

Florida State University Football Media Conference

Monday, November 20, 2023

Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Mike Norvell

Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Good morning. Everybody. Appreciate you being here. Obviously coming off the weekend, it was an emotional weekend for us. Going into the game, we knew it would be, senior day. Our guys, incredible group, playing in their last game at Doak Campbell Stadium.

Obviously there was a lot of it going into the game. Didn't actually start the way we wanted to. Fell behind in the game early. Had a few mistakes, things that obviously you can't have there in those situations.

And then unfortunately Jordan went down there in the first quarter and had a season-ending injury. It was devastating just for him, for who he is, for what he's meant to this program. The impact that he's made on and off the field, to know that his last play at Florida State has happened, it's hard.

With all of the emotions, and you felt the support, you felt the care, the concern for him. He was remarkable. I mean, his composure on the field, in pain, all things, he's just telling me, Coach, I'm good. I'm good. Tell my mom I'm okay, and I'm good.

As he got up, and really I think both teams came out there just to wish him off and wish him well in his recovery. He's had a great mindset throughout this with an incredibly difficult circumstance. But you felt for him.

Just like I told our team there afterwards, and we talked about it in the postseason, when you're in that game and you're playing an opponent you're better than and you have all the shoulds of what should happen, what it should look like and you find yourself behind and then you find yourself with an unbelievable amount of adversity and just the mental state, and any of our players that were there on the field, it shook a couple of them.

It takes a little bit of time just to kind of regather yourself, and I know Corey asked me afterwards, how do you block it out. You don't block it out. Not on this team. Not being a part of who we are and what we're about. You can't just say, hey, it's just next man up. That's not real here. You

care about every one of them.

Kalen DeLoach not being able to play Saturday was something that hurt me too. His last play at Doak Campbell has already happened. You want it for every one of those guys to be able to fulfill their journey and each of those experiences, but it shows you how fragile it can be and how important every play is throughout these guys' career.

But what I was so proud of was the response of our team. You saw a team that continued to come together.

It was a special game to be a part of even though it's one that you saw the response -- we scored, whatever, 58-0 run against a team we needed to beat handily, and it wasn't perfect. We had a lot of mistakes, a lot of things to clean up, but you felt the team come together.

To know that their hearts and their thoughts and all those things were -- everybody was concerned for Jordan throughout the game, and I gave them an update of all the information I had right after the game. But it was an emotional weekend.

As we come into this week, it's another emotional game. We talked about it a few weeks ago. It's one of the two. I love this game being the last game of the season because everything we've done throughout this season builds for this one and it builds for this moment, for this time.

And we've seen it. We've seen it dang near all. We've had highs. We've had lows. We've had adversity. We've had challenges. But the one thing that's constant is just this team, the work they've put in, how much they care about each other, the family that's been built here.

For as sad as I am for Jordan and obviously him not being available, I am so excited for this team. I'm excited for them to go get an opportunity to put their identity on display.

I'm excited for Tate. He did a wonderful job coming in. We talked about it yesterday. Didn't shock anybody that was on our team because we've seen him do that before.

We've seen him on the road. We've seen him have to lead us back from being down.

We've seen him have to be ready when his number is called. He's always answered that these last few years as he's grown. You've seen him answer that call whenever he's got the opportunity. You see how he prepares throughout the week, and we've got a football team that's going to rally around and behind him.

It was good Brock was able to get some work there. He's missed the better part of the season with an injury not being available to play, and once he got cleared it was great to be able to give him a couple series of work for him to get out there, and did some good things. Scored his first touchdown, which was awesome for him.

And I was proud of our defense. You look at the second half, I think it was six straight three-and-outs. The only time they got a 1st down was on that last drive. Then I was really pleased with just even the last play. We talk about playing 60 minutes. We were able to get a lot of newcomers in the game, and to be able to block the last kick and see guys return it for a touchdown, it was a pretty cool experience for them.

But as it leads into this week, it's everything that we have. We know we've got one more game after this. We get to play for a conference championship, and what we do with this week will put us in position for whatever ahead.

Everything that we have is going into our preparation this week to go be better than what we've been. We know we have to go to a hostile environment. That's going to be all the challenges, all the adversity, everything that's ahead. We've got a team that embraces that, and that's what I've loved about watching them grow. I love the character of this team, and man, I'm excited to see them go play. We've got to have a great week of prep as we continue to build and continue to get better.

