

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Graham Mertz

Press Conference



Q. Pretty good screen as far as accuracy is concerned. What's got into that, particularly coming off the Miami game where you started out 9-20. Seemed like last two games you've really been on point.

GRAHAM MERTZ: The biggest thing is what I've said all offseason, just doing your job every play. Like, after every snap, doing my little pre-play process, down and distance, get a feel for what's going to come in, what's going to get called. When that play does get called, just reminding myself, like, what's my job, what do I have to do, and just doing it.

Just trying to stay in the moment. Just execute each play that Coach calls and make it work. That's what goes into it.

Q. (Indiscernible) the win over Mississippi State was the first time you won a Division I game in a while. Was there an emotional lift that you felt with the team getting that win?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, I think you ask anybody on our team, we know we left a lot out there. I think it felt great to win. I know that guys in the locker room were fired up, ready to get into the bye week. I think it actually fueled our bye week, too.

We had three really competitive, really good days of practice. We got better as a team coming off of that.

It felt good to win. Always feels good to win. But I think in the long run it helped us going into the bye really maximize the bye.

Q. Does playing an in-state team elevate anything?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Any in-state team?

Q. Just playing an in-state team.

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah.

Q. You want to have a leg up on --

GRAHAM MERTZ: For me, it's like -- I'm not from Florida, but the guys either from Orlando, from Tampa, from Miami, it means a lot to them. I think that I've gained an appreciation for playing teams in Florida just because what it means to the people, what it means to the fans, what it means to our team.

So definitely means a lot. But for us it's just the next game. So gotta build on what we did, correct what we did not do well and build on what we did good. So it will be fun.

Q. Billy said last week was, they didn't coddle you guys with those three practices. Can you take us to what the intensity was like and what the practices were like?

GRAHAM MERTZ: They were fun. They were fun. I think that one thing that -- for me coming, playing six years of college football, you've had a lot of bye weeks. You can get into the bye and you can kind of, it can go two ways you can get better or maintain or get worse. There's three different ways you can go.

I think Coach did a great job. We split the team up into two. It was kind of like the spring game. So we had two teams and every period was a competition. And at the end it was just for gassers.

You run, if you lose. But we ramped up the competition, guys were flying around, making plays. That's what we needed. We needed to start fast each and every one of those practices because we need to do a better job starting fast in the games.

So I think the way we set it up was fantastic. The guys attacked it. We got better through the bye.

Q. How has the two-quarterback system expanded this offense and kind of elevate it? It's unique and can keep teams kind of guessing a little.

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, I think you think of just the way we did it last week, I think it was really well done. I think

that being able to have different dynamics, because obviously DJ, he's a big dude. And that running at you fast is hard to tackle.

For him being able to use that game plan for him specifically definitely adds a lot of layers for the defense they need to prep for. I think in total they did a great job keeping him honest, not knowing what was coming, making us multiple on offense.

Q. Are you enjoying it?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, I'm having fun, man. I think for me it's just something different. Something I've never done. It's forced me to really be in the moment.

You think about, like, the A&M game. For me it was every other -- you really need to maximize every play you get because it's like you don't know when you get to go back out there. Especially in that game where you had, what, 12 plays in the first half.

So stuff like that where just being ready when your number's called and maximizing those plays, really forces you to stay present. It's been good.

Q. Hasn't Billy made it sure to make it a little bit more cut and dried for Mississippi State and he's going to do it going forward sounds like?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yes, it was a learning curve for us in realizing what we needed to do. I think the way we did it at Mississippi State was great. It kind of allowed me to get into a rhythm, feel out the game, get us rolling. I thought DJ did a great job when his number was called.

Q. The bye week --

GRAHAM MERTZ: You said Saturday?

Q. Saturday on the bye week, was this, like, I've got to get away from football all day long? Or was this I just gotta get absorbed in it because it was --

GRAHAM MERTZ: Here's the question, I'll flip it on you. What do you think I did Saturday during the bye week? I did not touch a golf club.

