

Florida State University Football Media Conference

Saturday, October 21, 2023

Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Coach Mike Norvell

Press Conference



Florida State 38, Duke 20

MIKE NORVELL: First off, what a night. What a night. So proud of our football team. Their response, everything that we do and train for and how we go to work, it's for that moment, for that game, for that stage. They showed up, showed incredible heart. They fought back. Great second half.

A lot of credit to Duke. They battled throughout. It's a really good football team, and it's one that -- it was what I expected it to be.

I was just really proud of our entire team and just the mindset they brought. The way they encouraged each other throughout was special. We had big momentum swings, great plays, some disappointing plays that we have to be better at, but as a whole, like I said, that's why we train the way we train.

Want to definitely shout out our fan base. There's no words that can really do justice for how much I just appreciate them and the impact that they've made. The last three games, you play three straight home games and every one of them is a sellout. Every one has been an incredible atmosphere.

Tonight was special, though. There's nothing like Doak Campbell at night. To see the energy, to see our guys and how they battled throughout, really fed off that. It was remarkable.

Obviously today being a game to celebrate our Seminole heritage, it was a wonderful experience. Getting a chance to see the council members from the Seminole tribe of Florida, being here, being celebrated, it's a special relationship that we have. I'm glad they got to see a game or our team got to put on display an unconquered spirit. That's how they played.

They had a lot of confidence in what would happen, in what would occur, but it wasn't perfect, and it really doesn't need to be. These guys, they really fuel off those moments

where they've got to rise up and put on display their identity.

Proud of them. Proud of just every person a part of this program, and continue to work and taking a positive step forward because that was a big one for us tonight.

Q. The 4th down stop when they're up 20-17, you get the stop at the 5-yard line and then you go 95 yards against obviously one of the better defenses in the country. I guess looking back, how important is that moment in this game and maybe even moving forward what that said about the offense?

MIKE NORVELL: It's huge, and we've talked about it throughout these last few weeks. Our defense, even on that drive, they got their back against the wall, and they've responded in the red zone all throughout the course of the year.

To be able to get that stop and then seeing the offense really -- I think it was a 15-play drive that we took the ball down the field and just the confidence that our guys had, some big plays. Keion's catch was remarkable. The big runs. Jordan was a threat with both his arm and his legs.

To be able to finish that one off in the end zone was just so impactful. Not just for this game but even moving forward, just to -- you grow in confidence through the work. Our guys work at a very high level, and when you have these type of experiences, it just continues to fuel that.

But it took all three phases tonight, and all three made big impacts, and I'm proud of our players.

Q. The performance Jordan had in the second half specifically, both passing and running the ball, can you talk about his efficiency and what he did in the second half that was so effective?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, he was unbelievable. I told him at the end of it, man, that's a champion's heart, and that's how he works. It's how he prepares.

I have no doubt about the way that he's going to show up



because we see it throughout every day in practice, just the mentality which he brings.

He had fun out there tonight, and it was really enjoyable seeing him lead this football team. When it got tight, when it got tough, he played his best. To see him really take over in that game was special. I loved seeing him celebrate with his teammates and just the encourager that he is. That was a really cool moment there in the second half.

Q. It seems like he hasn't needed to run much this season. You guys haven't used his running ability much. But on that drive when you guys had to have it, did that feel like we've got to go to it now?

MIKE NORVELL: Well, obviously we're going to try to create things throughout the course of the game. That's a really good defense. They do a great job of fitting all runs. Very, very rarely do you get them off balance, but we did feel like if we needed it, there would be great opportunities to possibly have Jordan help us in the run game. It showed up.

You've got to give credit to Duke; they played really hard. Like I said, that defense did not disappoint from what I expected them to be.

But our guys showed up and made big critical plays throughout the second half, and that's what we needed to win.

Q. Deuce Spann turns in a huge kick return for you guys; response in the moment and also just breaking one in the kick return game?

MIKE NORVELL: I was so happy for Deuce. I was talking to him throughout the course of the week. I felt if we got a chance that -- JP did a great job with the scheme and putting together a return that we thought could give us a chance to have a game-changing play. We knew Deuce was ready. He's been working. He's been preparing. I was talking to him throughout the week, and even in the pregame, just be ready for this.

When I saw him when he hit the seam and was able to -- great job by all guys blocking. They battled through that, but when he hit the seam, I knew nobody was going to catch him. That was the momentum we needed. It was a huge boost to our team.

Deuce actually got to break the rock because it was such a big play in the game that I think really sparked us.

Q. Third straight second half shut-out for your

defense. I know the goal line stand felt big for that for sure, but what is it about this unit that they seem to grow into games really well, and what changed for them in the second half?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, with every rep they get better, and I think Adam has done a remarkable job, really has, just playing to the strengths of our guys. I thought they were dominant throughout the game. Duke was able to run the ball, got to the edge a few times, we lost contain, didn't have the edge. I thought Adam did a great job, and our players do a great job.

When you make slight adjustments you re-emphasize and focus on the things that they need to be doing and looking at, and to see that response -- basically there was 10 points, we had the missed 4th down where we were able to get an immediate stop and held them to a field goal, and then obviously the pick six there early, but other than that, they held them to 10 points essentially defensively.

