

# University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Gainesville, Florida, USA

## Graham Mertz

### Press Conference



**Q. You had a week off because you've taken a few beatings lately.**

GRAHAM MERTZ: It was good. The body needed it. I think anytime you get a bye week, I've never had one mid-season, I've always had it like week three or four, which has been wild. It's nice right in the middle. Get your body, your mental right. It was a good bye week.

**Q. Did you do anything special to get your body back to where you want it to be?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: Just normal recovery stuff. Spending time up here, hot tub, cold tub, treatment. For me it was really -- and just sleep. I think sleep is the greatest recovery tool in the world. For me, a lot of sleep this weekend.

**Q. What stands out about Georgia's defense?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I think definitely multiple in what they do as far as fronts, coverages, pressures. I think they're physical up front. They're fast. You see that on tape. They fly around, make plays. Like I said, physical defense.

Across the board, they play a brand of football on defense that you can see when you're watching film.

**Q. What's comparable in your career? 40th start coming up.**

GRAHAM MERTZ: Wow, 40. Getting old.

Yeah, you talking like other defenses?

**Q. 24-game winning streak.**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I played some really good defenses. I think each team's unique. It's kind of hard to compare a team to another one. Played a lot of great fronts, secondaries.

I think, what was it, 2021 Michigan, they were legit, man. I

think you watch tape and you see how people play. There's a lot of teams that are playing great defense right now. We've played some really good teams on defense this year.

I think, yeah, they're a great defense. You see it on tape.

**Q. How much does the timing of getting the ball out matter this week?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: It depends on the play. There's scenarios where you have to hold onto the ball longer and make a play. That's every week. I think we've sat in here, postgame, too, there's games where I've been holding onto the ball a little too long. Make a smart play, whether that is throwing it away or checking it down.

Each week that's the emphasis. You have to play each play. You can't predetermine stuff like that. You still have to go out there and play the game.

**Q. Coach Napier talked about the offense playing better around you. How have you seen that evolving, your chemistry with guys?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, I mean, we're having a blast. I think the biggest thing with the young guys we do have in there, they're growing up, they're playing really their first college ball. It's been cool to kind of see them mature through that process, really just understand what goes into the workweek, how to take care of your body, how to prep.

It's been fun to see the guys really take that step because really once you hit that, like, week three or four of your college career, you get a feel for what's going on, your head's not spinning any more, you know what to expect.

A lot of guys around us are getting their first snaps. Not anymore, they play a lot of ball now, but they've gone through that process of maturing and understanding what goes into winning football. That's been fun.

**Q. How has getting Trey back and Arlis Boardingham's development allowed you to expand the offense?**

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GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, I think those guys are playing fast. I think they're playing confident in what they're doing. When I know I have a matchup, I trust them to make the play.

I think across the board, like I said, the guys are really coming into their own of understanding what goes into winning football, like I said. Guys are doing what they're supposed to do. They're executing. Those two have been doing a great job of that. It's been fun to play with them.

**Q. This is a rivalry game. Have you ever thought about what it would be like never have to buy a drink again if you could pull off another rivalry win?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I've played in some rivalry games. I think that's one thing that once you spend some time in college, you have an appreciation for 'em. I think anytime you go into a game that's a rivalry game, you have to appreciate that, enjoy that process, whether it's the whole week of seeing all the stuff on the TVs or all that. I mean, there's countless different things you do during a rivalry week.

Yeah, I mean, we're excited for it. Another opportunity to play. Yeah, I'm excited for this team.

**Q. Have you leaned on any quarterbacks during the season for advice or just Danny?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I've had a lot of people reach out to me. One thing I appreciate from Danny is the constant communication. I think he's been great as far as outside of football, like just being a mentor that I can just talk to about really anything. He's been awesome.

**Q. What did the offense accomplish during the bye week?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: The emphasis was fundamentals. Anytime you get to this point in the season, when you've played, what, six, seven games, you got to really dive back into the fundamentals of what you're doing, how you're doing it, because you can lose that in the season because it's just constantly going.

On my end, footwork, timing, understanding the holistic approach of playing quarterback. Everybody kind of dove into that in their position room. It was good.

**Q. Billy told you after the game that this is why you came to Florida. This matchup is also why you come to Florida.**

GRAHAM MERTZ: A lot of reasons to come to Florida.

**Q. Was this something that was even on your radar, did you have an opportunity to play the two-time defending national champs?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, I mean, really when I committed here, man, it was the whole deal. I mean, playing in the SEC, playing in games like this. Like coach said, that's why you come to Florida.

For me, I'm excited just to play another game. I mean, like completely being serious. I'm just enjoying it. I think I hit you guys after the game, but enjoying each week, each step in the process of playing, getting to game day.

Yeah, this is definitely why you come to Florida.

**Q. Success putting wide receivers in the backfield, specifically Trey. What do you see that do to an opposing defense? Is there confusion that comes from that?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, it forces communication. I mean, I think just any defense you play, based on formation, they probably have a call defense, then they have to adjust on what they see.

Anytime you throw a guy with a lot of speed in the backfield, in addition with a running back, that causes some different communication.

I think you put it on tape, teams prep for it. You get a different look pretty much every time. Teams always have their own little wrinkles, so it's good.

