

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Coach Billy Napier Press Conference



BILLY NAPIER: We good to go?

Okay, guys, obviously Saturday was very disappointing and frustrating. You know, I think it's important for everybody to know personally taking total ownership of that.

Everything that happens within our team and organization is my responsibility. So we need to do much better. The film is a combination of mental errors, fundamental and technique issues, and some decision making.

No doubt that we can help the players and try to put them in better positions at times.

And then I think it's one thing to know, but we also have to go apply. I think that's kind of where we are at from a player perspective. I think as teachers, we have to take a good look in the mirror of our weekly process.

I do think there is no excuses, no place for blame. I think responsibility, accountability is the only option here. The most important thing, and I told the players after the game Saturday, is that they stick together.

I think their camaraderie, relationships as teammates, this will pass and then they're going to have these relationships 5, 10, 15, 20 years from now. It's important that they stick together and they do their part as teammates.

I do think that we can't control what is said on the outside or done on the outside. We can control what is said within the walls. When we show up to work every day in this building, our words, attitude being actions, the way we treat people and interact on the teammates and then the intensity and the urgency and the approach to the work is the most important part.

Look, we're getting ready to transition here into Mississippi State game. I do think Jeff Lebby is a heck of a coach. First year head coach, but had great success as offensive coordinator. Known Jeff for a long time.

This is a first SEC road game. We would say regardless of opponent or who you are in this league, when you go play on the road you have to anticipate that it will be very challenging.

So tough place to play; been to Starkville many times and certainly can be a challenge there. 11:00 a.m. central kick will contribute as well.

They do have -- offensively the tempo is something that we'll have to try to simulate this week. There is a ton of variables on defense, front pressure coverage, good team speed, and that's always a recipe for some challenges when it comes to special teams and matchups there.

So singular focus on the work. I do think that a ton of distractions and noise, and we all anticipate and understand that. I do think it's work extremely hard, recover, show up, work extremely hard, recover. What is the next opportunity to improve and really take the right attitude towards that. Total focus on the next opportunity to improve.

That will start today. Obviously put the game to bed and then when we walk out of the team meeting room and go to practice today, I think it's a singular focus on the next challenge and that's Mississippi State.

What questions do we have here?

Q. Been any discussions or been told anything about your future?

BILLY NAPIER: No, none.

Q. Do you feel like there is still a path to earn a fourth season if the team can get it together --

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, 100%.

Q. -- and get on a roll?

BILLY NAPIER: 100%.

Q. Were you giving any assurances when you got

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here? You signed seven-year deal. You talked a lot about the process, rebuild, challenges of it, that you were going to be given X amount the time to do this.

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, those are all hypothetical scenarios. I think for me, I'm going to try to model what I would expect from our players, okay? Some of those things I just talked about, I think that's the whole key. As a staff and throughout the organization, we have to do our part to model what we would expect from the players and want from the players.

And that for me is total focus on the next opportunity to improve. We're going to put the game to bed today from Saturday, and then it's about doing my absolute best to prepare the team to play next Saturday.

And we can't live in the should have, could have, would have, if, then, all that. I think ultimately we got an obligation to the players and our leadership at the university to do our best to play well this week.

That's all we can control. Anything else is a waste of time. I think it's that way regardless. I mean, we been doing this for a long time. The ability to hit the reset button, sometimes you're trying to ignore the hype or the praise or the -- sometimes you fall flat on your face and you're trying to -- so your approach with the players the right mix of accountability and ownership; I think it's critical that we don't point fingers and we accept some responsibility and point out where there needs to be accountability I think that's the key, especially with young people in a world that they live in currently.

Q. I hear what you're saying in terms of outside noise and a lot of times it doesn't matter, but it can matter in terms of recruiting. What is the message to recruits about where things are and where they're going?

BILLY NAPIER: Well, there is a lot of football left to play. You know, nothing will affect that more than the next game we play, right? So let's get ready to go play Mississippi State on Saturday.