But I can tell you that yesterday was a real day, and it was one that -- we lifted, we squatted, we went out, we had practice, and man, you felt it.

I'm excited to see these guys continue to respond. We know the challenges are ahead, but I believe in this group.

Q. On that note, I think fans have had a hard time processing and probably some media processing the last 48 hours. Was it a challenge to get the guys refocused yesterday, and how did you see them do that?

MIKE NORVELL: You know, they came in yesterday with

purpose. Everybody has -- like I said, this is truly a family. Our guys care about each other. When you have one of the elite leaders, one of the -- Jordan will be talked about forever in this program, and what I love is that it's not necessarily going to be just about his playing ability. It's going to be about who he is.

I think you feel that impact. There's concern. A lot of guys have got a chance to go and see him and spend some time with him, and he's sent his message to the team and made sure he's communicated throughout this weekend.

But there's also an expectation, and there's a responsibility that we have for him because he's been such a huge part of this journey, and we've got work to do.

That's something that he's echoed, we've echoed, and we've got to go put it in, and that's what we've been built on, and that's what we're going to continue to do.

It wasn't necessarily a refocus. It was just making sure that as a team we talk about the things that have happened and where we go from here and how we do it is what we control.

I thought our guys came with great purpose yesterday, and I was pleased with the work that I saw. Guys know what needs to be done.

Q. You mentioned you guys have been through a lot, and the Florida rivalry is always interesting. But have you ever been to a game where both quarterbacks kind of go down the week before and just kind of -- doesn't change the dynamic of the game, but changes the complexity of the game a little bit?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, to think about both sides, I can't recall that, whether that's something I've experienced in my career, but ultimately we don't -- the guys that step out on that field, offense, defense, special teams, that's what's going to be ahead of us.

To get a little bit of insight on their quarterback, obviously coming in later in the game, he did some good things, was efficient with the ball, showed off athleticism and speed as a ball carrier. It's a guy that's been in their system for a couple years, and obviously he's getting his shot.

As an offense that has really good playmakers, they've got probably the best receivers that we've gone against or a couple in that world. I think a couple guys at LSU are pretty good, too. They're in that spectrum. But a couple NFL running backs. They're big up front. It's an offense that you see that they've been doing a good job here these last four or five weeks putting points on the board.



I mean, we've got to control things we can control, and to prepare for what we expect, and then be able to react to anything that might be unexpected.

Q. How is life different for a quarterback when the whole week is around them, they go take snap one versus being thrown into a game in unexpected circumstances?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I mean, you try to make it to where the mindset is always the same because you never know, and you never know when you're going to be called upon.

But it's probably different for them, and it's just -- for Tate to go through it, it's the same message that I've had for them for however many, three years now. You get your opportunity, just go be you. I've got the utmost confidence in what he'll do.

I remember last year on that trip to Louisville, he went in and he went in right before the half, had an interception, probably there were a lot of questions and doubt on the outside of what it could be or what it would be, and I have a lot of confidence in him.

I've watched him grow over the years. I've been fortunate to have somebody that's been in this system since we got here. He was in that first signing class. He got thrown in the fire. He started the game, maybe it was the second or third game in his career, and it wasn't a real fun start, and I hate that we had to put him in that position to be honest with you.

But he's really done a lot of great things, and he's stuck through the journey, has continued to prepare. It is his time. I've got a lot of confidence in Tate because of what I've seen and the work ethic he has.

This football team has a lot of confidence in him, and you saw it the other night. He came in and he made a couple of incredible throws across the field, on rhythm, on time. I think people underestimate just his athleticism and what he can do, extending plays, and I think that's something that as we go into this week, he just needs to prepare to go be him and trust all the things that we've done up to this point. We'll do a good job as coaches and making sure that we try to put him in the best position, but he's done everything in this offense and has been preparing for it.

Q. Following up on that, you alluded to Tate has grown in his time here. What areas have you seen him improve on since day one?

MIKE NORVELL: Really all. He came in -- Tate has had a lot of success playing this game. He was I think seven, eight Georgia state player of the year, played for a state championship his senior year. Him and Jaheim Bell were teammates, and he's done some wonderful things. He knows what it takes.