Q. Probably watched but --

GRAHAM MERTZ: I was in my living room starting at noon, the split four screens of each game, the noon games, 3:30 games and the night games. I was in there with Chim, Joey, we watched ball all day. It was fun.

Obviously when you watch a game on TV as a quarterback, it's frustrating because it's like you can't see the defense. You can see what the front's doing, but following the ball, it's a little frustrating.

But it's fun. Just being able to kind of give your brain a break just watch football, enjoy football. It was good, relaxing.

Q. One question on the two-quarterback thing. What do you gain when you're on the sidelines watching DJ? How does that help you, I guess?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah, honestly, I think the biggest thing we gain is just our communication. And if something changes, being able to talk about that with each other, I think, in between -- obviously on the sideline you can get a feel for what they're running. I can see the secondary a little more clean because it slows down when you're not in there.

When we get to the sideline, we get the iPad and we communicate, we get a real feel for what the plan is for DJ and me. Just to get to break that down and get a feel for overall what their plan was, especially early in the game. As you get throughout the game it just kind of repeats.

Q. Asked you about the iPad and we've seen you with Coach Harris, you guys going through it. How much does that change what you do on the sideline with the guys?

GRAHAM MERTZ: The iPad is awesome. It's funny, I had it in high school. I don't know why we had it in high school, but we did. It was awesome because, after that really the first and second drive, being able to sit back, look at the defense and just verify, okay, am I seeing the field right? Am I making the reads right? Do they have any curveballs on defense. Just a verification thing of what you see.

It's a great addition. I love the addition of the coach-to-player and the iPads. I think they were much needed.

Q. You guys had another sellout at The Swamp, going to be under the lights, so forth. Just capitalizing on that particularly early and getting off to a (indiscernible) start against Mississippi State?

GRAHAM MERTZ: It's great. Anytime you get a night game in the Swamp, it's a beautiful thing. It's a special place. It'll definitely be fun.

Biggest thing, we need to start fast. That's what I'll be hitting the guys on all week: Look, whatever we have to

do, we get out there and we're rolling from the jump, whether it's warmups or in the locker room.

We've got to start fast. We've got to build momentum. If we lose it, we've got to capture it. It's a game of momentum and we've got to start with it. Definitely gotta start fast.

Q. Looking over the UCF defense, what have you seen looking at them from film? And coming off a good win like this, how do you look to keep bringing the boom on Saturday?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Keep bringing the boom, I like it. Yeah, I think the big thing with them is they're multiple on defense -- multiple fronts, multiple pressures, multiple coverages. These are always the kind of games that quarterbacks like because it forces you to be on with your reads, be on with your eyes and communication.

They're talented. They've got a good front. Secondary is fast. They play fast. And they play with each other. I think the biggest thing when you look at a defense if the front and the coverage really play off of each other. They do a good job of that. It's a fun game to prep for.

Q. What did Colorado do so well to attack them?

GRAHAM MERTZ: I think that they did a really good job of establishing the front. I think they did a good job running the ball. And then obviously just extending plays, making plays.

You go watch that tape -- watched it the second time this morning -- you just see guys flying around playing fast making plays. They did a good job executing.

They started off a little slow. First drive was a pick for Colorado. But I think as you watch that game, you just saw them executing. That's what this game's all about. If you go out there and do your job, guys make plays, you're going to win football games. You take care of the football.

They did a good job of establishing the front, playing simple, making clean reads. And that's how they won.

Q. How much (inaudible) elevate things on offense if he continues to do what we saw against Mississippi State?

A. He will, Aidan's a special player. I've seen throughout his entire time here he makes plays like that in practice because he plays with that effort every day in practice.

Coach always talks about the way you practice is how

you're going to play. I think Aidan's a clear image of that because he practices like that with that effort every single day, that speed.

Anyway we can get him the ball, get the ball in his hands quick, just let him go be a playmaker because that's how he plays.

It's funny, it runs in the Mizell blood. Aidan said, did you see my brother make that play. I don't know if you saw it, but his brother made an extremely play he made running around the field, scoring a touchdown. Aidan is a special player.

