

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Coach Billy Napier Press Conference



Georgia - 43, Florida - 20

COACH NAPIER: We made too many mistakes today. We knew the margin of error was going to be small. I do think we can coach better in all three parts of our team. I think obviously looking the players in the eye after the game, I think they know they can play better as well.

And ultimately, Georgia's got a good football team. They've got good personnel. They've got a good coaching staff. They've got veteran players that have been in their system, and they played well today.

We made too many critical mistakes. I think, in particular, the two huge mistakes in the first half allowed the game to kind of get out of control to some degree.

I do think that the kids continued to play hard. I do think we have a group that has character. I think, ultimately, when you fail in the game of football and in life, you got an opportunity to learn. How do you get wiser? You make mistakes along the way. How do you get smarter and get better at what you do, how do you continue to grow and develop? Ultimately you have to go through tough times, you have to make mistakes along the way. And we did today.

Credit to Georgia. They beat us today. I do think that this group will respond the right way. I think ultimately, as a staff and as a team, being a man and taking ownership of things that you can do better.

And I think ultimately we can compromise our character, or we can choose character, and we can go about our business here. And there's no sympathy.

You guys certainly don't have any sympathy for us, and in our league there's no sympathy. You've got to turn the page and get ready to go the next week.

We'll go through this thing with a fine-tooth comb. It's important that the experience that we had today, that we learn from that, all parts of our organization and certainly

the players in that locker room.

I do think we did some good things today, but, ultimately, not enough, and certainly not with consistency. We made too many errors. The sack/fumble and the blocked punt in particular, those two, it's a 14-point swing and a ton of momentum.

Q. Can you just take us through the thinking on the fourth-and-one at your own 34, I guess, it was pretty early there? Did you think you got a bad spot on the third down at the end of the first quarter?

COACH NAPIER: No, I think one was a go. And I think, ultimately, at that point in the game we felt it was going to be a point total that we needed to get to to win the game. Felt we had a good play. I think we're close there.

Whether or not the spot was right, I don't know. Our league's got really good people. They got people back in Birmingham are viewing all that information.

So, ultimately, the officials, they didn't have a huge impact on today. Didn't have much to do with them.

Q. Throwing the ball there versus, it was fourth and inches, does that show a little bit about --

COACH NAPIER: It was a little less than a full yard. It wasn't inches.

Q. Does it show a little bit about your concern about how daunting their front can be?

COACH NAPIER: No, I think that ultimately -- I've got conviction about the call. I mean, you can go a lot of different directions. We can sit here. That's one of many plays today that probably we'd like to have back.

But it's not necessarily about the plays at times. It's about the players. It's about the execution. We can certainly call better plays at times today, but ultimately it comes down to the execution of the play.

Q. You guys had a very fast start, impressive start.

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Where do you think the momentum kind of shifted?

COACH NAPIER: I think if you look at that second, third, fourth possession there, we made some mistakes. We got behind the sticks. We had a penalty. We got sacked. Those, in particular.

I mean, I do think that -- we felt like we needed to throw it at times in the game. And we did rush the ball effectively at times, in particular, early. I felt we had some good concepts.

But we got off schedule and then ultimately we lived in second-and-long, third-and-long there, the second, third, fourth, fifth possession of the game. A lot of those are long yardages. When you play that group you have to stay on schedule so you can have some balance.

Q. And Georgia, just obviously it's the gold standard in the league. What do you take away from just kind of big picture-wise on --

COACH NAPIER: I think it all matters. I think every single part of what we do matters. The evaluation of players matters. The recruitment of players matter. Ultimately, you need continuity in system. You need to develop players. This is a developmental game. You need players in your system for multiple years.

I do think that ultimately a set of intangibles, a set of values that I think resonate with the players, that they play with effort and they play with toughness, they play with discipline. It all matters. And they're a good example of that.

I think this is the eighth year for Kirby. And, look, we've got work to do to chase them down. There's no denying that. And we're in the middle of that process, in the middle of that journey.

