

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Coach Billy Napier

Press Conference



Miami 41, Florida 17

BILLY NAPIER: They beat us today, and I don't have a ton of excuses. I think we struggled to produce any running game outside of one explosive. Obviously didn't create a ton of explosives, and then obviously we had a couple key penalties, and then defensively, outside of 3rd down, didn't do much.

I do think there were a few bright spots in the kicking game, Miami outplayed us, they out-coached us, and give them credit. I do think there are things we can do better. There's no question there were mistakes made. I do think that we had a couple players that were banged up that you'll have questions about.

What questions do we have? Go ahead.

Q. Given the experience and how confident you were in this team going into the season, how disappointing and surprising was this performance?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I mean, it's embarrassing, to be quite honest with you. That's how I feel. That's how our kids feel.

We've got a decision to make. I think we have -- that's what I just told them. There's no excuses. Keep our mouths shut, show up and work. We have to do better.

Keep it simple. That's how I feel. I do think that our players will show up and they will respond.

Q. Where do you think the struggles on defense kind of began? Obviously Cam Ward was tremendous.

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, obviously a good player. I do think in the first half in particular we've got a couple opportunities to get off the field. The two roughings were critical. I think there's some misses tackles. I think there's a couple mental errors. But give them some credit. I think they were efficient throughout the day. They did a good job on converse downs. They scored touchdowns in the red area,

and they had some balance. They were able to rush it and throw it.

I'll be able to tell you more, but statistically they were very successful throughout the day.

Q. Were there signs of some of the struggles that you saw today? Defensively it looked like you guys had a really hard time in coverage generating pressure. Were these evident at any point in camp? Did this surprise you?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I would tell you that -- yeah, I think that I felt strongly that we would perform better. But I'm not here to make excuses. We've got to get it fixed. We're going to get another opportunity next week, and we've got to play better and coach better.

I'll have more answers for you on Monday, but sitting in here right now, I have no excuses for you.

Q. How is Graham doing?

BILLY NAPIER: Graham had a concussion, and he'll be in protocol, and we'll give you an update when we meet with you Monday and Wednesday of next week.

Q. How do you feel like DJ did stepping in in his place?

BILLY NAPIER: I think he did a lot of good things, in particular the second drive there we got to some things where he had success. Threw some great individual cuts, some good movement passes, made a few plays with his feet. I thought the players around him played well.

It's good. One of the positives was he had some success and we were able to go down and score a touchdown with him in the game.

Obviously he's a young player, but he'll continue to work and improve. He's got a bright future.

Q. Coach, you said you guys have been preparing for Miami for a while. Was there anything you saw today

that surprised you guys or that you weren't prepared for? And with the confidence you guys had heading into this year, where is the disconnect from that confidence to what we saw today?

BILLY NAPIER: Well, again, you've got to give Miami some credit. They've got a good football team.

I think they had a handful of wrinkles that were new. There's no question about that. But overall I think the game comes down to fundamentals. It comes down to good communication, good execution. At times out there we did not do that.

Yeah, I was surprised, and I do think that we have better football in us. I think that's the message.

I think our players feel that way. I think we've got a lot of football ahead of us, and I think ultimately we'll prove over time that we can play better than that. I really believe that. We'll have our opportunity to do that next week.

Q. Coach, I think you guys started 0 for 6 on 3rd down and finished 1 for 9. How do you evaluate the execution and even the play calling there?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, it was a big part of the game. I think we were 0 for at halftime, and conversion downs are critical. They converted, they stayed on the field, they sustained drives. We weren't able to do that. Ultimately that contributed to where we were at at halftime. We have to do better. We've got to play better and coach better.

Q. You know how the reaction and overreaction is sometimes to big losses. How do you keep your team from getting caught up in some of the negative comments?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, that'll be part of it. We'll have to navigate it. I think we've got to be men and we've got to show some maturity. Ultimately if you care about the team, you'll show up and work hard at your job.

I think this group will do that. But we can't control that. It's part of the job, and it's part of their responsibility to the team.

We've got to manage that. It's a big part of what we do, and certainly this group, I think, that'll be one of the challenges that we have going forward.

Q. Was Graham hurt on that specific play?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah. He was.

Q. Devin I think left the game real early --

BILLY NAPIER: Mm-hmm, Devin has an AC joint, shoulder.

