

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Coach Mike Norvell

Press Conference



Florida State 27, Miami 20

MIKE NORVELL: Start off, you know, so proud of our team. What a big game. What a great atmosphere. Unbelievable with just our fan base. The energy that was in Doak Campbell Ell stadium tonight was remarkable.

Our players, we knew this game -- I mean, you get to this game, rivalry game, we knew it could come down to literally one play. That's what showed up tonight. Our guys, they just have continued to battle. There are plenty of mistakes made and things we have to get corrected, but in the moment of truth they just continued to respond.

That's who are. That's why we work the way we work and we challenge them the way we challenge them, so in those moments they're going to be able to rise up and make the play that's necessary and just continue to have each other's back.

It's a football team that loves each other and they work hard together. They challenge each other. They continued to push, you know, for that game.

I mean, it's just so big for the program, so big for our fan base, the university, everybody involved. I'm just proud of these players. To be able to win the last three in this series is big. Continuing to build upon that. You know, to be able to finish up ACC play undefeated, ninth time in history we've been able to do that. That's a big step.

Tonight, you know, said this a year ago, this is a special program. This is a special place. Unbelievable tradition, unbelievable legacy that we have to push and work to uphold.

But to be able to change the walls here is something that's important. To be able to get back-to-back 10-win seasons, to be able to continue to elevate to that standard within our program is something that I'm proud of our players for.

They worked so hard and put in so much. Just really pleased with what they did and what they've done up to

this point of the season. We got two more regular season games to go. Finishing up ACC play undefeated was something that was a big step for our program as well.

You know, it was a great game. Excited for the things that we've seen and just the way that our players continue to respond.

Q. So many players have played such a huge role on this team, what you guys have done the last four years. Was it kind of fitting for Jarrian to come up with the final interception?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, it was special. You know, he's a young man that he's worked very, very hard and just improving and has grown up so much on the field, so much off the field.

Just who he is as a man is something that I respect and I love him. He's just a really special, special person. For him to be in that moment, to have the opportunity to seal the game, finish it like that, really proud of him.

You talk about guys, Kalen DeLoach was somebody that was special for us tonight. You know, talk about guys that have been here throughout journey as well. Kalen has been great all year. I think he's playing at an elite level there at the linebacker position.

The impact he's making on the game, he showed up big. Broke the rock there for us after the game, so very impactful in all the things that he's doing. It was just a wonderful night to see those guys and see the joy on their faces being able to get that win, knowing what it means, especially with the journey we've been on.

That was definitely great for those guys that have been through the process and been through the journey.

Q. Staying with that theme, I was going to ask about DeLoach, but I'll respond accordingly. Malcolm Ray had the pressure on the pick on the last play. For those guys that have stuck through this winning three in a row, 10-0, having everything in front of them, how important is it for that group especially?

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MIKE NORVELL: It's huge. You talk about this game. This game is going to be remembered forever. Every person that's ever played in it, everybody that ever coached in it, they know the importance of this one.

To be able to -- where we were four years ago and where it had been, to be able to come out and win the last three, I mean, just the continued progression, and this game it's always going to be a battle. There is always going to be challenges. Always going to be adversity that shows up.

I think you see the maturity of the guys that have been through it. Whether they're players that have been here for four, five years or guys that have been here for eight or nine months. We've all said yes. We have all said yes to a standard, an expectation. We've all said yes to continuing to push daily to get better and maximizing the opportunity that's here.

You know, to see that, us play as a team, because it was all phases, offense, defense, special teams, everybody had to show up big in moments. Keon was huge with the big punt return and then the touchdown.

You know, I mean, I'll tell you, Alex Mastromanno, I mean, I think he might have got a swing on the hammer there at some point, but he flipped the field for us. He really did a good job with being able to help us win some of that field position battle.

But then obviously offensively, defensively, the plays that were necessary. We gave up some things that we don't ever want to really give up, and just got to finish a couple plays. Offensively, you know, there was some times we just kind of stubbed our toe.

That was a good defense, one that has definitely improved and playing with a lot of confidence in what they're being asked to do. We had some missed opportunities that we get to grow from, but proud of this team and just all the guys.

Like I said, all the journeys, but really special for the ones that have been here throughout it. Definitely great to see Malcolm out there making an impactful play in that moment.

Q. The defensive performance in the second half, one play was pretty dominant. What went into that with effort and physicality, and even maybe some scheme adjustments in the second half?

MIKE NORVELL: Few adjustments. They did a good job coming in, you know, trying to mix up a couple different

looks and things they were doing out of personnel groupings. I thought our guys adjusted well. I thought they played at a very high level.

Even the big touchdown they had, I mean, we got two guys in position. Just unfortunately didn't -- weren't able to finish it in that moment.

You know, that's part of this game. It was a great throw by Emory, and obviously George made a really nice catch and run there afterwards.

It's every play. It's a game of inches in this game. The passion, intensity, all things that go into that one, it's big.

But to finish tonight and be able to get that victory was just like I said, it was huge.

Q. Mike, what was the message to the team in the locker room afterwards just knowing how many of these games you guys have played and come out victorious, and then also knowing there is still a lot to play for?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, that's what -- you know, you sit there and you look at the way these games have been won, the emotional swings, the good, the bad.

There has been times we've had guys injured, times one side of the ball has performed well and the other one had to really respond throughout it.

But you see a team. You know, I mean, any great team that I've ever been around, you got to have that. You got to have that as a critical component. You know, when times get tough, when things are challenging, when maybe it doesn't go exactly like you thought it would on a play or in a quarter or whatever that is, that you can just dig down deep, you have the grit, the confidence to be able to overcome and go get better.

That's what this team has done, and they've done it over and over throughout the course of the season. They've played at a very high level. This is a great team. It's one that I'm honored to be able to coach, and just excited for where we're going as we continue to go through this journey.

Q. Kind of along those lines, I think the position you're in, being Top 5 almost all year, feel like you often get team's best shots? In this rivalry, too. What do you think it is about your team that it feels like time and time again this year they've responded when they get punched in the mouth?

MIKE NORVELL: Ultimately, that's what this game is going to do. When you're a top program, which we are, I mean, you're not sneaking up on anybody. You're going to get all that people have and it's going to be challenging. That's what I love about it.

You know, everything we do in our program starting in January academically, you know, the sacrifices our guys make socially, just who they are, to go out there and just to push to be their best, I mean, I say it all the time, this program is not for everybody, but when you see the commitment and the belief, the work ethic, just the relationships, you know, it's what makes it special.

We've got an incredible group and they really care about each other. I think even to go back to Andrea's question, that's one of those components you can't fake it. When you have guys that truly love each other and they're willing to push and coaches, players, everybody involved, doesn't mean you're not going to have a difficult time or even adverse situations within the team, but you have the example. You build the trust.

You know, I'm so proud of our guys for what they're willing to put in and obviously the position they've put us in.

Q. Coach, the team got Johnny Wilson and Keon Coleman back this week, and both made some huge plays down the stretch to give this offense the spark. What can you say about the significance of having those guys back healthy, not only for this game, but down the stretch the rest of the season?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, they're great players. Obviously tremendous matchup issues for opposing defenses. It was good to see them get out there and work together, and obviously some of the plays that they made were monumental in this game.

Also Ja'Khi Douglas had a huge play there. Guy that had to step up a week ago when they were out. You see just a variety of guys that are ready for the opportunity. You know, some games you guys will have more, some games guys will have less. Everybody has to serve a role. Everybody has to be ready when the moment calls upon them.

You know, once again, just in the run game there was some challenging things with just looks and numbers and things that we were seeing. You know, our guys just continued to battle. It was great seeing Trey being able to get out again and just proud of our guys.

Definitely a team effort, and whether it's on one side of the ball or just collectively with all three phases.

Q. Mike, there have been a lot of really good teams, really good Florida State teams in that rivalry have suffered some heartbreaking losses to that program. Kind of looked there in the final couple minutes it was coming down to maybe a player or two. How did your team avoid a heartbreak to this program?

MIKE NORVELL: You know, it goes down to the training, the belief, the confidence. You know, with all the emotions and all that's around you, can you focus on doing your job. This game, that's what it should come down to, right? Anybody that's ever been a part. I've been around some rivalry games and obviously some -- there is nothing, nothing like this game.

You know, we're fortunate. We got two big ones, and the only ones I talk about before the season, before winter workouts. This is what it's about. You want to be a part of games like this. This is why you come to Florida State, to be in an atmosphere like we got to be in.

