

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Graham Mertz

Press Conference



Texas A&M 33, Florida 20

Q. Graham, where is this team at mentally right now? Two big games, you weren't really in either of them. What are you guys telling yourselves right now about where the program is?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, I mean, I think all the guys in the locker room, they're tired of losing. I think if you've ever been on a team and you've lost a big game or you lost a game at home at your high school, you feel like you let your fans down, you let your team down. We don't want to feel that anymore.

I think that the guys in that locker room -- I just got done talking to a few of them, but that's where we're at. We know what it takes, and reality is we got our butts kicked today, and early. It was weird for the offense. I think we had 12 snaps in the first half. That just showed us that the amount of drives we made in the second half, we had to maximize them. There's no time to waste, especially in SEC play. You need to start fast and you need to get that going, and that starts during the week.

I think looking back at just what we've done, we need to have more urgency in practice. We have great plans, but it's on us as players to execute them during the week and really sharpen that blade going into the game.

Q. Tremendous heat on Billy right now, and he's 12-16 right now at UF. What would you say to us, outsiders, people who are saying it's not working? Your support of Billy basically.

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, he has my absolute full support. I've never seen somebody prep the way that we prep, prepare the way we prepare. We have a great plan going into every game, and I know everybody in the locker room trusts Coach with everything we've got.

It's up to us, honestly. It's up to us and what we do during the week, what we do during the game. Are you playing with heart or are you not?

I think that's where us as a team, we need to come together and the players need to -- we need to play the ball that we know we can play. So I think that really, we have so much -- so many resources during the week that we prep, and our coaches are fantastic, and I think that we need to do a better job as players of putting ourselves in the right position and executing.

But no, he has my absolute full trust. I know as an outsider, you're not in the building every day. You don't see what we do every day. But as somebody that's been in there for a year and -- almost two years, there's nobody I'd rather play for.

Q. What was your assessment of the two-quarterback system, and did you feel like when you caught a little fire there in the second half and then to have to sit after that, was that frustrating, disappointing, anything like that?

GRAHAM MERTZ: No. I mean, every time that -- anytime you have an opportunity to go out and play, it's up to us to go out there and execute it. To me, you can't let the factors of what's going on take you away from doing your job.

For me, every time I step out there, every play that's called, it's up to me to make it right. There's no time to sit and self-pity when you're in an SEC football game.

Q. I think they came into the game 110th in the country against the run. How surprising was it you couldn't get that aspect of the game going on offense? Were they overloading a little bit? What were some of the reasons you couldn't get the run game going today?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, we knew just their philosophy. They're trying to get an extra hat in the box in a bunch of different ways, a lot of middle close zone, fitting the box from safety level with speed.

For us, we've just got to get all 11 moving as one, and what we're going to be harping on all week. If we want to

establish the front, if we want to run the ball, we need to do it every single day. I think that's one thing I can do a better job of getting guys the simple, hey, there's a guy coming from the field right here, little simple alerts that I can help just do my job better to help us all move as one.

I think we need to do a little self-reflection on how we can do our job better to free up everybody to go play.

Q. It looked like there were some timing issues on some handoffs, too.

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, it was a simple miscommunication. We had a run called. Yeah, can't have that.

Q. You had a few more deep balls than usual today, a couple of completions that went for 20 and 30 yards. Were you trying to air the ball out a little bit more to complement your compatibility with DJ and the receivers or was that just natural instinct?

GRAHAM MERTZ: No, I was trying to win. I was trying to do my job. I was trying to execute any play that was called. No, I just go out there and try to make my reads and do my job.

Q. Obviously the fans had a lot to say this week about the quarterback competition. How do you avoid letting that get to you on a personal level in the days coming up to the game or as you take to the field?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, I think it just goes back to what you pay your attention to. We knew during the week -- DJ had a great game last week. It was no surprise that we were going to do that. For me, like I said earlier, it's so easy to make this game a lot more complex than it is, or you can simplify it and realize, hey, I've got a job I've got to do, and when my number gets called, I've got to go out there and execute.

Like I've said a few times, I like to simplify this game and just try to go do my job.

Q. We've talked to you quite a bit about how strong the culture is and the togetherness. How important is that right now?

GRAHAM MERTZ: It's the most important thing. I think that -- I was on a team at Wisconsin, we started 1-4, and we won out, and it was a credit to the guys that we had on that team, the coaches we had on that team, guys coming together. We all know there's going to be a lot of noise, and it's up to us players what we pay attention to. Is it each other, or is it what's going on externally? Is it doing

our job, or is it something else?

We're going to rely on the older guys who have been through a lot of these experiences. I shared it with Chim when we were at Wisconsin. We know what it looks like. We know it all comes down to winning and doing your job every single day of the week.

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