

University of Florida Football Media Conference

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Coach Billy Gonzales

Press Conference



Tennessee - 31, Florida - 11

BILLY GONZALES: Obviously we didn't want to let them start, get a fast start at the beginning of the game. We know their offense, we know their tempo. We knew they were fast-paced and an explosive offense. We wanted to stop them, and we didn't make that happen. Obviously we wanted to slow them down at the beginning of the game.

They came out and they scored on the first four drives. Our drives were nowhere near where we needed them to be.

The first half stats, obviously it was 31-0. First downs they beat us 19-6. Rushing yards, 177 to 70 at halftime. Total offensive yards, 323-110. Then you take a look at the possession time, it was 18:31 to 11:29.

And I think the biggest thing is we talked about not letting them get off to a start, a fast start, but, you know, obviously we couldn't get them off the field. They were 4-of-6 on third-down possessions, 1-of-1 on fourth-down possessions. And we were 0-5 and 0-1 on third- and fourth-down situations.

Came back in at halftime. Talked to the team about when you're back's against the wall, who are you, and that's who you really are.

I thought they came back. They fought in the second half, obviously. I know both teams slowed the tempo down. Both teams slowed the pace down. But I guess a positive for us is, if you start looking at numbers, came back and obviously had a chance, I think, first and foremost, you recognize Baugh, Jadan Baugh played an exceptional game, both in the run game and pass game for us.

We finished up, if you take a look at the possession at the end of the game, they still had the ball 10 more minutes than we did. Again, at the end of the game we couldn't get off the field. They were 9-of-13 total on third downs and we were 2-of-9. And they were 1-of-1 and we were 0-for-1.

I think the biggest thing that people have done against us probably the last three games, when I come back and look at the stats at the end of the game, when you get a passing team, you think they're a pretty balanced team, but they only threw the ball 22 attempts and they ran it 51 times.

We've got to do a better job stopping the run consistently, and that hasn't happened lately. We've got to get back to work and continue to get better.

Q. Even with the fight you saw in the second half, I know you mentioned before not really seeing players quit, but what's the vibe of the team in this locker room to see this slide continue?

BILLY GONZALES: Nobody wants to -- I mean, it's not great because everybody wants to win, and nobody wants to lose. So if you're asking what it feels like to lose, it's not fun. It's not good. It sucks for me to be up here in front of you guys, obviously.

You know, I'll take the loss for the players every game, no matter what it's going to be. So I'll continue that process. But we've got to get better. And does it hurt, absolutely.

Q. Given just the circumstances, Urban in the house, national TV and Tennessee, a big rivalry game, riding a big losing streak, how does all that resonate with the performance?

BILLY GONZALES: Whoever's here is here. Obviously, I think it was awesome he had an opportunity to be recognized. I think that's special for Coach. I think the world of him.

But as far as our players, we've got to continue to get better. We've got to try to continue to finish a game. We played a half of football. The last couple of weeks, the first -- two of the first three games we played, we played a good first half and we didn't play a good second half.

This time we were the reverse. We didn't play the first half and we came out in the second half and played solid. Run game kicked up a little bit and we set up some play-action off of it.



But no, it doesn't matter as far as who is here or who is not. We've got to be better, play better.

Q. But he's talking to the team beforehand?

BILLY GONZALES: Sure.

Q. And just the team comes out so flat. Is there something you can pinpoint?

BILLY GONZALES: No. We played a good football team. They're a field goal away from -- last year they were a college football playoff team. This year they're an overtime loss to Georgia and a field goal, really, to Oklahoma. Or else they'd be in the CFP playoff at a high level right now. They're an extremely good football team.

But we've got to find a way to get off the field. We've got to find a way to stop the run game. And I think that's something that the teams have done over the last couple of weeks against us.