Q. Talked about going on the road, first road game you alluded to some challenges there. Can it have a galvanizing affect? How do you view that aspect of this week?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, no I just think in general, regardless of what team you are in this league or what opponent you're playing, when it's your first road SEC game, regardless of who it is and where it is, you got to be ready to go, because there is a little bit different intensity to that. You're going into enemy territory and you got to be ready.

Q. You talked about looking in the mirror and maybe some of that self-reflection. Do you think you've done a good enough job bringing in defensive help? Certainly look on the offensive side of the ball, Montrell, O'Cyrus. You have done fantastic with receivers, peer Pearsall, DK, and Badger, the position you know really well. Other side of the ball just doesn't look like it's gotten the fixes that it's needed.

BILLY NAPIER: Right. Well, I think that time will tell. You know, ultimately I think this is a group that gained some experience last year. I do think that obviously we're frustrated with the production to this point, but I think there is a lot of football left to play.

That's where we have to have the right combination of player accountability and then as coaches we have to take some responsibility as well. We have to adjust. I think if we continue to do the same things, then I think that would not be the smartest path.

So I think as a defensive staff, I know there is direction there. There is ownership there. And, yeah, just a little bit different approach, tweak things. I think it's critical in times like these that you listen to the players a little bit. I think you got to give them some ownership. It's important that they believe in what's happening and taking place, and painting an objective picture for them.

I think it's really important. So knowing that there is a lot of subjective out there, how do we create an objective environment where we can be truthful, I think that's the whole key. Then I think you would be surprised where they are. They know when they messed up. They know when they're in a tough spot. They know when the coaches can do better.

I think a combination of all that is the most important thing.

Q. How about the offensive line, when you evaluated on the tape, how much was physicality, communication? What did you see in terms of the breakdown?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I think A&M's front is good. In particular one the edge players, inside players are elite, next-level type players. We blocked them well at times; didn't block them well at times.

Some is fundamentals, techniques, footwork, hat position, hand placement, but there is also just some personnel things that we can help.

I think we got to pick from the right stuff. You know, I think



that's an important part of developing the identity of your offense. What do you do well?

We just didn't really have a lot of the rhythm in the first half. I mean, I think we had 12 plays outside of that last possession. Four, five, and six play possessions, something like that.

So I think we can do better. I think that the players would tell you there is opportunities for them to do better as well.

Q. What did the film tell you about the defensive performance? What stood out to you the most?

BILLY NAPIER: I thought we lacked gap integrity at times. I thought we lost the edges at times both in the run game and the rush game relative to the passing.

I do think obviously the backup quarterback, his skillset, the combination of runs we got in the game were challenging. Overall, much what I described earlier: mental errors, fundamental technique issues, some missed tackles.

You know, then I do think there is some decision making there relative to my assignment, some routine plays, you know, that are frustrating.

Also I think a combination of things we could have done better as a staff it help them.

Q. Does the lack of continuity -- year three, three different offensive play callers -- does that play into that? I know it's a developmental game, but fundamentally shouldn't you be more sound going into week three, four?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, no, I think it's the same system, verbiage. We have had three different play callers, but ultimately you're recycling players, too, right, in terms of experience.

You know, you start in January. You begin with an ending in mind. You're putting a system together. There is no question that the things you're describing there are frustrating things to me, because I've been a part of teams and staffs that we played really sound fundamental football.

I think at times, we're not doing that. Now, we do it really well at times as well. So I think consistency is what we're pursuing here. I agree with what you're saying.

Q. Do you see it from Monday to Friday in practice and doesn't show up Saturday?

BILLY NAPIER: There is some of that. There is some of that. I would say players voice that as well. Again, it's one thing to know; it's another thing to apply. That is not just life. I think that applies to about everything that we do. But in football it's the case as well.

You have to go execute in the moment. You have to go apply what you learned. You have to go -- and I think that's part of -- there is a combination of things here from a responsibility, accountability standpoint.