Q. Obviously he was flashing well and had built his body up. How did that impact pass coverage do you think?

BILLY NAPIER: Well, Ja'Keem is out there playing, and Asa obviously went down, too. But I think Ja'Keem was in good position a lot. I think there were some great throws and great catches.

Then I think we misplayed a couple of the stacks in the game. I think that's one of the areas that we can get better.

But overall Devin makes our team better. If we've got our job, we've got to have him out there.

But we started Ja'Keem today. Devin has been down for a little bit with -- missed a pretty good chunk of time with the sickness that he had. Ja'Keem is a good player. He's a freshman. He's got a bright future ahead of him. I think corner play was fine today.

I think there are other issues that we need to address.

Q. When you look at some of the performance up front, particularly stopping the run, is that an issue with some of the strength and conditioning, or is it just technique with leverage and playing with better feet and hand position, things like that?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, a lot of the runs got to the perimeter where the secondary was forced to make the tackle. We'll see. It's definitely not strength and conditioning.

I think good, sound football. I think ultimately when we look at it, there's not a ton of explosive runs throughout the game. I think most of them were manageable. There's definitely some big play passes in the game on some missed tackles that contributed to some of that.

Q. Obviously there was a lot of optimism surrounding this team in recent months. Obviously it's going to be hard to come back from something like this, but what would you say are some of the things you're going to try to do to keep the vibes positive and get this team back on track in the coming weeks?

BILLY NAPIER: Well, ultimately I think we've got -- it's a little bit of a challenge, right. I think you've got to be a man

and you've got to take responsibility for the things that he can do better, and if you really care about the team, you'll work at it.

I think we're going to -- we'll show up tomorrow, the sun is going to come up tomorrow, and we're going to go back to work. Ultimately I think there's not much for us to talk about right now. We've got to go play better. That's where we're going to spend our time.

Q. Off topic, you're revealing injury information. Do you like the SEC's new rule?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I think we've been pretty transparent when it comes to injuries. The key is going to be that we standardize it, and ultimately it's all got to do with gambling, right. I think just protecting the players, protecting the people in the organization, having a system so that you don't have any issues when it comes to that.

Q. Obviously offensive line there at times Graham didn't have a ton of time to throw. When it comes to that, are there changes that are going to have to be made to give him or DJ more time to throw, or do you chalk it up to just Miami having a strong defensive line?

BILLY NAPIER: I think that when it comes to protection, all players contribute to that, not just the offensive line. I think there's going to be areas where we can separate and get open. There's going to be things the quarterback can do differently. Maybe it's the running back or the tight end that's involved in protection. So I think it's more of a unit thing than a position group thing.

Q. You had quite a bit of conviction throughout the preseason that this team was widely improved. Is this discouraging to any degree to watch how this unfolded and where you guys are at in your first game?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I would tell you that I still have confidence in our team. I think we've made progress. We didn't -- I think today is disappointing, not only for myself but for the entire team and organization and for our fans and for all the people that care about this place. Like I said before, I've got conviction about the young men that we have on our team. I think we have better football in us. But we have to go prove that. We have to go do that.

Ultimately there's a lot of football left, and we'll have an opportunity to prove that over time.

Q. In regards to some of the smaller details today with tackling and special teams --

BILLY NAPIER: Special teams, what in particular?

Q. I thought you guys were sound today. How would you reflect on just the overall performance from special teams, tackling? What's your takeaway?

BILLY NAPIER: Well, special teams I think is an area where we did a lot of good things today. I thought the specialists were strong. The coverage was good. I thought we made some plays in the return game.

So overall I think we did do some good things in the kicking game.

Q. I think you touched on it earlier, but how do you -- there was so much buildup to this game and excitement. How do you rebound from this or make sure that this loss doesn't linger with the team and, I guess, refocus?

BILLY NAPIER: Well, I think it's one of the challenges that we have. I mean, I think if you play this game, you're going to experience ups and downs. Challenge is all the intangibles you work on building with your team.

I think that it's going to require great leadership, not only from the staff and myself but also from the players on our team. I think we've got a group that I think will stand up and go back to work and try to improve and do their job. Burr we've got to go prove it on the grass.

I think ultimately we've got to take a good look in the mirror, I think as coaches and players, what can we do better to get a better outcome.

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