

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Gainesville, Florida, USA

Coach Billy Gonzales

Press Conference



Georgia 24 Florida 20

BILLY GONZALES: First and foremost, I thought the players played extremely hard. Thought they fought. Proud of them. They did not quit. I told you guys before they do not have quit in their DNA.

Obviously we're not here for moral victories. We came up short and we came here to win. So we have to continue to work to get better.

Overall, this group of men in there, just had a chance to talk with, I told them I respect them. I respect them for the way they handled change over the past week. Respect them how resilient they've been over the past week. I respect how they've responded and taken ownership of this team.

I'm extremely proud of them. But I know they're hurting, our staff is hurting, I'm hurting. We came here to win and we fell short.

Gators expect a winner, so we have to get ready to get back to work. Got four more games ready to roll we can win. We have to continue to get better in all facets of the game.

So open up for questions if you guys have some.

Q. The short yardage, fourth and one.

BILLY GONZALES: Yep.

Q. (No microphone.) Thought about doing that or feel like the way you guys were running the football that was the way to go?

BILLY GONZALES: No. No second thoughts. We will take a look on film and see what happened. I haven't had a chance to look at it or review it yet. Obviously critical play for us, but never going to second guess it.

Our guys, you know, we had to go for it. We had to go for

it. If you kick a field goal you're still down. If they go down and score you're still down a point. We will take a look and see where we went wrong, but no second guessing as far as the play that was called.

Q. How would you assess DJ's performance?

BILLY GONZALES: Yeah, I'm just kind of looking at him. He was what, 15 of 24 today, 166 yards. They did a pretty good job on defense. They do a good job. They threw some pressures and played some two high, one high, man coverage, zone coverage, behind it.

They do a good job. So obviously DJ put us in great position to be in the game at the end of the game right now. So it was a close game like I said. We didn't have the outcome that we wanted, but we would have never been in that situation if we didn't have DJ playing the way he was.

Thought he did some really good things. He had a career long in a run. He showed that I'm not afraid to run the ball. He's a willing runner, so absolutely.

Q. (Regarding Trey Wilson.) His involvement today. Had some opportunities. Seemed like he was pretty comfortable.

BILLY GONZALES: You know, we talked this week over -- earlier this week up in Gainesville just about the way he worked over the last couple weeks. He's going to be rewarded based on how hard you work. Couple weeks ago he wasn't as active as as far as being able to get the ball, but he busted his butt in the blocking game.

Obviously with a couple playmakers down, we had Aidan down, VB down, and Dallas was down here in the middle of the game. He stepped up. I'm looking at some of the numbers. He had nine catches for 121 yards. He did a great job. He's got big play making ability.

So it was something we kind of saw throughout practice. He did a great job in practice. Everything that he did today he made in practice. That's kind of the expectation, to be able to make the plays you're doing consistently in



practice.

Q. No moral victories but what do you think this team showed in terms of talent, fight? Obviously going into the future a lot of people are looking into the future.

BILLY GONZALES: I think this football team, again, they have no quit. They're a gritty team. Again, like I said, I'm just super proud of how they have bonded together. I just got done talking to them. Extremely hard. Extremely hard.

They want to win. This team is not here to play. They want to win. I'm proud of them. I'm proud of them. Again, like I said, we got to go back to work as a staff to put them a better position so we can be successful and walk out of here as a winner.

Q. (Regarding third down.) 2-11 today. What were the issues?

BILLY GONZALES: You know, I was looking at some of the stats. They did a really good job controlling the ball in the first half. I'm looking at something, just the first three, or three of them from the first half.

They did a great job controlling the ball and keeping the ball, but our defense did a great job. Our defense didn't break. So we ended up getting the ball in minus 11, minus 9, minus 11, putting our backs up against the wall. You can look at it as a negative or as a positive. I look at it as both.

We got the ball deep with our backs against the wall but our defense did a great job in keeping them out of the end zone. So we have to be able to -- we have to be better than that and make sure that we're better than 2-11 on third down.

I do think they came back, our players came back, made some adjustments from the first half to second half. Coach Callaway, Coach O'Hara, and the offensive staff got together. If I'm correct, the first drive we were three and out, which is not what we want to be. Second drive was a 15-play drive and went down and scored.

So, again, hats off to our players for not giving in, not stop fighting. I love them. We're here for them, for our players. But we have to continue to grind and put them in the position where they can be successful.

Q. (Regarding defending Gunner Stockton.)

BILLY GONZALES: He's a good football player. He's a good football player coming into the game. He was -- had a good game today. Again, our defense played really

good. I thought they did some -- they moved around. They challenged him a little bit. Got an interception. So I'm excited about the way that guys played.

