

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Mike Norvell

Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Good morning, everybody. Appreciate you being here.

Just kind of wrap up Saturday, it was a great night for our team. You know, to be able to get that win, it's huge for our university, our program, for all former players, every member of our program. I mean, it's a game that we put a lot of emphasis on each year and to be able to leave that field with our third straight victory against that opponent is big. It's something that I was proud of our guys.

Just all the things that we work for, how they responded throughout the game, I mean, you can watch and see, there were plays that obviously we would like to have back. Some good, some bad. You know, all of it that showed up.

But I mean, our team, they had great confidence throughout the course of the game, the sideline was awesome. The support, the encouragement, and then I thought our guys played really, really hard. Played physical. You know, we made the plays necessary when they needed to be made. I love seeing guys, Jarrion Jones finishing up with that interception, just what he did, and what he's done throughout his career. I mean, it was just such a great ending. I was proud of him for that.

We kind of mentioned some of those guys in the postgame press conference. Guys that have been on the journey for the last four years, and to see and be a part of a lot of the transitions that we've had here and just kind of where we are, and to see them show up and play big in that game was really cool to see.

You know, there was -- it was a three-phase game. You saw our special teams, I thought showed up huge. Going back and watching it, you know, from Alex slipping the field, the field position battle, being able to making an impact to our coverage units, we're great. We've got great kicks. I think they tried to return two, and guys were able to pin them and have long fields.

You know, and then the return unit, you know, showing up,

I thought it was awesome. Just watching -- and watching the guys and the energy and the effort that was being put in.

I called out Dre Jacobs, Vandrevius. I think he played two snaps in the game. I always tell our players, you never know when your moment you're going to be called upon and when your moment is going to show up. He had probably one of the better blocks in the game. I think he played two plays and all effort and everything he had in that moment and actually helped kind of provide a seam for Keon.

When Keon broke into the open field, just watch the effort of our guys chasing him down the field and the excitement and the joy for a special teams play that was big, and you know, it was -- obviously Keon did a great job on it.

But when you watch the ten other guys that did their job and played a significant role in helping create that space, you see just the constant ebb and flow. That game, it's going to be challenging. You're going to have momentum swings. I don't care what year it is, what it looks like. I mean, we were a couple plays away from making that game a lot, you know, I guess less close if we would have executed in certain moments or had a little different outcome and it didn't happen. They made some great plays and did a good job in a couple areas. It came down to a one-score game.

You look back at the history of that game, since 2000, I saw a stat somewhere, I think 18 of the last 22 or 23 games have come within an eight-point game. I mean, that's what a rivalry game is going to be. So you've got to be prepared for that moment, and how we train, what we do, everything we build our players up for is to prepare them for those swings, and I thought they handled it really well and did what was necessary to win it.

Obviously hit a couple benchmarks: Being able to have our 26th ten-win season, pretty big. Big for our program. I know we've talked about it before but you get a chance to change the walls, change the number on the walls here at Florida State, you've done something special.



This team will be remembered because of that, and we're still just on our path, on our journey to take another step. To go undefeated to SEC play was big. These guys, they have battled, they have worked. It was definitely an impressive feat to see them be able to accomplish that and we know what that sets up for here in a few weeks.

But as we jump into this week, it's still about our growth. It's about our improvement. There's plenty of mistakes and things we have to correct and we have to get better at and our guys understand that. We met last night. We practiced last night. We squatted yesterday. It is work. It is time. It is going to get better. That's our focus.

You know, as we get a chance to come into this week, there's a lot of things that you get a chance to be celebrated this week. I mean, this is going to be our seniors, their Senior Day, our seniors' last home game. That's something that it means a lot to me.

You know, I kind of mentioned, you can go through the guys that have been here, the guys that have come here, that have really poured everything they have into this program into what we ask them to do as a football player but equally as much what it is to be a Florida State Seminole and how they have to represent this program. Obviously all the great players and the wonderful tradition that we have to honor in what we do and how we do it and who they are off the field, what they do on the field.

You know, this is a group that deserves to be celebrated. I'm just so excited for what they have done, and you know, obviously to be able to recognize them as we go out there on Saturday, also a very special occasion. We get to celebrate the 2013 National Championship team. We've got a great number of those guys coming back.