So it causes you to respect all parts of building a football team, ultimately. I think there's a number of things that can be done better from just game-day, situational football. They do it all well. And today we gave them a little bit too much.

Q. There's no sympathy medal or anything like that, but what can you take positively away from this game?

COACH NAPIER: I thought we showed some fight early. I thought we continued to scrap in the game. We continued -- I think, ultimately, 14 points -- you basically had two critical errors that led to 14 points, short fields.

The recipe for the game was to not do that and try to get

them to do that. And ultimately that didn't happen today.

You know, the game got out of control as a result of some critical errors. I think when we go back and watch it, we know exactly what happened. And I think we've got to take ownership of that.

Q. Trey was clearly a big part of the game plan. He was somebody that Kirby mentioned when he wasn't asked about and clearly knew about. How important was it for him and the other freshmen, T.J. Searcy, guys like that to get the experience like this?

COACH NAPIER: That's what I'm describing here. I think ultimately we all can agree in this room (indiscernible) some of the best what you can do. But ultimately you've got experience. Experience got you here.

I think that's important for our staff, but it's invaluable for young players. And I think that I'm hopeful that they'll take what they learned today and go back to work. I think that our team will do that. I've got a ton of confidence.

They know we care about them. This group will get up and go back to work.

Q. The pass defense, McConkey hurt you a lot of times. Just the evaluation of the secondary and the inability also to make Carson uncomfortable as well?

COACH NAPIER: I think you're spot on. Certainly couldn't get him off his spot much, I thought they protected him well. And certainly there were guys open, even in man coverage at times.

That's what I'm kind of getting at here relative to we can help as a staff conceptually. We can do more. And, ultimately, players had opportunities today.

I think it's a combination of all of it together. That's a good question. McConkey is a good player, though. He's been a good player for a long time.

Q. I know these were second-half injuries, but we saw Shemar James injured in warm-ups. Can you provide us with an update on him or Kingsley Eguakun?

COACH NAPIER: Kingsley is okay. Same ankle, aggravated him a little bit there. Princely, he did have a little incident pregame -- I mean, Shemar, sorry.

So, yeah, he was able to play. Certainly a little bit of a setback there late. I do think it will be something we'll be evaluating, big picture-wise for him. It is a prior injury. It's an injury that he had before in high school that kind of



came to life today a little bit. So we'll give you more of an update in the middle of the week.

Q. Because they're so good and so talented, do you sometimes feel you have to coach a little riskier maybe than if you were facing --

COACH NAPIER: I don't feel that way at all. I feel like we need to eliminate sack fumbles on short fields and not get punts blocked. Those have nothing to do with coaching risky.

I think if we do those things well, it's probably a little bit closer game going into the locker room at halftime. Playing from behind is a challenge. Ultimately, I think that was the big issue today.

Q. Offensive line play, what would you evaluate from this contest and the health of the unit and the challenges they face, where do you feel they're at after watching today?

COACH NAPIER: I think we struggled to protect them a little bit at times, but I also think they covered us pretty good. Some of those, we're holding the ball. I think if we're throwing the ball three hitch on time, there's short edges, we're climbing, guy gets a little bit of his elbow there, the ball comes out.

They made him move a little bit, but, listen, it's a combination of the rush and the coverage, right? It's not one or the other.

And I don't think there was any just purely immediate sacks. I think it was a combination of the arresting coverage. This is the game we play, right? When you play a team that can cover you and good rushers and they have a good plan, the key to the drill is you try to avoid those. We don't want to live in second-and-long, get back on track, third-and-seven, -10, -11-plus. Those are tough downs for any football team.

And certainly when you've got good cover guys and good rushers, that can cause problems for you. But, look, we ran the ball effectively at times today. I don't think we had a ton of mental errors. They've got a long, heavy-handed group up front. And I think the two inside backers do a good job.

I think that's the strength of their defensive group and, ultimately, when we watch the tape, I probably would be able to tell you a little more Monday, but there's no doubt.

The group we have, we can't live in that world. We need to stay on schedule, avoid penalties, avoid negative plays

and tackles for loss.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports Graham Mertz.