Again like I said, most importantly, I'm proud of this team, the way they responded to change. It's not easy. I'm just super proud of this team the way they responded and the resiliency, and they're not going to quit. We're going to get ready and get back to work and get on the bus and go back to Gainesville and start working again tomorrow and get ready for the next week.

Q. Sturdivant slips behind the defense and looks like the ball is slightly overthrown. How tough was that to stomach?

BILLY GONZALES: It's hard. We're going to go back and watch film. Probably going to be more than one of those type of plays. But, yeah, it's one of those things. Just didn't work the way we wanted it to work today.

We've got to continue -- like I said, as a staff we got to continue to grind, got to continue to work, got to put our players in the best possible position. Again, these guys, I keep giving praise to them. They have not quit and there is no quit in them.

So if they're going to fight for us we got to continue to fight. If we play like this we're going to be okay in the next four games. We have to continue it and keep pressing and keep getting better.

The seniors got to continue to lead. Young guys got to continue to get better and we got to just keep fighting.

Q. Did you think it was a catch?

BILLY GONZALES: No.

Q. What can you say about the opportunities he gives you?

BILLY GONZALES: He's a weapon. Absolutely a weapon. Soon as you get over on the plus side and you can -- Coach Houston, he's usually in my ear talking and letting us know where we are, where the kick line is.

Any time you got a guy that can put the ball in and get points from distance, that's gives us a security blanket.

So absolutely, but at the end of the day as a offense we want to do a good job, create big plays. Big plays create into points. We did a better job I think at some points with penalties. We still had five of them.



We have to eliminate that process. Time of possession was kind of flipped. First half they did an incredible job. Kept the ball away from us. We didn't keep the ball in our hands. In the second half we came back and put some drives together and it's pretty close, 27-32, looking at some of the stats.

But, again, we just got to bounce back. We have to keep our players together. Again, that's my whole mission, is to keep the players together, keep fighting, keep them together as a family. Again, I just thank them for that.

So...

Q. What's the status of Dallas Wilson?

BILLY GONZALES: We'll find out a little bit more. Obviously he was injured so I'll find out. Haven't talked to him or the training staff right now.

Q. (No microphone.)

BILLY GONZALES: You know, I think the -- there was -- we moved the ball the way that we needed to as far as getting aligned. Can you be faster? You can always be faster. But at the same time there are looks that you want to shift to try to get the defense in the proper look. We are going to motion at times where we need to motion to try to create picks. I shouldn't say picks, but trying to create the natural rubs.

Again, to try to put our players in advantageous situations based on run plays.

Q. Given the context of everything the past week, the changes, Top 5 team, rivalry, all that, I know it's a loss, but what kind of challenge was today? And for them to have a lead in the fourth quarter, I know you don't want moral victories, but...

BILLY GONZALES: It was good. If you take a look from the standpoint of what happened and what could have happened, yeah, it's great. But at the end of the day we did not win. That's all that matters. Okay?

So our players played hard. They fought. They know this. There are no moral victories. You win or you lose. I told them they're going to have challenges in life. They're going to be dads, fathers, husbands someday. There will be challenges in life that will affect them. How you respond is the most important piece of it. How you handle adversity, you control your emotion.

Nobody controls your emotion. You might not always control the situation that you're in, but you control your

emotion and how you respond. I just got talking to a young man in there, a freshmen, and told him how important that was. Continue to keep pushing and continue to keep fighting.

I love them. I love our players. Our coaching staff loves our players. We're going to continue to fight for the University of Florida. We believe in the program. Our players believe in it. We're going to continue to keep fighting to get those wins.

Q. More verticality today. Talk about that.

BILLY GONZALES: You know, we talk just about giving our players an opportunity to run a little bit. You know, the thing in the pass game you always want to try to design pass plays, whether their one high or two high beaters or top down level beaters or progression reads. Okay?

It's all dictated -- what shot you're going to be able to take is going to be dictated by the defense they're playing in the back end. So are there times you wish you could take the ball deeper? Absolutely. They might be playing zone thirds. Are there times you can throw the ball with a runner? Well, sometimes they're playing zone or man.

So the defense dictates where you're throwing the ball, but offensively we try to have those answers based on the coverages we're given.

Q. DJ, kind of put the ball in his hands as a runner more?

BILLY GONZALES: Absolutely. I think I talked a little bit earlier about that. We've never been afraid of it. He's always been a willing runner. Any time you got a willing runner I think that opens up. What it does is opens up and makes the defense defend you a little bit.

So, yeah, when you can spread it out a little bit and they're going to play four man or five man box and you have an extra hat, he becomes the runner. He's big, strong, he's fast. He's plenty fast.

Again, the only thing that matters is if you're a willing runner. If you are a willing runner, then you'll be productive in the run game as a quarterback.

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