You'll hear this this weekend, and it's going to be a special event, special recognition of all of that they did, one of the greatest teams in the history of college football. You know, to be able to honor their accomplishments is really going to be big, and glad we're going to have the majority of those guys back to be able to celebrate them it.

But like I said, it's all about the work this week. Continuing to push. Continuing to grow. Continuing to get better. But it was another big step that we took last week and we've got a big one here from us as we get a chance to put a stamp on our last home game here at Doak Campbell Stadium for this year.

Q. I'm guessing based on what you just said, I may have an idea what the answer is, but after this physical stretch, you guys had some very physical games and you've some huge games coming up down the road. Is

there any temptation giving guys some time this week to heal and get better as you get ready?

MIKE NORVELL: We need to go get better. That's what we need to do. But it's not just the physical. It's the mental. It's execution.

We have to get better as a program. There are some guys, if we have bumps and bruises and things like that, human nature wants to pull back. That's just reality. You come off a physical game and everything wants to take a deep breath, and we're playing an FCS opponent and obviously we respect this game, we respect our responsibility, we respect who we're playing, we're going to respect all things that are necessary to go out and be better than we've ever been come Saturday.

That's what I challenged our players with. We're going to respect these guys that are playing in their last game at home. And if it's not the best game that we play, then we have failed. We've come up short. We have not hit the mark. And that's where it's easy to want to give in to that human desire of, Oh, maybe we can just pull back a little bit. Then you're not going to accomplish the things that are out there for us.

And we're going to be smart with our players. We're going to make sure that everything we have planned, we have from when we started in the summer to where we are now, everything is planned for what it needs to look like and what it's going to be. We're going to work. That's why we came in yesterday, and it's business as usual as we continue to grow. Because if we don't get better this week, we are not going to be in position for the things that are ahead.

We know we're going to get to play in the conference Championship Game. We know -- you don't have to -- but it's about today. It's about what you do today. It's about what you do this week. We did not play a perfect game last game. We made some mistakes that were costly in that game. We have to be better, coaches, players, everybody involved.

But if we don't apply those lessons, we are not achieving the objective of what we set out for. All the things we've done to get to where we're 10-0, and I am excited to be 10-0, I'm proud of our players to be 10-0. I'm proud of them but I've watched them grow. I've watched them make the investment. I've watched them pour what all they have into each other, into this team, into each step that's been necessary. If we don't do that this week, it will be devastating for our program, right, because that's what we are built on.



So we are going to respect this game, and we are to go to respect the opportunity, and we are going to respect all the work that these guys have poured in to get to this point and we are going to improve this week.

Q. I'm sorry, I'm putting you on the spot a little bit here. One of the seniors, Jordan, is obviously one of the guys this week being honored, his last game here. Any moments or memories that stand out from your time with Jordan?

MIKE NORVELL: It's the whole journey. You can't just put -- with him, it can't be just about, you know, a glimpse or even just a game. It's just who he is. Watching him grow, waxing him improve, waxing him care, watching him invest, the confidence that has been built just in who he is and what he's all about.

I mean, he is just a tremendous, tremendous person. He's a tremendous leader. He represents Florida State the way it should be represented. I think the consistency of his character is something that stands out to me. It's not always -- you can pick in each game. There's moments and opportunities that he gets to make the choice of what it's going to be and what he's going to do, and he fights for this team.

I thought one of the great plays there the other day was the third down and ran a little speed option play and had to cut up the field. He lowers his shoulder but everything he had to go get a couple extra yards, right. Those things are just -- I love his passion to do all they can to help this team.

So not to point out just specific moments. He's had a bunch of great moments, and he'll have a lot of plays and a lot of games that people will talk about forever. He broke some records and I thought it was pretty remarkable, the first starting quarterback at Florida State to go 3-0 against that last team, that's something that will be remembered.

But I don't want to just put it into a couple of games because he's so much more than that.

Q. You mentioned honoring the 2013 team this season. You've had the opportunity to honor '93 and now '13, do you allow yourself a moment to enjoy those guys and understand what they represent now that you represent them and all that comes with that, even though you have a game on Saturday?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, absolutely. If you don't, then you're cheating all that they did. Those teams were special. Those teams, we do -- it's not just -- we are going to recognize them as a team there Saturday but it's about recognizing -- we bring the past players back. Every home

game, they have an opportunity to come and be a part of our Friday night.

