

University of Florida Football Media Conference

Saturday, November 23, 2024

Gainesville, Florida, USA

DJ Lagway

Press Conference



Florida 24, Ole Miss 17

Q. What does this mean for you guys to have been able to stay the course this season and to get to this point, because it was a rough September, and now you guys are really finding your stride.

DJ LAGWAY: It's been great. September was very rough, but we persevered and we continued to work and just continued to trust in what Coach Napier was preaching to us, and I feel like all of our hard work is starting to pay off now.

Q. What is it about Billy that he's able to keep you guys going forward?

DJ LAGWAY: There's something about Coach Nape. He's a different guy and he's just amazing to follow and just to see how he leads through the good, through the bad and through the ugly, he's going to be the same, and that's all you can respect, and I love Coach Nape.

Q. Defense held them to three points in the second half. Just your ability to close out the game, what that meant to you guys in the offense and them continuing to get stops in the red zone?

DJ LAGWAY: Man, it was amazing. Defense came to play. I felt like all of our special teams, offense and defense, everybody just came to play, and it was a great team win. Everybody did their job, and it was just amazing.

Q. When did you feel this starting to turn this season?

DJ LAGWAY: I'd really say Mississippi State and then after the bye week we kind of had a mentality that we could compete with anybody. It's just us against the world, and we're going out there and battle and compete every single day.

Q. Obviously there's been a lot of talk about the connection between you and Elijah Badger but just seeing it translate against a top-10 team of all people,

what do you think sets you and him as a duo apart from the rest of the competition?

DJ LAGWAY: You know, I'd just say I feel like the chemistry with all of my receivers, I feel like I have a great connection with everybody. I feel like I know them individually, and just having that relationship off the field, I feel that plays a big part.

Me and Badge have been connecting a lot recently. He's been making a heck of a lot of plays for me, and it's great to have a senior veteran like him to help me on and off the field, so it's been great.

Q. Obviously you mentioned having the connection with all your receivers. Being a centerpiece of this team so early in your career, it's a daunting task, but you've very clearly handled it well. What do you think has allowed you to succeed to this point, and how do you look to keep building on it going forward?

DJ LAGWAY: Yeah, really nothing but God. God has been leading me throughout this whole journey, through my whole journey just playing football. It's just a blessing to have just amazing teammates, amazing coaches around me to develop me, and it's been amazing just to see how everybody rallies behind me, and it's truly a blessing.

Q. Just talk about Montrell (indiscernible)?

DJ LAGWAY: Yeah, it's always great to have No. 1 in the backfield with me, man. He's been a great leader since day one, since I stepped on campus, and it's just awesome to be back there in the backfield with him. He's a heck of a player. He makes a lot of good plays, picks up protections very well, and I think he's leading the young guys in the same direction. It's just great to have a player like Montrell Johnson.

Q. I know you were asked about the receivers before and about the seniors. Talk about DK, Elijah, and how this season you've relied on those guys to make your job easier?

DJ LAGWAY: Yeah, those guys have been great

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

resources on and off the field, like I said. They're great leaders. They have their different styles of leadership, but they definitely are great leaders, and I appreciate those guys for real.

Q. Back in Willis, you were kind of a man among boys, but how do you explain being able to throw passes with people hanging all over you? You had three or four great escapes today. How do you keep your head in the situation?

DJ LAGWAY: You know, we practice situations like this every day. Believe it or not, we do ball security, we do pocket moments every single day and every off period that we have, any special teams periods we're doing ball security drills and pocket movement stuff. I'd just say from the development of Coach O'Hara, Coach Nape and just the plan that they have, we prepare, and those situations that I've seen out there on Saturday hasn't been the first time I've practiced those situations. So I'd just say the preparation from those guys has been amazing.

Q. I don't know if you've been asked about this yet this year, but how often do you hear the "DJ Lagway" chants and what does that do for you?

DJ LAGWAY: To be honest, it's such a team sport. I really don't pay attention to that, man. It's all about the Gators, man. No player is bigger than the program, than the brand. That's how I see it. Just having my guys rally behind me and now even some of my teammates make jokes about it because they know I don't really care about that type of stuff. You know, it's a blessing, but like I said, it's Gators football over everything. Nobody is bigger than the brand.

Q. On that note, Lane Kiffin this week talked about the lag way effect and how this team plays differently when you're behind center. How much have you felt that the last two weeks since you returned?

DJ LAGWAY: I feel it a lot, man. That's why I'm so thankful to have a group of guys around me that trust in me and believe in me since day one that they're going to have my back through the good, the bad and the ugly, and that's all you can ask for, especially at the quarterback position when you're depending on a lot of other guys to make plays for you and to protect you and to get the ball back for you. It's just truly a blessing to have such amazing teammates.

Q. Last week you talked about the offensive line and how they kept you up and no sacks. Today you got caught a few times. I know you've probably gotten away from worrying what will happen if you get

sacked, but can you talk about getting up after each of those sacks, and on the offensive line itself today, I know that this team was -- Ole Miss was a much better defensive line in that regard.

DJ LAGWAY: My offensive line battled their butts off, and I'm so thankful for those guys. They come every day willing to work, and we always communicate about little things that we're seeing protection-wise and really just having those guys around me, I know they're going to give me their all and I'm going to give them my all. Those guys are just tremendous. I couldn't ask for a better front five, seriously.

Q. We saw you scramble a little bit, too, today, and I know you didn't run much last week. Is that a sign you're feeling better physically?

DJ LAGWAY: Yes, sir, I'm feeling better each week. I didn't have any set backs during the game, so I'm just continuing to get better and continuing the recovery process. So it's good.

Q. It was senior day for Graham Mertz. Talk about the relationship you've had and what that has meant to you in getting you to this point.

DJ LAGWAY: Man, Graham means everything to me. He's like a big brother to me. He's taught me the ropes, man. Since I got here in January, there was never no egos in it. It's always just been him mentoring me and leading me and teaching me how to be a professional, especially at this level, so it's been amazing to have Graham.

Q. You talked on the defensive performance at the beginning of this, but what was it like seeing Bryce getting back-to-back picks?

DJ LAGWAY: Man, it was great just see how those guys work each and every day. At the beginning of the season they were getting a little talk-back stuff about them, but they came every single day and battled and worked and persevered. People had to step up and play big roles due to injuries, but I felt like everybody continued to get better, and I'm just thankful to have those guys on the other side. Just working against them every day is getting me better and developing me, so it's been great.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports