

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Billy Napier

Press Conference



BILLY NAPIER: All right. How is everybody doing today? Are appreciate y'all being here today.

I think ultimately when you have time to look at the film a little bit closer, some of the same things I said after the game. I feel strongly about today. I think just makes me realize, and I think we all know this, you guys obviously cover our team, but everything matters. All parts of what we do contribute to the final result.

I think really for me, it causes me to double down on kind of what we believe from an evaluation standpoint, recruitment standpoint, having continuity in system relative to the concepts that you run, scheme, adjustments. I do think there's a development component to that, as well.

The accumulation of reps, right? Building depth on your team. I do think the competition that is created from depth. The quality of your walk-on program, how that can improve your practice environment.

I think the situational football and the game management piece, as we go, it becomes really important. There's a set of values. There's character that you like your team to play with. There's a chemistry. There's a togetherness. All these things are important.

I think for me, walking off that field Saturday, that's how I felt. I feel the same way today after watching the film. I do think there's a lot of positives on the tape. There's also areas we have issues and we need to get better.

I do think that some of the things that happened in the game are very fixable. I think ultimately when we look at that with the players, I think they feel the same way. As a staff, I know there are things we can do from a concepts standpoint that can help the players in all three parts of our team.

Good day with the players yesterday. I have confidence in our group relative to their attitude and their approach. I think the key thing for us here is what matters most today. I think regardless of what's happened in the past, I do think

that this is a group, every single detail, really challenging all parts of the organization to do their best work. We need to be operating at our best, firing on all cylinders. We need to lead our people. We need to impact our people and get consumed with preparing for this game.

I do think Arkansas, although their record doesn't reflect it, they've been in every football game. This is a team that's lost a lot of close games. I do think they've played really good defense for the most part. I know offensively they've made a change. I know Sam Pittman personally, and I have a ton of respect for him as a coach and a man. I do think they're a lot closer than their record indicates. This will be a challenge.

We're excited about playing in front of a sold-out crowd. I do think this week, for me, it's important for a lot of reasons. We're doing something really unique relative to the saluting those who serve theme of the week. We're going to honor all of our military members, our veterans, local first responders included in that group.

We're going to wear black uniforms for the first time in school history. I know everybody is excited about the uniform. I do think it's important, I don't want to lose sight of the intent here relative to what we're trying to do.

Really want to create awareness and show gratitude and appreciation for these people who chose a life of service, and ultimately put their life at risk to protect some of these freedoms that I believe sometimes we ultimately take for granted.

Each player on the team's jersey will display one of the five core values on the back of the nameplate. We worked with the military branches and the state and here locally, allowed them to select the core value that they wanted to use. Those five core values are: honor, courage, commitment, excellence and integrity. You'll see that this week when we play.

We're also going to carry out the prisoner of war, missing in action flag of the tunnel this week. I do think it's important that we never forget those prisoners of war, their sacrifice, certainly those missing in action.



Also I want to point out that our civil engagement piece with the players today, at 2:45 today we're going over to the Veterans Affairs Medical Center here, Randall Malcolm Center, in Gainesville, spend some time with some veterans with our players.

We're hopeful that that experience, along with a number of speakers that we'll have at practice, we're going to have someone from different branches of our military talk to the team. We started that last night with the team.

It's an important week in that regard. Certainly it's a critical week for our football team relative to where we're at. Certainly Arkansas presents a number of challenges.

I know you got questions. What do we got here?

Q. Is there at all a need, when you have a team on the other side that has a potential to be more physical than you, to be extra creative, insert more trick plays into your game plan?

BILLY NAPIER: One more time.

Q. When you have a team that has the potential to out-physical you, does that call for you to be more creative to give your team an advantage?

BILLY NAPIER: No, I don't necessarily know where you're coming from there. No, I don't feel that way at all. I think ultimately every week's a little bit different, right? Your team has strengths. Their team has strengths. Vice versa. Relative to weaknesses, you try to position the team for success.

You're combating the players that think can be issues for you. The more good players they have, the more challenging that is. The more good players you have, the more opportunity you have to neutralize that, right? I think every week's a little bit different.

In this league, most weeks that you play, and all parts of their team, they have a significant player. Sometimes they have one at every level, different skill players maybe at their front, whatever the case may be.

I think each week's a little bit different. You try to do what you think is in the best interest of the team that week.

Q. What do you see so far from Arkansas' offense?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, no, I think it's a big part of the story this week relative to the prep. They made a change in the off-season. Obviously Kendal made a move to go to TCU.

They brought Dan in. That was a wholesale change.

Coach Guiton will be calling it this week. He has experience with Kendal in the past. Certainly played quarterback at Ohio State. What flavor do we get? I think ultimately with an open date I think that magnifies that a little bit.

Coach Pittman is an offensive line coach. His teams are tough. Certainly I think there will be an element of that. He'll have some imprint on the offense. I do think that's an element of the game.

I think ultimately for us, we're going to have to find the right balance of prep in terms of what we expose the players to, but also being ready to adjust within the game.

Q. One more win, you clinch bowl eligibility. What does that mean for the team?

BILLY NAPIER: I think there's an element to that. Certainly that could happen this week. Ultimately I don't necessarily think we're thinking about that as much as we're thinking about we got to get consumed with the things that can affect the outcome Saturday.

