

University of Florida Football Media Conference

Wednesday, November 15, 2023

Gainesville, Florida, USA

Billy Napier

Press Conference



BILLY NAPIER: How many of you played basketball growing up? Got any hoopers in here? You know, there's an old adage in basketball, when you fast break, you get a good pass, you score a basket, what do you do? What's kind of the unwritten rule in basketball. What do you do? You point to the passer, right? No doubt. You point to the passer.

Look, basketball, there's five players. There's probably 15 on the team. But that's a thing that we can apply to what we do in football. There's no question. We put 11 out there at a time, we've got 120 guys that work hard each week. But it takes a number of people to contribute to the final product, right? It's important that we appreciate everyone's role. We've got to point to the passer a little bit more often.

Look, we can say that in life as well. It's not just in a team setting. I encouraged the guys today to -- you know, you're around guys every day that go about their business the right way that are working hard. Maybe their role is not as big as yours, but we've got to go out of our way to tell them we appreciate what they do. That may be staff members. That may be people in the organization, people that take care of the facility.

So got to point to the passer a little more often in life, I think. Good day's work. Much better. This time of year, we kind of pull back a little bit on the volume, but the intensity is still there, and I thought we had that today.

This is an important game, and there's going to be a lot of things that are important. Obviously turnover margin, big plays, first down efficiency. This is about playing high level football and executing at a high level. It's important that we continue to prepare. We've got a lot of work left to do here in the next couple of days.

What questions have we got?

Q. Who do you point to?

BILLY NAPIER: This time of year, I'm pointing to my wife

every day when I see her. She's chasing those three kids around. They're all three playing multiple sports. So, yeah, I'm pointing -- she's definitely --

Q. (No microphone)?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, we've got some work to do. We've got a ton of people. I think that can apply to a lot of areas. Maybe that made you think of somebody.

Q. Yeah, the same person as you. Not the same person, but relative --

BILLY NAPIER: The same role in life. What else we got?

Q. They have one of the better tandems of receivers in the league. How do you handle that with such a young secondary?

BILLY NAPIER: It's one of the areas where I think they made a big jump. I think the new coordinator's brought some new elements to the throw game. Look, they're balanced, right? So it's the challenge of stopping the run game and then matching up. I think you've got to pick the poison there.

When you do get put in those matchups, you've got to win them. I think every defensive call has got a weakness, and I think it's important that we do a good job mixing it up, and you've got to do a good job of disguising. When you do get -- those guys are going to be in those positions, and it's about leverage, eye discipline, good fundamentals and techniques. If you can start the play the right way and communicate well and be in the right things, you've got a chance.

Q. Can you speak a little bit to decreasing the volume this time of year? What's the benefits of that from a physical approach and mentally as well?

BILLY NAPIER: I would think most coaches say that's the case. We kind of break our year up into three tiers. 1 through 4, 5 through 8, and 9 through 12. We've done that for a long time. Look, we've got great people in the training room, sports science, strength and conditioning. It's all --



we've been doing it for a long time. It's definitely, it's called for, some players more than others. Very individualized approach.

Some players got more tread on the tires than others.

Q. Just at the beginning of the week, how did you think you were able to overcome that travel snafu issue with Sunday and into Monday there?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, interesting that you know about that. We had some issues with landing in Gainesville, ended up having to fly to Orlando and bus back over. I will say this, I thought the operations people with the UAA and Josh Thompson, that whole crew, Spiogs was outstanding. We had some contingency plans in place, and we just got back a little bit later than normal.

So we exchanged our Sunday, Mondays for that reason. We got back, I think, 9:00 in the morning or something like that, so we decided probably not the right thing to bring them back to the facility that day.

But it's been good. We just exchanged the work and stayed on schedule.

Q. Colder weather at night, is that something you can prepare for physically, mentally, with a lot of kids who are kind of sunbelt kids from Florida and Georgia from your roster?

BILLY NAPIER: I always tell them, hell, you want to play in the National Football League, you'll have to do it on a consistent basis, especially in the playoffs. It's part of it. A lot of these kids have been around it. They'll be part of that. They'll have to get adjusted to it.

Q. Could you speak a little bit to the challenges that come with recruiting this time of year and keeping a strong class together, just when the results have been what they've been on the field as of late.

