

# University of Florida Football Media Conference

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## Billy Napier

### Press Conference



BILLY NAPIER: Obviously not the result we wanted in Baton Rouge Saturday night. Look, we're talking the last couple weeks here, reality is we're talking about one more stop. We're talking about finishing one more possession. Certainly had our opportunities.

There are things that we can do better. I do want to compliment the players relative to the state of mind, the mindset. I thought we were ready to compete, in particular early.

I think you guys will have more questions about that, but reality is here we've got to turn the page really quickly and get ready for a good Missouri team.

Sometimes when you're going through trials, troubles, hardship, adversity, whatever you want to call it, just talking with the staff and the players earlier today, I think it's critical at this point, especially for our young players, that we are a good example.

I was talking to the veterans in the accountability group. Don't avoid it. You've got to lean into it. You've got to attack it. You've got to embrace hard.

I think there's an element here, to any great competitor, anyone that's had success in life, they can tell you their story, and they can talk about the things that they experienced that were challenges.

It's essentially training. Much like you train strength, you train endurance, you're not born tough. You're not born with endurance. You're not born -- and I think it's a test of your faith that allows you to develop faith. I do think it's a test of your character that allows you to develop character. I think challenge presents opportunity.

It's important that we are action oriented, solution oriented for our players, and you go make it happen. I think sometimes you get in these situations and you don't want to let things happen, you want to make it happen.

So we've got to model for our young people. Every role

matters. We use the terms make an impact and be the difference. Those two are more important than ever right now.

Mizzou's got a good football team. They play complementary football. Eli's done a nice job there in year 4. They're getting incrementally better. They've got good quarterback play. They've got some significant matchup players like most teams in our league do.

I do think they've been opportunistic and they've won games, LSU and Georgia being their two losses. So good football team, tough place to play. Going to be important for our guys to have a good week.

Just listening to our guys earlier, I think they're about the work, and there's an attitude that I respect from that group.

What questions have we got?

**Q. After review, what were some of the things that maybe stood out to you about your defensive performance against LSU, issues with things that went wrong, and what's correctible moving forward?**

BILLY NAPIER: It's much like every week. I think it's communication, it's alignment. I think that there are fundamentals and techniques that can improve. Playing with good eye discipline, good leverage.

LSU contributes to some of that. I think obviously the quarterback's ability to escape and extend, and even when we kept him in the pocket and played coverage, he was able to get through the progression.

We won some matchups. We lost some matchups. I do feel like the effort was good. I mean, when I watched all three parts of the -- of our team, I do feel like the effort was good.

Some of it is very specific. There are times where we can help the players, and there's times where players have opportunities. I think it's a combination of all those things.

**Q. Brady Cook is another mobile guy. Is it too easy to**

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**say you just try to overemphasize taking that away? Or are there adjustments that can be made schematically to scrambling quarterbacks? There have been a lot that have victimized you over the last couple of years.**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, they victimize most teams they play against, not just the Gators. The athletic quarterback, depending on the skill around them and your strengths, can be an issue. This guy for sure has the ability on third down to escape and extend and make some plays with his feet, there's no doubt about it. He's also playing really efficiently, in my opinion.

They do a good job using their skill. They play with balance. They do a good job with the run concepts. There is some familiarity here because of our past experience with Eli.

So I do think they do a good job, and their quarterback is essentially the foundation of the efficiency they've had on offense.

**Q. What stands out to you about Cody Schrader?**

BILLY NAPIER: Low to the ground, pretty heavy, 5'9", 214. The guy's got good instincts and vision. I think he can get small, plays at pad level with power. Ultimately, I think he's a guy that's been productive as a running back for a long time. I think they do a good job conceptually creating running lanes for him, and he's able to maximize those.

He's been a productive player. It's a great story. I love stories like that. I've got respect for it. Certainly he's part of the challenge when you play Mizzou. For the most part, he carries the load.

**Q. I think this will be your fourth time against Eli, but maybe a different wrinkle with their new offensive play caller this year. How different does the offense look?**

BILLY NAPIER: Four times? I'm thinking about seasons. I forget we played them twice that one year.

There is some. I think it's really systematic on offense. I think they do a good job. They play with balance. They're committed to a run game that is well designed.

I think the new coordinator has implemented some concepts in the throw game, but they're doing a good job using the skill they've got. I think the back's a good player. They're getting pretty good play from a couple of tight ends.

I think their front is playing well. I think that gets overlooked. Then the skill players, the receiver group has -- you know, they're all a little bit different, and I think they do a good job utilizing that group.

**Q. When you look at the SEC, two coaches fired in the last two days, one of them with a crazy buyout, one of them without even a year on the job. Is that like life in the SEC at this level? Kind of that just comes with the territory?**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, it's been that way in this league for a long time. Look, I think you know what you sign up for. I think we all do.

It's part of life, right? No different than if the AP decides they're going to fire you one day. It comes with the territory. We all have a job to do, and ultimately I think you view it as a challenge, you view it as an opportunity.

Look, these are well thought out decisions. You don't just flip a coin to decide to be the head coach of the Florida Gators. For me, you go into it with a strategy and a plan. You adapt. You evolve. You adjust. And we're in the middle of our process, right? It's been happening a long time that way.

**Q. You've got a resources commitment clearly. What's your confidence in the time commitment with Florida? You're right in the middle of it. Do you feel confident in the timeline?**

BILLY NAPIER: Absolutely. We knew it wasn't going to be easy. Look, I think you have to go into it -- you develop a skill set. You're equipped. These same things I'm talking about relative to our players, I can tell you I wouldn't be up here without going through a lot of tough stuff to some degree.