Q. You've had to rely on the transfer portal. Got an elite on in year one in O'Cyrus. Just curious about maybe some of the challenges in that and building continuity when you're having to plug in guys from different schools versus building from the ground up?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I mean, I think ultimately we're -- yeah, it was one of the initiatives when we first got here was we needed to get better on both line of scrimmages and we have done that with a combination of portal players and high school players.

I think anybody that's coached in this league would tell you to get where you want to go, you got to do a really good job on both lines of scrimmages relative to personnel, and also just in structure and how you teach, how you coach.

But you're right. That is one of the challenges that we all face in this profession. We had an incredible group at the previous stop. Several NFL players, I mean, it was a strength for us. We would like to get to that place.

I do think some of the players that we've added have played relatively well at times. We've had issues at certain positions. We've struggled a little bit.

Overall, that's part of the battle in college football at the elite level. No question about it.

Q. How do you handle the quarterback position this week? Going on the road, what type of dynamic does that add to it?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I would say we're committed to playing both players. I think obviously the impressive thing to me is just how both these guys have handled themselves, how they're working together, the camaraderie they have. That piece is impressive to me.

That can be divisive if you got the wrong people in the building. So just the way they handled themselves last week. I think we tried to define it for them so they weren't looking over their shoulder, and I think that worked.

But the humility of both the guys, the confidence, and then the working relationship they've since the first day. So both have character. Both understand the dynamic. I think both of them can help our team.

And certainly was great to have Graham back from injury. I thought he played well for the most part. One of the keys is that we have to play well around both these guys and we have to have some form of balance. I think that's the whole key. We got to play efficient on first and second down, stay out of the passing downs, and then we have to have some balance.

Q. What did you learn about coaching them for the first time in a game, how the offense responded to them, and then could you see that rotation maybe change going with the guy with the hot hand or if you feel like you need a spark?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I mean, I think that some of it is open-ended. They know that. Ultimately my expectation is they both prepare well, they both practice well, and they both play lights out when given a chance, right?

So I think we know when it's -- sometimes on offense, you know, we got a crowd in there watching the game. They don't know what sometimes is -- hey, it's not the quarterback's fault or it is the quarterback's fault, right? So we know, and I'm able to make decisions based off that.

If they're not doing what they're supposed to do, they can stand beside me. But for the most part, I don't necessarily think we have that problem.

Q. Do you see yourself with a plan in place? One of the guys is going well and you say you know what, tell the other quarterback, we're going to deviate from the plan this series and roll what what's working?

BILLY NAPIER: I think the approach we've taken kind of gets DJ involved early and then we kind of leave it open-ended after that. That's the commitment there.

So both halves are that way. That's ultimately what we decided to do.

Q. DJ Douglas isn't the only guy that had some plays he would like to have back. What's the philosophy with guys that have a tough day? Throw them back out there and let them try again? Maybe let them take a back seat for a little bit and watch it and then...

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, that's a good question. I think probably depends on what we've observed from that

player, you know, his attitude, his work ethic, his intent. Where is he? How is he accepting coaching? What type of teammate is he? What type of depth do we have at the position? Sometimes got no choice but to put the guy back out there.

But I think every position is a little bit different. What I describe is ultimately the way I would say -- sometimes the guy, we've probably figured that out before we got to the game, if that makes sense.

So it's part of the coaching, teaching is trying to get the player ready. I think that's where ultimately we got to take a good look in the mirror. We got to get them more prepared to play.

Q. Keeping the noise out, there is so much of it. Is it realistic to think it won't permeate?

BILLY NAPIER: It's never going to go away. It's going to be they love you if you win and hate you if you lose, right? Doesn't matter if we were at Buchholz High School right down the road.

So, look, we have to have some type of internal standard and objectiveness to what we do. It has to be just as frustrating, if not more, I would say. I have personal objectives. I have expectations.

You know, that's ultimately the way I view it. It's the same for me. So, look, I don't think there is anything that's more motivating to me than proving it, you know? And making people proud.

I think that's the key. So the more people you meet that have -- you listen and you hear the impact this place made on them, you listen to the stories, right? This place has been -- it's got great history and tradition.

