

# University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Gainesville, Florida, USA

## Graham Mertz

### Press Conference



Georgia - 43, Florida - 20

**Q. How formidable was that front? And how difficult was it once you guys got behind, chasing points?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I think anytime we got behind the sticks, second-and-10, third-and-long, that's where their game plan specific. They're a talented defense. You just can't put yourself in that situation.

I think there were multiple times in there I could have done a better job giving us the right call or throwing to a different person. When you get behind the sticks, it's never easy, especially against a good defense.

**Q. Just broadly, what would you say were some of the things that maybe held you guys back today?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I think there were a set amount of plays that, when you're playing a great team like that, I mean the margin for error, Coach talked about it all week, is so slim.

You make a mistake. I stepped in the pocket, didn't have good ball control. The ball got tipped out. It's first and, what, around the 15-, 18-yard line. There's so many little plays within the game, but I can think of a set amount that we flat out didn't execute. And it really flipped the score. Especially when you're playing a good team like that, the score can get away from you quick. We've got to be better.

**Q. In your opinion, what do you think changed really from that first drive where you guys were moving the ball pretty well and then as the first and second quarter went on, the offense struggled a little bit more.**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I think first drive we were clicking. And then after -- they have great coaches too; they've got great players, too. They made adjustments. I think anytime you're in a game, you've got to be prepared to give a punch and receive a punch, I think, especially in this sport. It's a fistfight, and it's for four quarters.

We've got to be better to be prepared for that punch and punch back and be able to respond quickly. We started fast. Momentum was going. We knew it was going to be a momentum game, especially with the stands split 50/50.

So we've got to do a better job of setting that temperature. We always talk about -- I had a coach tell me one time, the difference between a thermostat and thermometer leader -- can't be a thermometer team thermostat team that sets the energy and the tempo and continues that tempo.

**Q. What was your message and the leadership group's message to the team after being handed a loss like this?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I think the guys are frustrated. Because we know we're better than that. And we know it's controllable stuff. We've said that at Utah and Kentucky, now this game. Every game there's stuff you can control that go wrong, but it's what did you do after that, your response to that.

I think we're going to push guys to have that short-term memory and respond quick, especially when you're playing great teams. We have a lot of great teams on the schedule. It's going to come down to executing, playing at a high level and being able to take a punch, give a punch, and keep punching because these games are going to be four-quarter battles.

**Q. On that fourth-and-one early in the second quarter, from your own 34, did that ball go between your legs?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yes.

**Q. And were you surprised you guys went for it there, and do you think it shifted the momentum?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: It definitely shifted the momentum. I trust Coach Napier and his play call with all my heart. Anytime he calls a play it's my job to go out there and execute it.

We had a direct snap to Trev, and they had a great defensive call and they made a play. It was a momentum



shift, but when that happens, our defense did a great job of, especially when we would give them a short field, I mean, holding them to those few field goals. That was big.

So for us we've got to play complementary football in all three phases, but I'm never going to doubt a play call. It's my job to go out there and execute it.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: Every game we've got a few things, trick plays that you've got designed for different situations. We knew they were going to stem and check sneak. So it was a game plan, a specific thing.

**Q. You were talking a couple minutes ago about kind of the response. What do you and the leadership group here, how do you make sure this doesn't snowball into the season going south?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I'll tell you right now it's not going to snowball. They're a great team. They got after us today. We made a few mistakes. But we've got a young team and I'm confident in our leaders to see the bigger picture. We've seen that all year.

We know what this team has. And we know that our best is still out there. So there will be no snowball effect from this, I can guarantee you that.

**Q. On the fourth-and-one, did Trevor have a run-pass option on that?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah. He had run-pass option.

**Q. Georgia is the gold standard right now in the SEC. What do you think that -- what does it tell you about where the program is, where the team is when you play a team like that?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I thought our guys competed. The score got away quick, but across the board, we'll turn the tape on and we'll see good and see bad. And for us as a program we have to keep striving to be better. It's so cliché to say. But it's what we do on a daily and weekly basis.

You're working all week to go out there on game day and put your best out there.

There was some great stuff on tape. I haven't looked at it yet. But I know there's going to be some good stuff. There's going to be some bad stuff.

I trust where this place is going 110 percent. There's not a

bone in my body that thinks it's going in a different direction.

**Q. And how highly anticipated was this game because of the opportunity it presented, playing a team that's won 24 in a row and a couple national titles?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: I think anytime you're really -- my way about going about it, every time you have an opportunity to play this game is a blessing. So regardless of the opponent, especially -- I'm just so thankful to go out there and play.

Like I said, it sounds so cliché, but as a team when you know that you're going to a game and you kind of control your destiny, it gets guys excited, gets you amped up. I'm definitely not one that would like to lose.

**Q. You seem like you made it a point to find Kirby afterwards and say, I don't know if it was to say hi, congrats, whatever. Do you do it with all opposing coaches, or why was Kirby someone you wanted to reach out to after the game?**

GRAHAM MERTZ: He recruited me pretty heavy out of high school. It's funny, there were a bunch of coaches -- in every game there's a coach who either recruited me or I was with at Wisconsin. I feel like I've been in college a while, so I know a lot of people.

It was funny. It was, like, Coach Dickey was out there. He was at A&M. And Coach Streeter, he was at Clemson. And obviously Coach Smart. In every game I know some coaches.

So if I know them and they recruited me, took the time to put energy and effort into me as a person, I feel like I owe it to them to go say hi.

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