame, you're a little frustrated. Couldn't get the ball rolling. And then when something big would happen, we kind of got set back a little bit. It all comes down to execution.

I mean, I'm definitely not satisfied with it. We did do some good things. I think that skill players made a lot of plays. Ricky right before halftime made a great catch on the sideline.

Guys definitely went out there and played, and I think that was fun, getting under the lights in The Swamp. I wouldn't say even close to satisfied.

I think that's why we all play this game. I think that's why the coaches coach. We're addicted to always getting better, so definitely not satisfied with it.

Q. How much of the playbook did we see tonight?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Not a whole lot (laughing). Some good stuff. We ran some good stuff tonight, but we've got some stuff (laughing).

Q. Do you feel like you settled down after the first quarter? The second quarter -- the operation seemed a lot better?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, I think offensively on the Orange team, as soon as we kind of hit that second quarter, put some drives together, got a few first downs. Our biggest thing is we were getting negative or not getting a positive play on first down and then getting behind the sticks.

So for us it was just getting that first first down, and then

everybody kind of settled in and we could make our plays.

I think the second quarter we stacked three or four good drives. We had one then in that fumble, but I mean, that's the flow of football. That's what happens in the game. Yeah, it was a solid second quarter.

Q. What do you think the biggest thing you took from tonight that you guys need to improve upon by the time you get to camp?

GRAHAM MERTZ: I think the details. I think at this time of the year, I mean, I've been through a few spring balls. Now, at this point, it's all about the details. You've got a group of, what, 20 to 25 guys that are new on this team, new playbook. Whether they're transfers or they're incoming freshmen.

A lot of guys' heads are out there spinning, but at this point -- from this point on it's all about the details and really owning what you're -- you kind of got thrown to the fire for some of those guys, and now it's about really locking in on the little things that win games. Especially in the SEC.

Q. By the way, exchanges, what was going on there?

GRAHAM MERTZ: We'll work on it. It's just a couple of high snaps, but, I mean, I'm confident in Rod, and I know that he will correct it and work harder than anybody on it. He has that big brace on his arm so it's a little harder for him to control it sometimes. But, I mean, he'll be more than ready. I mean, I've got all faith in that guy. He is a baller.

Q. Now that the spring is over, what are your thoughts on it? What was it like compared to what you expected?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, first off, I just have to say I'm blessed to be here. Like I said earlier in spring, I wake up every day with -- just grateful to see the sun every day, which is something stupid, but when you are in Wisconsin for a while, you kind of realize what the sun does (laughing). Really enjoyed the spring.



I think that personally I grew as a player and as a young man. It's been a great spring. I've put in a lot of work here, and it's just the start for it. I mean, we have a lot of work to do, but I'm excited for it.

Q. Can you kind of talk about maybe the last two minutes of that first half, hitting Ricky and then hitting Kahleil in the end zone?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, basically the one to Ricky was just four verts. They gave us a version of two, and he was kind of running free, so I was, like, I'm going to rip that. He is my third guy in the progression.

Then we get down to -- first off, Coach O'Hara dialed up a play call down there on the goal line. We had double slants. We had a feeling they were going to bring the house, and they did. We repped that early in the spring, and it was the same exact rep we saw earlier.

It was good to get Kahleil and go score that. It was a good end to the two-minute.

Q. How would you judge your progress from arriving here in January to now it? Are you as far along as you thought you would be?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, definitely put in a lot of work early, a lot of long days, but even getting to day one of spring ball, I mean, I was grateful that I did that because I was a lot further ahead than I expected, which kind of allowed me to early in spring ball play free during practice.

Looking back at it, I was grateful for the long days that led to that, but I think that right now offensively I'm in a great spot, personally.

Definitely, like I said, there are the little details that I need to master, whether that's protection and giving just a few little calls to the O-line to make their job easier, that's all I'm focused on right now, how to make everybody else's job a little bit easier. I think that's the true job of a quarterback.

Q. How comfortable are you with the overall scheme of things and the guys you've got to play with?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Extremely comfortable. That's the exciting part. Everybody in that locker room trusts each other, trusts the coaches, and now it's just building up that -- I'm kind of an old soul on this, but I always think that the best teams I've been on, everything is fueled by love.

And I think that's that one thing you've got to -- it's love and respect, and you have to earn both of those. We've got a lot of new guys here, and I think that this summer is going

to be great to really -- we had foundation, identity in spring ball, but I think that the summer is really where a team separates.

On the field, I love everything about it. I think that the fun part about this, now we get to truly grow together as young men, and I think that's where this team will take the next step.

Q. What did you see from Jack when he was out there? What kind of opportunity was this for you guys to push each other?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah. Heck of an end to the game. That was one thing that I think I'm standing on the sideline watching it, and we talked about that in meetings. All right, if you get this pressure, this coverage, you have to get down the back because no one is going to have him.

I was really excited to see that at the end of the game even though the Blue team lost, and I was on the Blue team, but I was very excited to see that because that fires me up, seeing a guy out there that we've spent time on that. We've seen it during practice. The correction was made, and we hit it. That's one thing that as a competitor you love to see, and that's what pushes you.

I mean, in total I think that I was proud of how we took care of the ball tonight, but I think that we're both going to look back and be, like, I could have made that play, I could have made that play. That's what we're excited for.

Q. It's kind of up to each --

GRAHAM MERTZ: Great name, by the way.

Q. Likewise. Got to stick together. It's kind of up to each program how much they take advantage of a spring game. Just given your experience, how much do you think this setup kind of was conducive to a competitive atmosphere?

GRAHAM MERTZ: You know what the crazy thing is, I have never had a spring game.

Q. Really?

GRAHAM MERTZ: We've always had an open practice.

Q. What did you think of the first spring game?

GRAHAM MERTZ: I loved it. Just from the start walking out there. Obviously, we had two scrimmages in the stadium, but there's nothing like walking out in The Swamp and seeing it loaded. Well, not completely loaded, but



loaded with people in there and fired up. It was electric in there.

For me, just having my family down here, it was definitely a blessing, and I completely enjoyed it.

Q. Is that a Wisconsin thing or Big Ten thing, not having a spring game?

GRAHAM MERTZ: I think it was a Wisconsin thing.

Q. Cold weather.

GRAHAM MERTZ: (Laughing) yeah, if you really want to be outside with the snow.

Appreciate you guys.

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