

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Mark Hocke Press Conference



MARK HOCKE: First of all, hope everyone here had a really good summer. I know we have, and we're looking forward to this fall. Best time of the year, right?

Secondly, I want to thank all of y'all for telling our story. I think that there's a lot of work that's done in the dark that no one really knows about. The average person, the average fan doesn't know what's required or what it takes.

I think you help write and tell that story, so we can't thank y'all enough.

The first thing I want to say is I think the culture is presenting, and that's because of the hard work of this football team. The quickest way to become a dangerous football team is to get your most talented players to have the most intangibles, for them to be the best examples.

Without that, it's a recipe for disaster.

Fortunately, we have guys like Jason Marshall, Ricky Pearsall, Montrell Johnson, Trevor Etienne, Shemar James, Devin Moore, Austin Barber, Jaydon Hill. I'm leaving out a ton of names here, but when you have that many great examples on not just how to catch a football or how to run for a touchdown but how to keep your locker room clean, how to be punctual, how to wear the right uniform, how to be more bought into the team than you're bought into yourself, it just cleans up a lot of things, and it makes a more cohesive unit and helps you play team football and winning football.

Coach Napier says it all the time: The main factor in building a team is the human element. At the end of the day, we see them as athletes sometimes, but they're humans. They're people.

One of my favorite quotes that Coach has in our staff meeting room, our war room, is "We're building a team, not collecting talent," and I think that's where those intangibles come in.

What we ask of our guys isn't normal. We had the Grill in

the 'Ville yesterday with a player panel, and every player talked about how demanding and how hard, and it was funny because I felt like they were a little reserved because they were trying to be honest but not scare these recruits.

But I was like, no, speak the truth. Speak your truth. They need to know what the reality is. I think sometimes we try to hide the truth, and that needs to be out there.

That's why -- and it's got to be hard. We're developing men.

I think that's why. They've been through it a year and a half now, and we're a better outfit because of it.

Obviously plenty of work left to be done, but really pleased with how they responded all year, and looking forward to seeing some of the fruits of our labor.

I can truly say the best is yet to come.

Any questions?

Q. How have the metrics changed over the years in terms of what you try to do? If you go back old school, it was like bench pressing and these things. How has all that changed in your approach?

MARK HOCKE: Yeah, that's a great point. I think just like anything and everything, even in your field, it's an evolution. Some of y'all started this journey years back, and you didn't have a phone that you could type your report on. It was note pad and pen, right? And it's that same approach in the weight room.

Tyler Miles is our director of performance. Some people call it a sports science. He and his crew, Miguel Carodine, Frank Ogas, they do a good job of, like you were saying, some of this newer age analytics that we use to help -- look, if we're not developing your talent, driving performance or keeping you healthy, we're wasting your time. Some of these tools, some of these analytics help just with that, velocity-based training. It's Perch, it's Elite Form. You may have heard a couple of these things. The catapult chips that the players use every time they practice,



every time they run.

I can think back to my playing days, our conditioning test was to run a mile. Those ways are long gone. When I first got to the college level, it was the 1-10 test. That's few and far between. There's very few programs still running that test because long and slow is kind of dead. Now it's short and fast, which that's more football.

Football is acceleration, deceleration, and the life of a play is somewhere between five and six seconds, depending upon what level you're on.

Does that answer your question?

Q. How has your role kind of changed, too, because they've just curtailed practices so much since you got into it. Two-a-days don't exist. It's 15 practices, used to be 30. How has that changed your importance and your role?

MARK HOCKE: That's a good question. I think some of those changes are calculated, intentional and smart. The health of the player. I think that's what's in mind. So whether it be -- this is a physical, violent game, right, so guys getting beat up over the course of 30 practices in a very short window, I can remember literally when I'm playing 25 years ago, you have -- 20, 25 years ago, you have two-a-days for two weeks straight. Like I remember going to a different camp, and it's morning practice, afternoon practice. Some days we even had a walk-through at lunch, and that's bizarre.