So you're equipped with faith. You're equipped with discipline, your ability to come up with solutions. And you've got to be tough minded. You've got to have endurance. You've got to be able to persevere. You've got to surround yourself with really good people.

I think ultimately it's not like we thought we're going to run the table the first year. It is what it is. I think we have to continue to be action oriented, solution oriented. I do believe in what we do and how we do it. There's always adjustments that are required. We have tremendous leadership here top-down. We have great resources. We have a tremendous product to sell.

This place has done it before, and I'm firmly confident that we're capable of doing it again.

**Q. You've seen really good receivers, been around them, recruited them. Ricky is closing in on a thousand yards here. Hasn't been done since 2002 here. What kind of season has he had? I don't want to say it's quiet, but he's really putting up some impressive performances one after the other.**

BILLY NAPIER: Ricky is -- I don't want to say underrated because he's pretty highly regarded out there. I know the National Football League feels that way. Ricky, in my opinion, is the product of a lot of work. He's highly skilled. He can win at the line of scrimmage. He can win at the top of the route. He has good awareness. He understands coverage and leverage. He's run routes.

He's to a point in his career where he understands what we're trying to do conceptually, and he's creative. His hand selection is outstanding. I think he's going to test a lot better than people anticipate. This guy's a 40-inch vertical, short shuttle, L drill. Those numbers will be impressive. He'll run well. He's bigger than you think.

Ricky, he's up there. I've coached some good players. I'll tell you what I really appreciate about Ricky Pearsall is the consistency and the person who shows up every day. His attitude, his energy, his leadership. He's a tough dude, and he has values. He has -- he's equipped with some things that allow him to be really consistent as a performer. He'll be a great pro. He'll play for a long time.

**Q. Has the portal changed, do you think, the patience that schools have with their coaches because there's so many players coming and going? Does that change perspectives, do you think, on patience with coaches?**

BILLY NAPIER: I think it's just more -- it's more coverage. It's more drama. I think it's just another element to strategy relative to what you're going to do. And it's new. So there's not a huge sample size of evidence as to what works and what doesn't work.

I do think that our game continues to evolve, and it's important that you keep up. I do. I think there's an element to that. But ultimately we've got conviction about how we do it.

I think it's much like the National Football League. In my opinion, you're talking about you want to build your team through the draft, and you want to -- each off-season you're evaluating the depth on your team, the impact players, the immediate -- where do you need immediate presence? And that's the NFL free agent model. I think we're living in a world that's very much the same.

You throw IO into that equation, and you're living in a salary cap model. The problem is we have no contracts. Our drafted players have no contracts. I'd like to know that we have them for four or five years. So the instability, I think, is magnified.

Since when have college fan bases been patient? That's what I'd like to know. Everywhere I've been, the fan base is impatient in my life. I've got two brothers that are high school coaches, and my dad coached high school football.

**Q. At what point do you have to start re-recruiting your own guys?**

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I feel good about the player experience here. There's going to be attrition now, just so we all understand. That's a product of the environment that we've created at this level.

So you used to anticipate a half dozen guys a year, and now you probably anticipate twice as many. Some of which you anticipate happening, some maybe you don't anticipate happening.

I probably would say, if you're on the fence, maybe this is not the right place for you. It would be different if I didn't have confidence in the experience of the scholar-athlete here. The player experience here, I think, is second to none.

So when you start talking about the degree, the alumni network, the experiences that are available through GatorMade, from a life skills player development standpoint, the resources that we have to offer from a facility standpoint, infrastructure standpoint, location -- you know, game day. It's a tough place to beat.

I think there's an element to that, but I also think that life is pretty good at UF right now.

**Q. Offense to this point and how it's progressed through the year and kind of established an identity.**

BILLY NAPIER: I think most weeks I'd like to have one or two more scores a game. I think ultimately I'm evaluating it within the play, within the possession. I think we're sound in what we do. We have developed more consistency.

I think early on we had some issues. We had some struggles. I do think we've developed some consistency. We've also developed some players, some guys that were backups that have gotten experience that have improved. Whether that's the two freshmen tight ends or Jake Slaughter or we get Kam Waites back, Trey Wilson gains confidence and gets experience, whatever the case may

be. So I think players have improved. We're getting a little bit more consistency across the board, and that's allowed us to be a little bit more effective.

We're -- we need to play better complementary football. Ultimately, that's our issue. It isn't just one unit. We have to put all parts of our team together. At this point where we're at, that's the issue. The defense shows up, and the offense doesn't. Not just week to week, but half to half or quarter to quarter.

Consistency is what we're seeking, and I do think we need to continue to develop players. We need to see improvement from players, and we need to eliminate some of the mistakes that have nothing to do with the opponent.

I think that's my struggle. That's what I think about. I think I can handle some of the matchup that's we get positioned in and, hey, look, it is what it is. But some of those things that we can help, that's what I'm consumed with right now.

**Q. Kingsley and Devin missed the game the other night, and Austin was a little banged up. When it comes to Kingsley and Devin having missed different periods of time this year, is there any consideration to shut them down at this point?**

BILLY NAPIER: No. Devin is -- Devin's injury happened Thursday during practice. That's why it wasn't reported. We're pretty transparent when it comes to injuries. Wednesday, you'll know where we're at. Between now and then, we're going to work on getting as many players available as we can.

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