It prepares you for all things that are ahead. This was a championship atmosphere, championship approach, all those things. When you play in a game like this, it takes it all.

Like I said, there has been a lot of teams that have come up short, but this is a very confident team. You know, when those moments arise they know what it takes because they put in the work.

Q. Coach, mentioned a little bit already, but talk about the special teams today. On the one hand you had the onside kick that didn't workout, and Keon's punt return and then Alex flipping the field for you guys.

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I thought our guys did a really good job in special teams. You know, we took a shot on the surprise onside. Unfortunately -- and all credit to their player; made a really good play -- we got a little bit bigger hop than we have had in our preparation, but he made a great play.

I was confident in how we would respond even in that situation if we didn't get it. Something we had talked about, something we were prepared for. You know, but you see the way our guys -- the work that's been invested in special teams, you see how it's carrying over on game day.

You know, you never know which unit it's going to be, punt return, kick return, coverage units had to show up big. There were some challenging situations. Alex was flipping the field, but coverage units have to get down there and be able to get them down.

I thought just the belief in that is something that also speaks to the culture. You know, we have a lot of great players that play on our special teams unit and some newcomers that I think are going to be wonderful players by what they put on display in those teams. Proud of our special teams group and was so very impactful for this game.

Q. Coach, you said you have coached in different rivalries. What makes this one special in your opinion?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, that was a field full of very talented players, and when you take great talent, great ability, but the passion, the intensity, it's 365 days, right, their fan base is gonna talk about it and our fan base going to talk about it. What do you want them to say? That's the opportunity of we've had for the last three. It's a pretty good feeling.

Obviously it's something that you don't just prepare for this game when it gets to this week. It's everything that we do. There is a focus to make sure we're going to put ourselves in the best position to go be able to win it.

Even doing that -- we didn't play our best game tonight, but made the plays necessary, right, to go win the game. That's going to show up in any championship-level game like this. I just was so proud of our guys for the composure they were able to have to go make the plays necessary at the end.

Q. Revisiting special teams, Alex was one of the guys that got to break the rock. One the few guys that got to tonight. How important is it that the team is recognizing what might be a smaller role is on the team? How important is it that the team is recognizing is his impact?

MIKE NORVELL: You know, every person, every player, you know, everybody matters. It's easy to point to offense and defense, but when you feel and you know and you watch the special teams and the investment that goes in, our specialists do a great job. They work so very hard.

Ryan being a semifinalist for the Groza Award is something that -- a lot of people doubted him, too. Alex has been so very consistent for us this year, and we needed him to show up big today. That happens from time to time.

Really good offense, and sometimes he didn't get much work. When his number is called he has to be ready. Our team appreciates that. James Rosenberry, somebody I want to shoutout. Obviously he's been outstanding in his

operation with his snaps.

Last week he was a player of the week for us in special teams because nobody talks about him. I'm glad nobody talks about him. You don't want people to talk about your long snapper, but he does an outstanding job as well.

Just the things we ask our guys to do in the work and the time invested, to see that show up, I think it's just a tribute to them.

Obviously Coach JP does a great job in the planning and continuing to build that for our guys. But it's really big, and the appreciation within our team, I think it speaks to the culture once again.

Q. I think Jordan is the first quarterback, starting quarterback to go 3-0 against Miami in the history of this rivalry. Not his best passing day overall, but just the grit he showed, and also did you -- in the moment can you hear like when the crowd starts chanting his name during a break, especially where he came from three or four years ago?

MIKE NORVELL: For me, I don't usually hear some of those things. It's special that they did. You know, I think when you see what Jordan Travis has meant to this program, and especially the path that he's been on, you know, there has been ups and downs. He's had to work, he's had to believe, he's had to grow throughout it, and he is a tremendous leader.

For him to finish up as a starting quarterback 3-0 against those guys, it's big. You know, I'm so proud of him. He pours so much into this team and he cares so much, and at the end of the day, it's all about getting the win. We were 100% on offense not turning the ball over, and we knew in a rivalry game that was going to be huge.

To see our guys be able to have that discipline and carry that over, that's one of the things that I think doesn't get mentioned enough, is these guys -- you know, we have explosive players, we do. But they play a disciplined brand of football too, and I'm really proud of them for being able to do that.

Then obviously defensively the takeaway when we needed it. It was huge. Being able to seal the game there. Really proud of our guys.

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