The game has changed, but I think some of it's calculated. Some of it's intentional. I think there's been some smart changes.

Now we have objective data instead of a coach using a subjective eye saying, no, we have worked them hard enough or we have or haven't worked them hard enough. You can look at the numbers. This is what the numbers say about what a game looks like. This is what the numbers say about what a practice looks like.

Q. Has it increased overall, though, because it's less time with the guys, and I don't know if it was more for you --

MARK HOCKE: Yeah, personally that's why I fell in love with the strength and conditioning world. I started as a high school coach where I was in the weight room, but I was also a position coach. When I got to the collegiate level, I saw the time we had. Time is influence. That's where you can really have influence over a human being, over a team. On the college level more so than any other

level, the strength and conditioning staff is somewhat at an advantage because of the time we have with the players.

Q. You mentioned in the off-season that culture is trending. I'm curious maybe what you've seen from that in terms of the unity compared to last year or what an example may be.

MARK HOCKE: Yeah, I think the biggest piece is just the understanding of what the standard and expectations are. I think at the end of the day, everyone wants to do right and wants to try really hard. But sometimes it's hard to do right when you're used to doing things a different way.

I think there was some resistance. I think we've overcome that. I think we're all on the same page, and much more working as a team, kind of pulling in the same direction.

I think that's kind of where we're at.

Q. Compared to last year, how close are you guys as a team to reaching the goals you set for them for the summer as far as conditioning, as far as muscle gain, et cetera, like that?

MARK HOCKE: I think you're always going to have a mixed bag as far as did everyone hit this number on Power Clean, did everyone hit this number on max velocity, speed work, whatever. You'll have a mixed bag. I think the majority trended in the right direction, and that's what you're really looking for.

The way I've always seen it, and I could be wrong, I'm looking at the culture because I feel like that's what I need to have my ear to the ground on because I think that's more important than just a Power Clean number or max velo number, what type of people do we have, are they selfish or are they grateful, how do they operate as a unit. Those are the things that I think are more important, the intangibles.

Q. You mentioned the word "selfish." I presume you see a lot less of that this year than you did last year?

MARK HOCKE: Yeah, I think that comes with having a better understanding of what's expected. Look, I get it; I'm stubborn, too. My wife tells me that all the time. Sometimes you just have to have an open mind and be willing to change.

Q. When it comes to what kind of shape guys are in coming into camp, what is Des Watson's story?

MARK HOCKE: He would tell you we're still running a mile. Des has work left to do, but I love Des Watson, and I

think Coach Spencer has called him the eighth wonder of the world. What an unbelievable talent, for a guy to be so big, strong, powerful, and so agile. We've got a team of people working directly with Des, and we're going to keep chipping away, getting him in a great place so he can put out his best plays.

Q. People say his weight fluctuates, 400, 450. When you see a specimen like that, how hard is it for him to -- he says he can gain 20 pounds in one meal.

MARK HOCKE: Yeah, I think that's why Spence called him the eighth wonder of the world. If you were to ask me, hey, you're going to have a guy that contributes and is dangerous that's 400 plus, I'd have probably called you a liar. That's why they say never say never, right?

Q. You can't work out the same way in season as you do in the off-season. What have you learned to keep guys from losing too much during the year, what they gained in the off-season.

MARK HOCKE: Great question. You hear maintenance -- like we're going to maintain strength, we're going to maintain speed. We believe that maintenance is a myth.

We are going to chase strength and speed year-round. We have a plan in place to develop strength and speed year-round. But to answer your question, you can only serve one king. In season, king is practice, king is competition, and not necessarily strength and conditioning.

What we do is we cut out a lot of the volume, which isn't ideal when you're chasing strength and speed, but there is still a regimen or a protocol that you can put in place to still have strength gains, still have speed gains year-round.

Q. It's come to my attention that the F in your weight room has two meanings.

MARK HOCKE: Yeah, maybe a few.

Q. Where are you guys at in that department?

MARK HOCKE: Yeah, F is not for Florida, it's for freaks. That is the factory for freaks. It's trending just like the culture.

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