BILLY NAPIER: It's a battle. I think -- look, it's not this time of year. It's every day of the year. It's part of the job. Look, I would tell you, you win some, you lose some. I think it's highly competitive. I think it's good to have some players that everybody wants, truth be known.

Look, it comes with the territory. I think recruiting challenges your resiliency. Ultimately for me, I think it's important that we get it right in the front end. We want players that have conviction about being here, that believe in the experience that they're going to have at the University of Florida relative to the degree, all the things that come along with being an alumni here, the resources

that we have to offer as a football program.

Sometimes you're going to go through some things like that. It's nothing new. This is a year round battle that we do. We do it every year. We're right in the middle of some of those.

Q. You have a few losses like you've had, is it important to punch back and maybe go get some wins in recruiting? Is that like the most important thing right now, keep the momentum going or get it back?

BILLY NAPIER: I think momentum's real. Look, I think anyone would -- at any profession, I think momentum is a key component, right? I think ultimately there's one way to get momentum back, and that's to go compete. We specifically have talked about that.

So I'm watching Buffalo the other night, and I'm sitting there thinking we're not the only team in America that can go through some challenges, right? I think it's part of it.

Look, it's what we sign up for, right? It's part of the challenge. It's part of the competition. I think recruiting is highly competitive. I enjoy it. There's always going to be some of that. It's not going away. So you've got to get used to it.

Q. As a team that's so young and most of your kids come from winning programs where they've been in playoffs and championships. How do you deal with them, they're losing games for the first time. They're looking at maybe a 5-6, 5-7 record. How do you deal with that?

BILLY NAPIER: I would say that these kids have been through -- each one of them is a little different in terms of what their experience has been like. I think they've all been through some adversity to some degree. I don't think that -- I don't think we've had anybody there that's undefeated. We do have some that come from great programs, and we also have different levels of success coming from high school.

Ultimately, I think, we talked about it earlier in the week. I think toughness, endurance, faith, your ability to overcome, resiliency, those things are developed. You're not born with them. So you've got to go through tough things to develop some of those things. I think it will prove beneficial.

Some of the tougher things I've been through in life have ultimately you didn't understand it at the time, but you look back, and you benefited from it to some degree. So I think this is part of growth for a lot of guys on our team.

Q. Are you able to speak to Caleb Douglas' progress and maybe provide an update on Austin Barber, considering he went down twice in the game and was able to come back?

BILLY NAPIER: Caleb is not quite ready to go. Austin, we'll have -- Austin's questionable. We'll take a good look over the next couple of days. Outside of that, I think those are the two you asked about, but I think we just sent you the depth.

Q. Missouri just overall, a lot of things to be concerned about obviously. You talk about the running back, the receivers. What just stands out, I guess, about that team? What's the main kind of thread, the characteristic of it?

BILLY NAPIER: I think they play complementary football. I think they're good on both sides. I think they've made an improvement. They have -- the group of players that they're coaching is essentially almost the same group they had last year. They have a lot of guys coming back.

So I think that it's year 2 in both systems. I think the new coordinator on offense has added a few elements, but it's really the same system, both sides of the ball, special teams included, and I think they're benefitting from that.

I think veteran players, second year with the coordinator on defense, and I think they play complementary football. I think they rush the ball, they stop the run. They do a good job mixing it up in the throw game. They have balance. They're aggressive on defense. There's a number of front pressuring coverage variables.

They've got a good football team, without question.

Q. With Eli Drinkwitz's success in year 4, guys sticking with it through thick and thin, is that a good lesson in patience, I guess? We've talked to you a lot about that, and you've mentioned for several of the programs you've faced the fact that they're in year 4 or year 8 or all that, and does that give you some solace in the struggle?

BILLY NAPIER: I think -- look, we are where we're at. We have to compete. We have to stay in the present, work on the issues that we have. Come up with solutions.

There's a number of people that have turned it around, and there's some that haven't, right? I think ultimately Missouri is a good example. Eli is a good coach. He's hired well. He's done a good job evaluating. He's got some veteran players, and they're playing at a high level.

Yeah, I think -- again, patience is part of the game, but ultimately you've got to produce, right? I think we all understand that when we get into the profession.

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