

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Coach Billy Napier

Press Conference



Georgia 34, Florida 20

BILLY NAPIER: Okay. I'm extremely proud of our team. I think throughout this entire year the character of this group has showed up. I think it's a tough group and I do think that I'm proud of the way they executed in the game today, the effort in which they played, and the pride in which they took in representing Florida and competing.

You know, I do think that the objective today was to come here and put fanatical effort on the field. We wanted to ramp up the intensity. We wanted to play with better effort. We wanted to out-finish, out-compete, out-hustle, out-physical, and we knew there would be poise and composure needed.

We knew there would be momentum in the game that would challenge the resiliency of the team. Certainly that was the case. We felt like we understood the mission and we felt like we had the men to do it. This group is very unified. I think its unity is powerful, and I do think in the last couple weeks this group has started to believe that they can play with anybody and beat anybody.

Obviously there is a bunch of football here that could be done better. I was proud of a lot of the players that stepped up. We went into the game with some injuries. We had some injuries throughout the game. But I do think the players that had opportunities really stepped up and did a great job for the team.

You know, I'm proud of our team. Proud to be associated with that group in there. Obviously came up a little bit short today, but I do think the game kind of went the way we wanted it to. We made it ugly at times, but I do think we had our team in position at times to win the game.

So what questions do we have?

Q. How challenging was it (regarding DJ - no microphone.)?

BILLY NAPIER: Well, first of all, hats off to Aidan Warner.

We're talking about a guy who didn't go through spring practice. Really did a lot of two-spot work in training camp. Won the backup job or won the three job at some point in training camp.

Then two weeks ago started taking real reps with the second unit. So two weeks of work with the second unit. For him to be able to go operate today, obviously made some plays, made a handful of mistakes. They're a really good group on defense. We all understand that and know that, personnel and schematically.

Yeah, it's apparent that there were some challenges there, but the guy made some plays. We literally tied it up. Didn't turn it over until late. Threw it away when he needed to. Leaned on the defense. I thought Crawshaw was outstanding. We played field position throughout.

Yeah, he was one of many like him that stepped up for the team.

Q. Billy, you said on ESPN at halftime that DJ's injury was pretty significant. Anything else you can share with us at the moment?

BILLY NAPIER: It's soft tissue. We'll have more for you next week.

Q. ... how confident were you because of the way you were playing on both sides of the football?

BILLY NAPIER: No, I think our plan was working well, and really continued to work well on defense and the kicking game, and even on offense to some degree at times.

I thought third down was a challenge today. But, yeah, just overall the effort, the physicality, fundamentals at the point of attack, I thought we were in position for sure.

Q. What was your view on the snap? It looked a little low to us.

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah.

Q. (Regarding momentum play.)

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BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, one of many plays where maybe a player had an opportunity to make a play and he didn't necessarily do it, right?

I mean, never comes down to just one play. We probably played 180 plays out there today and there were multiple opportunities for us to get it done.

Special teams are a team effort, and on that play, we did not execute.

Q. Seem to be playing a little better. Week to week the team seems to be playing with confidence despite the injuries. What can you attribute to that? Just the body language looks different. The product on defense has really improved. Something you can point to or just a process?

BILLY NAPIER: I think we have really impressive kids. I think we have some unbelievable human beings on our team. We don't have a distraction. We don't have one guy that's not compliant. We have no discipline issues.

We got a group that shows up on time; they work. I think the leaders on our team have done a great job holding people accountable. It's becoming the expectation.

Ultimately, when it starts to work and you play toe to toe with some of the better teams you start to believe. For the first time since I've been the head coach here we showed up and we believed we could beat that team.

I think ultimately belief is probably the most powerful in the final value relative to what we teach. You got to have integrity. You got to be together. You got to have discipline. You got to have effort and toughness. If you do all a those things consistently, then the product starts to look the way it should look and there is a level of belief that comes with that.

I think we have gotten to that point.

Q. Devin Moore came out of the locker room on crutches after going down with an injury late in the first half. Is there anything else you can tell us how he's holding up?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, we'll have an injury report on Wednesday at 8:10 pm.

Q. Jadan and Ka'Kobi (indiscernible.) I saw Montrell was dressed; he didn't play. Because he couldn't go or what was...

BILLY NAPIER: Montrell wasn't able to practice the way we wanted him to. Wasn't the right thing to do to put him out there. It was a game-time decision. He wanted to play. He was battling his tail off all week in the training room.

Just wasn't quite ready to play.