**Q. Did you go football-less?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: No.

**Q. What did you watch?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: Are you talking about Saturday?

**Q. Yeah.**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I watched a bunch of games. I was spending some time with my girlfriend, Ricky and his girlfriend. We had the games on in the background. Yeah, just kind of around the league watching SEC ball, then I watched a little bit of the Bucks game yesterday. That was a wild ending.

It's weird when you're so into a season, kind of sitting back and having football on constantly, not playing. That was

one thing that Rick and I talked about. It's like a weird gut feeling that this just doesn't feel right. You got to take some time off, get your body back, get your mind right.

**Q. Is there a benefit to staying in a rhythm throughout the season?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: 100%. I think it's being honest with yourself, knowing that you've done a lot of work and your body needs it. We didn't take, like, a week off just so we're all clear. We just took like a day or two off. I kind of grabbed the guys and we did some stuff on our own. We had a good week off. Bodies are right.

**Q. 24-game winning streak, what does that say?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: It's impressive. I mean, I think just across the board the way they run their program, to do that back-to-back years is extremely impressive. That's why every level you play football, it's to win a championship. To do that back-to-back years, it's hard to do. It's definitely impressive.

Yeah, we're looking forward to this opportunity.

**Q. As a quarterback, what kind of weapon is Brock Bowers?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I've seen highlights. First off, anytime a guy gets hurt, that's never fun. I've been around a bunch of guys that have had injuries that have to deal with that. Obviously praying for him in that sense. It's an NFL tight end. He's an elite, elite tight end.

After every game, you go on your phone, you're swiping, you see guys' highlights, I see him every weekend. He's a baller. I wish him nothing but the best in the future.

**Q. (Question about younger offensive linemen.)**

GRAHAM MERTZ: They've been awesome. Across the board in that room, a lot of different pieces have been plugged in in different areas. They've never flinched. That's one thing I appreciate, is they come out there, they're ready to go.

Yeah, I mean, I think guys like Slaughter and Kam, they're doing a great job. Slaughter is putting in the time, the energy, the effort. He's been doing a great job. I truly appreciate that.

**Q. You have a relationship with a lot of your teammates, but the bond you have with Ricky is special. How much has that been something you appreciate, have the quarterback-receiver**

**relationship?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: It's been awesome. I think it's funny because our team, we definitely got a lot of young players. We got a lot of guys that have played a lot of ball and seen a lot of different things.

We always joke about we played each other in the Vegas Bowl in 2021 when he was at Arizona State, I was at Wisconsin. We always joke about stuff like that.

Rick is my boy. Ever since I got down here, we've both been on the same mission. I think I can say that about a lot of guys on this team, that's why we're so close. But, yeah, Rick is my guy.

**Q. How much does that help you play on Saturday?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I think a bunch. Whenever you get to know your teammate, coach always talks about it, but when you form that off-the-field -- obviously when I got here, it was about on-the-field stuff, catching, watching film. It's kind of like a wave of on the field, you get a little bit of time off, off-the-field stuff.

He's been awesome. That's my guy for life. Always have his back, he'll always have mine. He's a brother.

**Q. You threw on an off day?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah.

**Q. Two days off, is that what you got?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, Friday, Saturday.

**Q. It was too much for you to be off?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: No, no, we still took our off time. It was just kind of everybody getting back, getting their feet back under them.

**Q. How hard you've worked since you been here, how many days would you say you've taken off?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: How many days I've taken off? What do you consider 'off'? Does film count?

I don't know. Couldn't put a number on it.

**Q. Zero?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: It's probably under, like, 10, but... Yeah, I couldn't tell you honestly. Like I said, I always say it, but I love to do this. My free time, I love watching film. I



sound like such a football nerd right now. I genuinely love this. It's hard to separate myself from it. Especially when you're at a place like this, it's easy to just do it every day. The support staff, the coaches, the players, everybody, they love this place and they want to win, so...

When you wake up and you have that every day, it's kind of hard to step away from it.

**Q. Do you sense others are feeling that sense of urgency?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: It wasn't just Ricky, yeah. I think one thing we have learned is throughout the season, I mean, we always talk about winning football, guys know what it takes to win. They know what it takes in the week of prep.

I think it's always just growing your week of prep, what you do, just kind of getting that little extra edge. I think you take everything that you've done, you add a little bit to it every week, you constantly develop that, trying to get better.

I think guys know what to do and how you need to prep to win. I think guys, we're trying to stick to our normal schedule.

**Q. Did you have a true off day during the bye?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, I took a day off, yeah.

**Q. At first you faced skepticism. How gratifying has this been? How pleased are you with the way things are going right now?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I think there's always, especially in this game, a narrative. You can fall victim to the narrative. When you have a mission, you have a process, you trust it, I think that's where you truly find that growth. When you invest in yourself. Invest in what you're doing, in the people around you, it just takes care of itself.

It's easy to get wrapped up in a narrative, especially with social media nowadays. It's easy to fall into that. If you stay true to yourself and your mission, that carries you further than any narrative can ever.

**Q. How much has the offense grown?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: A bunch. I think across the board where I see the growth, you guys don't see because you're not at practice every day, but you see it during practice. Whether that's routes on air, indy, team period, seven-on-seven, it's guys taking everything that's happened in the game, good, bad or ugly, and applying it

in the practice. For me it's been seeing that transition in practice, how guys are approaching it. I think that's really where you see the growth. It shows up on game day.

You guys see Saturday, a few days go by. Those few days are the big growth periods. It's been fun. This offense, we're close, playing together. Just got to keep getting better.

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