Q. What was your takeaway from the Alabama Georgia game and also the SEC in general, just watching it from afar?

GRAHAM MERTZ: I think that game was fun to watch. I think that anytime you -- obviously when it starts out, what was it, 28-0, 21-0. As a player, if I was in his shoes what would I be doing? To see them go out there get seven, another seven, slowly chip away at it, it just shows what the SEC is about right now.

You've got a lot of teams that are even across the board. A lot of skill. It all just comes down to execution. I think that's how you can simplify this game. If you go out and execute, you're going to win. If you don't, you're going to lose.

I think you see that throughout the entire Saturday, last Saturday.

Q. Was it (inaudible) watching two teams with that talent putting on a show like that?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Is it motivating?

Q. For you as a player (inaudible) to get to that level.

GRAHAM MERTZ: I've never really been like an externally motivated person. For me it was just fun because I love football. Being able to sit back, watch a good game. That was fun. But for me, I've never -- I'm always motivated by my people. I don't ever get motivated by what other people are doing.

Q. Converting five fourth downs like Georgia did, have you ever seen anything like that?

GRAHAM MERTZ: No. No. But like I said, execution. That's what wins football games. They went out there. Did their job. Had all 11 guys making their plays, that's how you win.

Q. After the A&M game, they were asked if you saw any quit in this team, at times guys start mailing it in, what have you observed as far as that goes?

GRAHAM MERTZ: No quit.

Q. How do you reset as a --

GRAHAM MERTZ: How do we?

Q. How do you police that?

GRAHAM MERTZ: The nice thing about this team is I don't have to police that. I think that it's just a credit to the type of guys we have right now. We're not going to quit on each other. I think that if there was a camera in our indoor for the entire bye week just watching practice, people would be, like, why do they have that juice? Why are they practicing in a bye like this, but it all comes down to we care about each other, we're not going to let each other down. We're never going to quit on each other because we're all we've got right now. It's all the people in this building and no one's quitting.

Q. You've never seen someone (inaudible) during a bye week?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Never. I felt like it was fall camp again. But it was fun. I think that back to my bye weeks, it was always, like, okay, the young bucks go in they go scrimmage for the end of the practice. But no, we were rolling. 1s on 1s, 2s on 2s, competing, all day, for three days.

Q. (Inaudible)?

GRAHAM MERTZ: It was coach's. It was pretty similar to the spring game. That kind of setup.

Q. Was this a whole reboot in a way?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Kind of. I think that for us it was -- we've been rolling since before camp. So for us just to kind of get a day, day and a half to sit back and relax and kind of recenter, refocus, it was definitely good for a lot of guys.

Q. You mentioned the buy in and the execution, how much guys care. Is it frustrating to not see that translate into the results you guys want during games? Have you thought about what needs to occur to kind of get the product you guys have all been proud of in practices to show up on Saturdays?

GRAHAM MERTZ: Yeah. I mean, we're four games into the season. I think that there's a lot of ball left to be played. I think that that's what this team realizes, look, we have, what, eight more opportunities to go play. We need to be ready for them. We've got to start fast. We've got to execute. We know what we've done wrong. We know how to fix it. We've addressed it. But for us, we're just excited for this next opportunity to go play because we know what we've got. We know that we haven't put our best ball on tape yet. We're looking forward to it.

It all comes down to execution. Just doing your job. You've got 11 guys on the field. We need 11 to make as many plays as they can, just doing their job.

Q. Jason (inaudible) said at the end of camp you've been locked in hasn't been able to catch any picks from you. Looks like he's been pretty locked in, what do you think about how he's been playing?

GRAHAM MERTZ: J Marsh.

Q. Has he been able to get one from you in recent weeks?

GRAHAM MERTZ: I don't think he's got one. But he's been locking it down. That's one thing where he probably hasn't got it because I really haven't thrown at him in one-on-one. But, no, he's done a fantastic job. I think he's one guy that you look at the defense, he's consistent. He makes plays. Guys look up to him every single day. I think the biggest thing with him is his consistency. That's what guys respect him for. It inspires other guys to be consistent. He's done a fantastic job. He's a baller, man.

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