You talk about the goal-line -- the inside-the-5 stop there at the end on the 4th down, that just shows the confidence with which our guys play, and 11 guys going out there and executing at a very high level.

Q. You guys have scored 80 points in the fourth quarter this season, which obviously is a lot. What is it about this team that allows it to turn it on in the fourth quarter?

MIKE NORVELL: It's building and getting better. We want to start fast. That's something that's important to us. We spend a lot of time on how we come out of the gate, but ultimately we want to finish. We want to finish strong. We want to make sure that we put into everything the game, the adjustments -- put your preparation on display. Put your physicality, your toughness.

All the hard work they do in the off-season, Coach Storms and his staff, they do a remarkable job, and you see that in the fourth quarter, and our guys have confidence in it.

Last thing before we left the hotel today, we talked about our identity, and this is going to be a program that's going to finish, and whether it's in the classroom, whether it's on the practice field, whether it's in the weight room, on the game field, primetime, whatever it needs to be. That's what we want to be known for. It's one of the greatest qualities you can ever have as you go through life.

These guys, they embrace that. They're willing to go through the tough moments so they can have confidence whenever it's maybe stacked against you or when you need to dig deep and to go put your stamp on a game or

whatever you're going through in life. That's why I'm so proud of this football team.

Q. With the slow start, was it more your guys just being antsy or was it something Duke was doing schematically that was giving you trouble?

MIKE NORVELL: Well, you've got to give credit to them. That's a good team. I think they were leading the ACC in rushing. That's a tough offensive line. They do a good job in the schematic part of it. I think Coach Johns put together a really good plan, and there were some times that we missed things. We had a couple of really poor eyes, poor fits that allowed them to get out on the edge.

Offensively we had two 4th downs that we didn't convert on, and then the turnover. I didn't feel that it was our guys not -- the want-to was there, but it's just slight execution and being able to finish within drives. They kept playing.

Obviously we got the spark on special teams. Was able to still get in the end zone there offensively, and then once we get to the second half, you saw those guys get rolling.

Q. The tight end room has been very versatile this year. Talk about Jaheim's performance tonight. He had 10 targets, eight receptions. How much of a role did he play tonight when it came to the passing game?

MIKE NORVELL: You know, sometimes you've got to take what teams give you, and as you saw, they were trying to fast buzz everything underneath Keion and Johnny. It was a little bit of a challenge to get those guys into one-on-ones, but it opened up the middle.

Also you presented the tight ends with opportunities that come, Morlock did some good things. Obviously Jaheim had a really good game. I was proud of him in some clutch plays and clutch moments. He's continued to work at a high level.

. You see it and feel that within our group of guys playing. There's a lot of unselfishness that's taking on. I want every receiver and tight end and running back to want the ball every play. That's what we desire. But some weeks there's more, some weeks there's less. When you play good teams, they're going to try to work and adapt and adjust to maybe slow down certain guys, but it also provides other guys opportunities.

I thought our tight end room did a really nice job, running backs catching the ball out of the backfield and then still finding a way for Johnny and some of the receivers -- obviously Keion, that catch, it was unbelievable. It was another one of those just wow moments in the game.

But I'm proud of our guys. Hykeem had a big 3rd down conversion. It's fun to see guys going out there and playing at a high level and playing with that confidence.

Q. I know you guys are chasing perfection and putting everything together for 60 minutes, but that's the 16th ranked team in the nation. You're going to play teams like that as you go forward. How comfortable are you that your team is going to be able to find ways to grind out and win games?

MIKE NORVELL: Oh, I believe in our team. I have the ultimate belief in our team. Just like I told them, belief is one thing. Going and earning it is another. We've got to work.

Tomorrow I promise you we'll come back here, we'll clean up mistakes, and we'll go get in the squat rack tomorrow and get out on the practice field, and we're going to get better. That's what this team has to do. If not, then we set ourselves up to be disappointed.

I have the ultimate belief in what these guys can do, what they can accomplish. We've seen throughout the season already, we've played seven games, multiple games where we've been down, we've had to respond and rise up at home, on the road. We've been up and had to finish games.

I like the makeup of this team, but ultimately all the things that we want and all the things that we desire, it doesn't really matter if we're not willing to continue to put the investment and stay focused on the journey of what we set out, and that's just to get better with each opportunity.

Q. It seems like in the biggest moments Jordan Travis, the lights can never be too bright, moments can never be too big. How pivotal is it to a locker room and a culture to have the leadership intangibles in your quarterback?

MIKE NORVELL: It's huge. Like I said, he's a winner. He's got a champion's heart. The performances -- it's not just this year, it's years past. When he's in the game, you always got a shot. It's really -- Jordan is a great example of that.

But I think it also carries over to our team. There was a time last year where Jordan wasn't available, and we had to come back and find a way to win. From Tate, really tried to carry over some of that. That's where when you have that within the locker room and guys see it on a daily basis, it does rub off. Jordan is such a special player, but the young man of who he is and how he approaches things,

that's what makes him just elite. There's nobody else I'd rather have -- he's remarkable. To have a second half like he did, to be able to take over the game like he did when the moment called, it was a great night for him, and he showed why he is who he is.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.