

# University of Florida Football Media Conference

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## Coach Billy Napier

### Press Conference



Florida 22, Charlotte 7

**BILLY NAPIER:** It's hard to win. It's hard to win, and certainly we had to grind that one out. We all know the issues, red zone, forced to kick five field goals down there tonight.

But I will tell you, hats off to Trey Smack to step up and hit all five of those, and certainly defensively right around 200 yards, really gave up one possession with a couple big plays.

But complementary football, and we moved the ball up and down the field. We've just got to have better red zone production.

I think when we look back at that, it's going to be very technical, the game in general. I think there will be things that are very correctable just based on what I observed out there, whether it's a missed block or getting beat in pass protection. I think it was all very correctable.

But man, there was a lot of good. We had almost 89,000 in there tonight, and to have that two weeks in a row, to sell it out, every time they turn the lights off out there in the fourth quarter it's a pretty special moment.

I'm proud of our team. Half the teams in college football today lost, and the Gators won. Now, are we happy with everything that happened out there? No. There's going to be lots of things that we can improve at.

But I think we see a lot of bright spots. There's a lot of guys that are playing good football. We had guys make their first start today for the Gators, a couple guys, and we had a lot of young players that were very productive.

The disappointing thing about games like this, these are the ones where maybe the average fan anticipates it getting out of control, and a lot of our young players didn't have an opportunity to play because we didn't get it under control.

But I'm proud of our team, the character of our team. We stayed into it. We continued to fight. I didn't see a lack of effort out there. I think it's all going to be very technical and very correctable.

So what do we got? I know we've got questions.

**Q. Multiple instances where it appeared you guys were undermanned on returns, and special teams you guys also had multiple penalties. Could you speak to the trend --**

**BILLY NAPIER:** Multiple penalties?

**Q. Earlier in the game.**

**BILLY NAPIER:** What were they?

**Q. First a holding and then illegal block in the back.**

**BILLY NAPIER:** Right, so the illegal block in the back, Jaden Robinson, I think would be up for debate, and I do think in the return game on occasion when you're competitive, those things are going to happen. I mean, there's very rarely an NFL return that doesn't have a penalty.

But much like I just said earlier, there's going to be technical things that we can improve at, and we did. We had a block in the back and the holding penalty, and those are individual mistakes.

They're all going to be technique based, decision making based. But we're close, and I think it's been a point of emphasis in the return game.

It was good to see some production in that area. I do think that Jaden Robinson -- I'll be interested to see when we watch it a little bit closer whether it was a block in the back or not. I'll let you know Monday.

**Q. What about the 10 men on the field -- it was a field goal, field goal block and a punt return.**

**BILLY NAPIER:** We didn't have 10 out there for the field

goal. We didn't get the returner on right there in the middle of the field, and ultimately because of the sack, that's where the miscue was made.

We're okay with that. We're okay with the returner not being on the field in that situation. It's 4th down and a mile.

Look, it's out there where we think we're going to be in field goal range and then all of a sudden the punter is out there.

Aware of that and very unique situation in the game, and we're okay with that.

**Q. The red zone and the short yardage, was that something you saw during the week? You were talking about during the week in practice particularly being sloppy and so forth at times.**

BILLY NAPIER: No, I don't think that. I think that's going to be very obvious. Whether a guy missed a block or a guy missed an open receiver or whatever the case may be, look, they stopped us in the red area tonight multiple times, okay. But I think I'll be able to give you a little bit more of a report. I feel like I know what happened, and I think it's all easy to fix.

**Q. Micah didn't play in the second half...**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, obviously Micah was suspended for the first half and then a little bit of in-house there in that regard for the second half.

**Q. Another efficient night from Graham, got knocked around a bit, though --**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, we've got to keep him cleaner. That was one of the things that was disappointing. But listen, I'm going to tell you, we talked about it during the week, they've got some guys on their side. Some of those edge cats were top 100 players in the country, Alabama, Michigan. That was the big challenge in the game was the edge players, and certainly playing without a starting tackle in the beginning, the first half -- they proved to be effective players. There were issues in the pass game and the run game.