Whenever we are on the road, if they are in the area, you have an opportunity to come be around the team, the guys that have come and laid the foundation before us, they deserve to be recognized. They deserve to be celebrated. I mean, because they have made this program what we get to be a part of, and so I'm glad that we have a game and the moment.

But I still think that what we do each day, being able to open the doors to past players, that's important. We had a lot of great past players that were here this last week, and guys on the sideline. I mean, you see tears in their eye just because they care so much because it meant so much and because they invested so much. It is who they are and what they are all about. We say it a ton: Once an 'Ole, always an 'Ole. It doesn't ever go away. Being able to put on pads, it does. That's going to end. And it's going to end for guys at a lot of different times.

But the passion, you know, obviously the excitement, the belief in the program, I mean, that's forever. So yes, we absolutely take time to recognize that, and I'm looking forward to those guys being here but it's also, it's daily.

Q. The senior class, especially the guys who were here when you got here at the very beginning, what level of appreciation do you have for the work and all the emotions that have gone into get to go this point?

MIKE NORVELL: The level of appreciation is all. It can't be any higher. Because they said yes. They said yes.

It was hard. It was challenging. The experiences, there were highs and there were lows. They said yes to continue to work, continue to grow, continue to push themselves, a lot of them further than what they probably thought they even could get to.

But I believed in them. They said yes; so did we. It's our choice in being able to set the standard and to help paint the picture of what can be ahead. You know, a lot of these guys, they were able to stick it through. They were able to push, and I'm sure plenty of people had other opinions on what they could or what they should do.

But they believed in it, and they are great leaders on this team. Wonderful teammates. They are just great examples of what this program is all about.

Q. When you guys beat the Gators last year, the fans rushed the field. This year, the players went and celebrated with the fans. How much does it mean to



have the fans be part of, when you win those rivalry games?

MIKE NORVELL: Our fans are incredible. And that atmosphere on Saturday, oh, it was special. We had a little over a hundred recruits that were here.

So it's been a busy weekend. Just get a chance to visit with them, and you know, everyone I talked to, "What do you think?"

"Coach, that atmosphere." Just it stands out and you feel it. It's incredible.

And for our players, they feed off of that. You understand, and I think I've said this before, but I told them there on Saturday before we came. I said when you get that legacy walk, take it in for a second. Just realize. From the minute we got off that bus, the energy -- we felt it all week. You know what it's building up to. But take it in. You realize who you get to represent.

You run out on that field, it was electric. So obviously when our guys, we finished that game and to see them run over in the student section and the fans and just being able to have that time, you know, I think it does show the appreciation for all those that support us.

But it wasn't just this week. We talked about it last week. We went on the road, last two conference road games at Pittsburgh and North Carolina, I mean, we had, I'd say half -- we had a lot of people there supporting this team. That's one of the great things about where we are, and it is who we represent and just the support that they give as we continue to push.

Q. The last two weeks seems like more than usual tackles behind the line of scrimmage for your offense. Is there a common theme to what's gone wrong with those? I'll wait for the second part --

MIKE NORVELL: It's not a two for one -- first part.

That's something we have to clean up, and it's not one specific. I mean, we faced a lot of pressure these last two weeks. When you face that amount of pressure, there's variable levels of why a negative happens or what you could do better in that. There are certain things up front, certain things, whether it's a track or a run or a read or a possibility of getting the ball out or a hot throw. Different things that showed up that helped allow the negatives, and there's things that I can be better at as a play-caller. Where can I help put guys in a better position.

So we all take ownership in that. But that's something that

has to improve, and the last two weeks. We've had way too many negatives offensively that put us in long yardage situations. So starting with me, I've got to be better. We're going to work as we get into this week some of those things that we talked about having to improve upon, that's obviously a big focus.

Q. He had a 200-yard game this year, but is that the best Trey Benson has run this season, or the hardest, I guess?

MIKE NORVELL: He was great the other night. I mean, he had some hard runs where maybe it wasn't a big run, and then a couple of them that absolutely showed up. He looked great. I was proud of him. He showed up when we needed him to, and yeah, I thought he was one of the key factors to that victory because he ran with unbelievable purpose and did a wonderful job.

Q. I believe your staff sports information put out a statistic that Kalen DeLoach with seven sacks is the most sacks a linebacker for Florida State has had since '93.

MIKE NORVELL: (Turning to SID) You put that up? Good job.