There is benefit to bowl games, there's no question about that. I do think with the team that we have in particular, that could be beneficial.

Q. Looking up your quote from last year about the military aspect, some of your background. Do you have a specific moment where that kind of shifted for you and became something that was important to you?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I think 9/11, I was a college student to some degree. I think there was an element to that. I think there's a generation of people that were affected from 9/11 to some degree.

You look at the recruitment of all branches of our military, the increase in membership that they saw. I think you get into becoming a head coach. I think being around your platform, there are things you get a chance to emphasize with your players.

Look, this started with black uniforms at Louisiana. The kids wanted to wear black uniforms. I was like, Well, okay, but why? Why are we going to do it? Ultimately we decided to build it around this theme. We did it at Clemson. We wore purple uniforms there.

I think it's been beneficial for the kids. I think ultimately there's an awareness. We have a game that has a platform. We can do some good. Ultimately I think that's

what we're trying to do.

Q. Obviously home-field advantage is important. What do you see from your team when they get that you'd like to see out of the building a little bit more often?

BILLY NAPIER: I think just in general, home-field advantage is a real thing, especially in our league. You're making the opponent execute in a little bit different environment. Our people can impact the game. They've impacted games this year. They've impacted a lot of games in the past, right?

It's a special place to play. We're sold out Saturday. This is going to be a really unique event. It's going to be an historic event. I think ultimately the team thrives off that energy, no matter what anybody says. I think there's an element of that that you don't get at a neutral site or on the road.

We've benefited from it. They make it more challenging for the opponent. Certainly you get the benefit of not having to travel, right?

It's a special place, man. I think there's an element, a respect there. I think the players, there's a sense of responsibility. When you run out of that tunnel, there's been some great teams and great competitors do it before you.

Q. Two-thirds of the way through this season, how would you evaluate the progress you've made through the first eight games compare to the progress you made last year?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I think the biggest difference would be the makeup of our roster relative to who's gaining experience, who's been productive, the leadership that we see at the player level, the level of discipline that we observe every day, the camaraderie, the chemistry of the group.

Look, I think the football's improved in a lot of areas on our team. I mean, there's areas we've gotten better. There's still areas where we need to play with more consistency. Overall I think we're operating at a little bit more efficient rate. I think there's good processes in place. We're getting better at what we do.

We haven't necessarily got the results we wanted a couple times this year, but I do think there's improvement in the big picture.

Q. When you got here, going for it, being aggressive

on fourth down was part of your makeup. How do you assess where you are in that part?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, no, I think ultimately you get judged on the outcome of those decisions, but I think it's more of a big-picture approach. Seems like it's happened less year than maybe it happened last year, if that makes sense.

I do think that we work hard at it. It's not just a singular event on game day. It's more of a holistic approach that we spend a ton of time on in the off-season relative to strategy.

I think it's sound. I do. I think that you're seeing it at all levels of football. We just have access to information that we didn't have before, right? I think the analytics, the technology that's available, we can basically analyze the history of the game and tell you exactly why it's beneficial to do at times.

I do think there's some subjectiveness to it relative to the current dynamic within the game. Those are the things that keep you up at night.

When it works, everybody pats you on the back. When it doesn't work, they throw you out in the trash. It is what it is. We played Utah the opening game last year. We went for it on fourth down, threw a touchdown. Everybody is excited. When it doesn't work, they're not, right?

It is what it is. I think we'll continue to evaluate that just like we do all parts of our team.

Q. Where is your level of concern with finishing plays defensively, yards after the catch, after contact specifically?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, no, I think there's definitely yards after catch. I think it's what happens before the catch ultimately I think that contributes to that. Our ability to affect the quarterback, play better coverage. Once the ball is thrown, we have to break on the ball and get the guy on the ground. I do think that's one of the areas we can improve for sure.

Relevant question.

Q. You made it pretty clear you have conviction about the fourth down call. Sometimes when you get further away from that, you go okay... Absolutely now, 48 hours removed, still feel the same?

BILLY NAPIER: I can see both sides of it. I mean, I think ultimately, yeah, I can see both sides of it, if that makes sense.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Q. The other side being the play itself turning into basically a fourth and five because of the snap, is that what you're saying?

BILLY NAPIER: No, no, no. I'm just talking about the decision. There were other plays that I think about sometimes maybe we could have called. I think that play would have worked. To get real specific about what happened, I think it was just one of those things, right? Sometimes the ball bounces your way, sometimes it doesn't.

Yeah, I mean, I think more about you punt it, it's 10-7. At that point in the game, that's what I think about. I don't necessarily think about the play call.

Q. This play was inconsequential in the game, but T.J. Searcy only made one tackle in the game, but he ran a guy down 60 yards. How encouraging was that effort to see? Is that something that needs to happen more on defense?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, no, we pointed it out with the team yesterday in the team meeting. I think it's an extra-effort play. The ball was thrown. The guy goes full speed, runs the guy down. GPS number on that play, ran as fast as any skill player the whole day, right?

T.J. is a good example of a young player who has traits, who's tough, who goes about his business the right way. He's a true freshman that's getting valuable experience. Ultimately he's been a bright spot.

But I think when you see some of those intangibles that you want as a coach from young players, you can build off of that. That was an impressive play.

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