**Q. Three times inside the 10, you guys had to settle for field goals, and one of them was a 4th and 1. Last year I think you guys were third in the SEC in 4th downs and going for it. Why didn't you go for that one?**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, the analytics said it's not a go, even though it's a 1. 15 at that point in the game makes it a two-touchdown game, so you want to go for -- there's 2:40

left in the game at that point, 15 helps you a lot more -- if you don't get it you're 12 and they've got the ball. Ultimately the analytics say don't go for it right there, as much as I wanted to.

**Q. I was just surprised.**

BILLY NAPIER: No, I mean, that was a test of, do you really believe in the analytics or not. Great question.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, Arlis is -- we had a handful of players that made their first start, Arlis being one of those, and he played well in the game. He made some plays, touchdown, big play late. We think he can be a mismatch player. The guy was a unique receiver/linebacker in high school. He's really developing nicely.

I thought he had the best week of practice that he's had. Odom was a little bit banged up, and we decided to sit him, and Arlis stepped up and played really well in the game. I'm proud of Arlis. I think he's got a bright future in front of him.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I don't know what the net was on that punt, but we definitely blocked one -- nobody asked about that. We're close on a punt return tonight. We blocked a punt. We made five field goals. We kicked a bunch of touchbacks. Crawshaw was outstanding in the game. And we played good on defense.

We're sitting here a little bit disappointed because of red zone issues and a couple sloppy turnovers in the game. Trust me, nobody is more pissed about that than I am.

No, I think Wingo is one of the more impressive young men that we have in our program, and he practices with effort. He plays with effort. This is a guy who missed the off-season with a shoulder surgery, and he's played a critical role in some of our 3rd down success. He's a great communicator, and he plays a lot on all of our special teams.

Wingo is what you want a University of Florida football player to be. He's a class act. It's good to see a guy like that who does things the right way consistently have some success.

**Q. Ricky Pearsall's one-handed catch, about as good as I've seen. What was your vantage point of that? Secondly, 22-7, like you said, not the greatest, but can that be maybe a good thing going to Kentucky, playing**

## with a little edge?

BILLY NAPIER: No, I think you're spot on. How about that catch, huh? I'm running four verts and the safety is tilted to Ricky, I think he's getting ready to rip a field seam in there to Caden, but then he throws a two ball and -- I don't know, that one would be -- Ricky Pearsall, I'm telling y'all right now, this guy is a very underrated player. He is one of the best receivers in the entire country.

He's bigger than you think. He's more explosive than you think. He came back to improve his stock for the draft, and he's doing it. Not to mention the leadership and the character that he brings every day, the work habits. Ricky is a very effective player because he's highly skilled. He can get open at the line. He can separate at the top of the route, and he's got fantastic ball skills and hand selection.

Yeah, I think that was one for the books right there for sure.

## Q. (No microphone.)

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I think so. I'm trying to help our young guys in there sort through all this, but I do think that this group kind of thrives off the hate, if that makes sense. There will be some things that come with keeping this one a little too close.

I think ultimately there will be some things that we can learn from this game. We talk about red zone touchdowns all the time. We want to be 70 percent touchdowns in the red area, but we want to be 100 percent red zone scoring, and it was a factor.

I think if you add 20 to that score, I'm probably already taking a shower right now. Y'all would have much less questions, okay.

We moved the ball really effectively. We've got to score touchdowns when we get it down there.

## Q. Only 1 for 9 tonight on 3rd downs; that was a problem last week in the second half and carried over it seemed this week.

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah. I think the turnovers -- look, we played some of those were two-down approaches, right, and I think that affected a little bit.

But yeah, there's no question. Ultimately -- and they're in the red area, right. Got to get it better, there's no doubt. That's one of the stats that's going to stand out.

## Q. And center down to right tackle, all young guys,

## newbies basically?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, Jake is out there, Knijeah, Lyndell made his first start, Knijeah made his first start. You've got some guys out there, but it's healthy. It's good for them. It's good for our team.

We had other players playing. We talked about Arlis earlier, Hansen is out there as a rookie, Andy Jean played a lot of snaps tonight, did a nice job in the game.

Yeah, I think we'll definitely benefit from some of that experience, whether it was because of injury or suspension. That will be a positive for us.

## Q. I was wondering if you had an update on Kamari Wilson. We didn't see him before the game and he was only briefly on the sideline.

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, Kamari Wilson didn't make the travel roster this week, so we can take 80 to the hotel, and Kamari wasn't on that list.

Yeah, it's pretty simple.

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