Q. You're up on Tennessee; Graham goes down. You're up on Georgia; DJ goes down. Playing without Tre, Montrell, some other injured players. Do you ever feel snake-bit with these injuries?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, no, I don't believe in this that. Always been injuries in this game. Every team in the country has injuries. One thing I can say is we built a roster that has some competitive depth and that's proved to be beneficial.

You play in this league, the level of competition, the explosive players, height, length, and speed of the game, physicality of this game, you're always going to need depth.

We been fortunate to have it. Look, goes back to how you practice. Goes back to how you install, how you teach the two-spot practices.

Look, we have an incredible group of walk-ons that create a practice environment that allows us to develop that depth, and they take great pride in their role relative to preparing the team.

It takes every person to develop a football team in terms of how you practice, and certainly some of that work we been doing this off-season, it's the first time we been able to practice like that since I've been at Florida.

Q. Also your quarterback room, what's that look like now?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, no, Aidan and Clay obviously have taken a ton of reps. You know, again, Aidan, I would tell you he's had some really good practices the last couple weeks. I mean, the kids love him. He has got some self-confidence and he's got arm talent. He cares about Florida.

So we'll rally around him and go put out ball down in play again next week.

Q. How did the injuries affect you guys in the secondary? Three guys went down on one series. (Indiscernible.)

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, no, I think we work though contingency plans. We had to use them today, you know. So just in general those guys competed their tail off, man.

I mean, the way Cormani has come on, and obviously Trikweze, his position versatility, you know, we will be fine there.

Q. What did you think of the defensive performance overall?

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, no, it was exactly the way we wanted it to go. We affected the quarterback. We made it sloppy. Made it ugly. We limited the explosive plays. Made them go the distance.

Were able to get some takeaways. We obviously need to capitalize on some of those short fields, but hats off to our defensive staff. They had a great plan and the players executed that plan.

We played with the type of intangibles that you want your team to play with?

Q. (No microphone.) So many guys going down.

BILLY NAPIER: No.

Q. Despite everything that went on injury-wise for you, Aidan got you down the field; tied the game at 20-all. Can you go through the mindset of what those guys are feeling down there on that field and how you're feeling as you're in this game with the No. 2 team in the country?

BILLY NAPIER: No, there is a lot of work that's contributed to what we experienced today. I'm just proud of the intangibles that the kids showed.

You know, it's not easy relative to maybe the way we performed early in the year and the things that come with that. For a group of young people to stick together and not only continue to maintain their character, but to go to work on the areas they needed to improve, stick together, never heard a player make an excuse, complain, blame somebody else, just work and collaborate with the staff to get to the solutions and put the ball down in the practice environment and work on getting better.

Leaders leading. Young players buying in and developing. Ultimately played with several combinations of players throughout the year.

Q. Do you know yet if DJ will come back from this injury this season?

BILLY NAPIER: I think it's soft tissue so those things are sometimes subjective. We'll get an MRI tomorrow and have a little bit better idea. Give you a report on Wednesday.

Q. Number one, since Aidan is more of a pro-style quarterback, are you planning on doing any adjustments because the O-line at times are struggling a little bit in protection? And number two, because you're now down to the third guy, do you have that feeling like sometimes you just want to put a little bit of a leash and not make as many risks? I know DJ liked to take off.

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, no, I think you're thinking the way I'm thinking. I mean, I think your analysis is good. A lot of things that went through my head today.

But I'm proud of Aidan. I have confidence in him. He's done a great job since he start taking reps a couple weeks ago. For him to do what he did today, you know, I think there is something to be said for that.

Look, he'll continue to get better. You know, think about it now, just a few weeks ago that guy is, you know, standing around eating ice cream.

So then all of a sudden Graham Mertz is down, I'm the two. You know, then here we go two weeks later it's Florida-Georgia and mid second quarter I'm trotting on the field and I have a locker room of players that I have a responsibility to.

So hats off to Aidan in term of how you handled that today.

Q. Just kind of expanding a little bit more on the defense. Now six interception in the last two games. What do you think is the reason you guys have been able to force so many turnovers, especially today where those -- all three interceptions really kept you guys in and had a big impact on the game.

BILLY NAPIER: Yeah, I think the rush and the coverage are working well together. I think we've been able to make them hold it a little bit. I think we done a good job sewing up some of our zone concepts and principles. You know, just I think we've gotten better at every level of the defense.

I think the front and the edges have gotten better inside backers; secondary. I think all three of those combined. Look, it goes back to leadership on that side of the ball co-elaborating with the staff. Embarrassed with how they played in the beginning of the year.

I think the open date was huge and I think since then the product continues to get a little better each week.

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