What I appreciate is just the way he's competed, but also not necessarily gotten discouraged with not being the starter. He's been behind one of the best players to play at Florida State. I think Jordan is in that conversation. He's special.

But Tate has stayed the course and he's continued to work. His confidence, his understanding, he's gotten bigger, he's gotten stronger. He can make all the throws.

But also just the ownership of the offense is something that I think he has a really good understanding of. Does that mean that -- there were a couple mistakes that other day that showed up, but we've all had them. But he understands immediately if there is a mistake, this is the reason why. So that's something that is sometimes hard with a young quarterback, but he's already been able to go through that process.

I think it's a high ceiling for what he'll be able to do.

Q. You mentioned Kalen. Was holding him out more precautionary, and Renardo and Maurice were two guys that got hurt Saturday. Where are they at coming into this week?

MIKE NORVELL: We'll see where it's at. Definitely very hopeful with Kalen. I do expect him to be ready, but we'll see where that goes throughout the course of this week.

Same with Renardo and Maurice. Felt good about where we were on Sunday, and as we get closer to kickoff, we'll see what that looks like.

Q. When you first got here, Tate was a guy you moved on very quickly. When you saw from him in his time at Valdosta High, what jumped off the page at you?

MIKE NORVELL: I actually offered him at Memphis, and so he was one of the guys that I liked a lot coming out. I liked just his play making ability. I thought he was -- you see somebody that can live in the pocket and throw on time, throw on rhythm.

He's not afraid of being able to step into a throw. We saw that last year. There was a couple throws in the Louisville game where he hit a guy coming right at him and he stepped into the throw and made big-time plays. He is a

quarterback.

Like I said, his athleticism is something that -- not the biggest guy in the world. You see him kind of moving around, you don't know ultimately how athletic he is, but he's one of our faster players on our team. He can run, he can move, he can do all those things.

So it's exciting to see his growth, and just like I said, I mean, the determination and patience that he was willing to show just continuing to grow, he's a son of a coach, and he challenges himself, and he's hard on himself.

His growth and what he's pushing to do, but I also think that's what allows him in uncomfortable situations to be able to come in and flourish. He's earned it, so I'm excited to see it.

Q. What's it say about Tate that in the year 2023 a fourth-year kid is still here, willing to be a backup, even behind one of the better players in the country? Because that doesn't seem to happen a lot around the country anymore. What does that say about him and what does it say about your belief in him and his belief in you guys?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I think all factors have to be involved in that. You see it, and we've experienced it. If they don't get it now, they're going to go and try to find a better opportunity, and I think Tate has believed in the growth that he sees in himself. I think he believed in the development because if you don't -- one, if you don't love the place, if you don't enjoy who you do it with, if you're not having a good time in where you are, then you're going to leave.

I think Tate knows it. It's competitive. Every year you're going to continue to try to bring guys in that are going to try to be the one, and playing quarterback, that's all a part of it. If you don't embrace that challenge, then it's probably not the right position and definitely not the right place.

But he's always valued that, and like I said, I think he believes in the development that he could receive here, and I think it's showed up because when he's had his opportunities, he's been as efficient -- the muff-up or whatever you want to call it, when you go in and you have to play, the efficiency he's had has been really good.

Last year, like I said, in the one opportunity where we needed him, we're down, on the road, what was it, third game of the season, and he brought us back.

He is one that even after that, after last season, he said, I'm going to find a place I can start because there's a lot of

places he could have started this year.

But he also, how much he cares about this team, and obviously enjoys the experience here, and he's been willing. He's gotten better throughout the course of this year, through the course of last spring.

I think we've seen glimpses of that and how he's been able to play when he's gotten opportunities so far this season.

Q. There's paralysis by analysis for some guys. If they have too much time to think about something it might hinder them. How difficult will it be for Tate to know that it's his show to run versus some of the spot duty he's had in the past?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, he's played this game and he's had to -- you play at the top level in the state of Georgia and you have to go through that experience as a high school player. He's played in pressure-packed situations where he's known he's been the guy.

Now, is it a step up when you're in college? Yes. But also, he's had to do that before, too. This will not be his first start that he's taken. Like I said, the one a few years ago, oh, absolutely, it was probably a real challenge for where he was just being a young kid getting thrown into it.

But he's been preparing for this. I'm not worried about any of the other factors other than just go play his game. I'm very confident what that'll look like.