Q. You hit a big pass play to Bbaugh early and it gets called back on a penalty. Then the rest of the half, the rest of the quarter, I think only one yard. But the inability to exploit their pass defense -- I think they came in worst in the SEC, what were some of the reasons you feel like were because of that or why couldn't you get the pass --

BILLY GONZALES: I'll go back and look. I can't tell you every pass play that we called, right off the get-go. You know, when you start off with, when you start off with a big play in the pass game and all of a sudden you get a penalty it deflates you.

And it's hard to dig yourself out of a hole when you have a big play and all of a sudden now you're moving behind the sticks. You go back through, and I'm just looking at some of the, where we got the ball, we got the ball on the one drive on the minus-5. And one of the other ones I think we got it a little bit further back as well, too.

But we didn't put a ton of drives together. Offensively a penalty negated a big pass play and we had to punt the ball on the first drive. Second play we had three plays, we punt. We missed a block by a block on the right side of the line up front. It was a good play. We missed a block.

And then we had a offense turnover on downs; we couldn't get the yard that we needed. Then we started on the minus-5-yard line. We'd like to be able to see, make the decision where we run away from the ball and try to let it go into the end zone. So we got it on the minus-5 and we

had to punt out of that.

The back part, we got it again on the minus-5. We drove down to the 14. Got ourselves in trouble again. And then we missed a field goal, which is uncanny of Smack. That's kind of how it ended at halftime.

Q. Besides the second half effort, because obviously it was a much better than the first half, what other positives are you going to take with you into Florida State other than trying to stop them from going to a bowl game?

BILLY GONZALES: I think our players want -- we want to continue to fight, continue to win. I just got done telling them. I said sometimes life has to break you completely before you truly discover who you are. And that kind of resonates with me in talking to the players.

And you're searching, obviously. There's been a lot of change and a lot of different emotions that have went on through these last five weeks.

The one thing is the players are going to continue to keep going. There's not a negativity. There's nobody in there complaining to each other and throwing things around the locker room and fighting.

But, yeah, it hurts. Anytime you want to have an opportunity, this is the last SEC game. We've got one more game here coming up against Florida State, another rivalry game. We've got to go back and obviously try to figure out what we can to get a victory here.

Q. This is just the nature of the beast, right, you're dealing with here? I mean, the program's in search of a new direction right now.

BILLY GONZALES: Well, obviously --

Q. I know you guys come into it with determination but is it difficult?

BILLY GONZALES: As a staff you keep fighting no matter what the situation is. I think anybody that would give in really shouldn't be around a program. So I don't think anybody's quitting as far as the staff goes right now.

We've got to continue to keep fighting. We've got to continue to keep pushing. Again, like I said, our job is to try to continue to help these players get better and coach them. We've got one more week with them.

That's going to be our job, continue to keep pushing these players so we can try to continue. We've made a

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

commitment to them, and they've made a commitment to each other. So that's our goal.

Q. Despite the stats and the outcome of the game, obviously it was a gut punch for the team and also the fans. What is the message to the fans despite in this tough stretch right now?

BILLY GONZALES: Gator football and Gator Nation has tons of tradition. The University of Florida's tradition is second to none. Obviously we're in transition right now.

But the biggest thing is continue to keep being who they are. I think I've been here three different times with three different head coaches. The one thing that's consistent, is the fans are unbelievable. They showed up again today. They're going to continue to show up.

I've always said this before, as a coaching staff, as a coach -- I'm going to put it by myself, but as a coaching staff, embrace it, embrace the fans and the community because that's what makes the university such a special place.

The fans have always been great. I can go back through, some of the biggest games that we've ever won here, they've been fantastic. They've helped us win those games with the noise and the crowd that they've done.

Just keep hanging in there, obviously. I want what's best for this university. However the move continues forward in the future, I think as a coach, from my standpoint -- I'm looking from a fan and a coach, Gator Nation and the fans are fantastic.

And I think the relationship between the staff and the fans and the players and the fans has got to continue the way it's always been. I think that's second to none. I think the fans are amazing here.

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