Q. Coming into the season, he had four career sacks. If you can talk about him and is he also a perfect example, I know there are a lot of them, but of those guys that from where they were when you got this year to where they are now?

MIKE NORVELL: He's had an exceptional year. You look at the production that he's had, tackles, sacks, tackles for loss, just -- fumble recovery, big one. But he's been all over the field for us.

You see his progression over the last few years. Yeah, he's a wonderful player. Very smart. He studies the game. He embraces that part of it which allows us to do so much with him. I think when you look, I thought Coach Fuller did a great job in the plan. That was a team not giving up very many sacks and he did a great job and a couple things schematically to try to get Kalen the space necessary, and then when he hit it, that was impressive.

He's got great players around him that also help allow some of those one-on-one or one on none situations. But he is a tremendous playmaker, and he makes this football team better by his example. He makes this team better by his work. He's really grown and matured over the years. You know, just the work ethic is something that I'll forever be grateful for because you've seen him really push himself, and I think that's what's earned the respect of his

teammates.

Yes, when you watch him on the field, yes, he goes and he makes plays.

Q. Last week against Pittsburgh, 37 runs, 37 passes. This week against Miami, 31 runs, 31 passes. How important is it for this team to be balanced on offense and how do you continue to call plays with that in mind?

MIKE NORVELL: We always want to be an element of being balanced. But we want to score points. That's the thing that -- helping put our guys in best position to do that. We had some missed opportunities the other day that we are going to have to continue and improve upon.

But the thing I've really been pleased with our guys is just they have done a great job of taking care of the ball. They have done a great job of -- I think Jordan has made some wonderful decisions and sometimes going back to a little bit of the negatives, there's -- he's made some decisions sometimes to take a negative rather than force something that could be a catastrophic play.

You know, he's gone a great job. The running backs, receivers, all those guys. We want to have balance and take what teams are giving us and as games continue to evolve, you know, being able to hopefully be able to especially up the explosive runs and the opportunities that can be provided. But I thought our guys, they know. They work hard and we want to be balanced and it's something we continue to work to improve and just make sure we are scoring as many opportunities as we can.

Q. You had a strong defense all season, but Adam Fuller's ability to adjust to whatever is happening in the second half, just talk about that and just how great he has been for the second half adjustment to help the team pull out wins.

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, Adam has done a remarkable job. I think him and the defensive staff, they are so very well coordinated in what they do. It's one thing to have ideas of how to adjust.

It's another thing to be able to implement that throughout the course of the game and for the players to be confident in it and for the players to be able to go out and execute it; the efficiency in communication. Obviously the versatility and things that we can do in the moment.

Some is of the challenges that we faced earlier in the year with communications where we might have had a mishap, something that -- you have to grow through those, and

nobody wants to experience them.

But because we could do multiple things because some of those elements that you can now reference back to maybe in the course of a game, it allows us to be multiple and then it allows us, if somebody is coming in -- I thought they did a good job in one of their personnel packages. We gave up a little bit too much space inside on the run game and they were able to pop a couple runs. But I thought we did a great job making adjustments in the second half to eliminate some of that space.

Other than the onside kick, which was something that we knew we were going to do going into the game, I think that was the only time in the second half that they had a snap on our side of the 15. It was impressive to see our defensive mentality and the execution. So we gave up the big play, but that was one of those that, you know, that we'll continue to get better in eliminating that.

I thought they did a great job. He's doing a great job of leading the group, but our players have done a great job of being able to execute and adapt in those situations.

Q. Two national outlets were discussing a coaching vacancy and put your name on a potential list. I know you can't control your name being involved in those things, but what is your sort of reaction when things happen, and how do you manage that in your conversations?

MIKE NORVELL: There's not really any point to talk about it. In a sense, I mean, it's funny how sometimes those things get out there and people want to try to use that, especially in recruiting and things like that. I was telling recruits, I told recruits two years ago, and a lot of these guys we're recruiting now, I said, Well, it's funny, two years ago, every coach was talking about, well, how long is he going to be there. They going to win some games, or he's not.

But I told them, I said, Watch, in two years, everybody is going to be trying to use the other thing. You know, this is -- I can't control any of that.

And obviously we're so excited about what we're building here, where we're going, the opportunity that's ahead. I mean, it's a special place. I think that speaks for it receive. I'm grateful for the opportunity but I can't control all those things.

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