You want to get it back there. It's one of the reasons you take the job and accept the challenge. For me, outside of getting a lot of text messages from former players and coaches you worked with and friends, it's next game. What can we do to come up with solutions?

Q. There is a buy-in aspect of a football as well. The players publically supported you on Saturday. What's your temperature on them?

BILLY NAPIER: We haven't had that problem. I'm not saying we wouldn't have that problem going forward, but I would tell you, we haven't had that issue.

We got a group that shows up and, again, today we have had two lift groups today and it's pedal to the metal in



there. They're ready to go.

Q. You've referenced your faith before. SEC media days you quoted Hebrews. What is allowing you to keep the faith in a time that's rough like this?

BILLY NAPIER: Well, I think we've done a ton of work. We have a lot invested. We've seen progress in certain areas. We got to get some of these things figured out. There are parts of our team where what we did this off-season I think was successful. The strength and conditioning program, nutrition, special teams is a positive trend.

We added some good young players, portal players. The detail and the execution of football, that's where that punches me in the gut a little bit, and that's separate. That's separate.

I think coaching is a career, but more importantly it's an opportunity, it's a platform. It's a way to impact people. It's a purpose. That's what I would describe it as.

We're all competitive, so I think we all want to win. And we want to produce a good product, right? So, yeah, that's where my energy is at. That's what I'm trying to get fixed.

Q. Spierto, if I'm getting his name correct, I haven't seen much of him.

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah.

Q. He played a good bit the other day. What has he done to elevate himself into the lineup?

BILLY NAPIER: He just makes plays every day. That's what he did. He's done is -- players would call him Dirty 30. That's his nickname. All he does is get open. He makes plays. He's been a good special teams player.

He's well respected among the team. He's bigger, faster, and more skilled than you would anticipate. He just does his job. So ultimately got a couple guys banged up and he's been very consistent and productive in practice. Not a day goes by he doesn't just make one of those catches, the other day he caught a one handed slant about eight inches from the ground.

Just guy does his job. He's one of these guys that's earned a scholarship and we're going to put the best ones out there.

Q. Saw him during pro day. He was good then.

BILLY NAPIER: Uh-huh, good football player.

Q. Last week offensive line rotation kind of tightened up. Was that due to SEC play and roster limits, or is that those guys have emerged?

BILLY NAPIER: A little bit of both. Just what we observed through the first couple weeks, what we felt like was best for the team.

Still a ton of competition. Still trying to develop players, improve players. There is a handful of those guys that are still a little green. Practice matters. Practice with the first and second group matters. That's where the offensive line develops. They don't develop on game day.

They develop in the good-on-good environment in the practice setting. If they're not a portal player that's ready-made and they did that somewhere else, right, they gained experience and practiced with the first and second units somewhere else. If they came here as young players, they have to do that here.

So I think some of these guys are a little green and we just got to continue to give them reps and feedback.

Q. This week travel roster is 70?

BILLY NAPIER: 74.

Q. How much of the 74 do you know you're going to take versus there is some spots, five, six, ten spots that...

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, special teams will dictate the last dozen or so. I mean, ultimately it's about what value do you bring to the team independent of offense or defense for the final few spots.

It's all who is a back up our starter, how many phases. But we can travel with less if we had to, but ultimately I think it's a positive that we can take more players, especially in a portal era, right? So I think most coaches would say take as many as you can.

Q. Talked about playcalling. Previously said every part of the offense will be evaluated. How would you evaluate the playcalling aspect of your offense?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I think some good, some bad. You know, I think ultimately to me, what I've observed on tape it's more about execution, more about decision making, fundamentals. I think that hasn't necessarily been the biggest issue.

Q. How surprised are you the run game hasn't gotten

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going a little more? How much are teams taking that away in the beginning for you guys?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, hence my frustration. (Smiling.)

So we got to do better in that area. It's one of the things that makes the engine go. We have to do better. Some of that is we got to look at what we do well. That's part of where we are. How do we generate some of that.

But, yeah, I think you are spot on. It's one of the things we've got to get better at.

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