Q. For a while Florida State had a fractured fan base. What did it mean, the support from the Florida State community to Jordan in the days since the injury?

MIKE NORVELL: We have an unbelievable fan base, and it's one that -- to see the support this year, I said it -- we finished the season with five straight sellouts, and it's pretty big, and especially the fact that we had three straight home games in the month of October, that's challenging.

But you see the support of this team, and it's not only, well, we're undefeated. Great, yes. But it's also how they play. It's how much they care. The way these guys value representing Florida State in general. And it's all the past players, everybody that we get a chance to step on that field and speak for in how we play. It's big.

Obviously when a player goes down, and Jordan has earned every bit of the support that he's gotten because he is real and he's true. He's a remarkable young man, and it's been overwhelming, the support from all.

I've had most of the head coaches in the league have

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

texted me or reached out just that their teams, their programs, their university, they're praying for Jordan and they're thinking about him because they know the competitor.

Sometimes when you compete against somebody, you get a different insight of who they are, and he's just -- he's pure and true.

He's been remarkable, and I appreciate our fan base just for all the support throughout the season. Obviously it was definitely on display this Saturday, and it continues to be on display daily.

Q. In the first nine games, the secondary allowed four touchdowns. In the last two games they've allowed four. Is that something that needs to be cleaned up or little regression to the mean, as well?

MIKE NORVELL: Well, obviously there's plays we'd like to have back, things we can learn from, things we can get better. I think we've been really good in our pass defense throughout the course of the year, and we don't ever want to give up a touchdown, but sometimes that happens.

But you can still learn from the why and obviously how we can improve on that. I know that's what our guys are excited to work on as we go through this week.

Q. I know statistically Florida's defense has struggled, but when they play well, when they are good, what is it that allows them to be good? What stands out about them?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, it's a huge defensive front. They're massive. No. 1 is probably one of the better defensive linemen that we've faced this year, very active, I think six and a half sacks, 11 TFLs. He's a really good player. We saw him last year. He's done a nice job for them.

But you see the size that they have up front, it's a big group. They've got a couple big corners that are aggressive in nature in how they play and have done a good job for the most part throughout the course of the season in what they do. But they're going to run.

It's a big athletic group that's playing on defense, and they do a lot schematically. It's something that's going to be a big week of preparation for us because of the volume of things that they're going to try to throw at you.

We've got to try to make sure we settle that down for all of our guys as we get through the week, but this is a talented group.

Q. Could you tell us the extent of the conversations you've had with Jordan personally since your postgame presser Saturday night?

MIKE NORVELL: I went and saw him afterwards, and just being there for him, just helping him to understand the support, because it's tough. When you know as much as anything else for a program that you love so much, that you're not going to get the chance to go and play another snap, it's just hard.

I mean, he texted me first thing Sunday morning, and it was something that was -- I'm not going to go into all that it said, but it was special. I actually shared it with the team in our meeting Sunday afternoon.

He's a remarkable young man, and his belief in his teammates, his belief in our program and what we do, he's been a living example of it. And like I told our team, you never know when your last play is going to be, but the one thing in life that you never want to experience is regret.

I believe Jordan is very composed and comfortable in where he is in one of the most challenging situations you could ever experience because he doesn't have regrets. Like he gave all. It was in every practice and every game and everything that he did.

Knowing that the journey of being a player at Florida State, he's not going to be able to make that impact on the field anymore, but there's not a regret in how and what he did. Unfortunately it came -- his time ended a little bit before our last game.

But he's still going to make an impact, and that's just what's so special about him. He's making sure that he's communicating and continuing to lead in every way that he can right now.

Q. There's another undefeated team that thinks the world is out to get them right now. Their coach is suspended. When you guys lost your starting quarterback, people decided, oh, their season is over. Even if you go 13-0 you might not get to go to the playoff because of what you could do in late December or January in the playoff. How much do you use that with this team to be like, hey, this season is still going and we're still good and we have everything out in front of us? Is it a rallying cry?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I mean, it's always about us. Through challenge, through adversity, through whatever the perspective is on outside of people that think that know our team, I live with them every day. I watch them every

day. I watch their work. I watch their heart, the ability, all the things that are important to winning football games and being able to sustain success.

You never want to see anybody go down, but I can't control what anybody on the outside says about our team, but we can make our impression by how we play and how we do the things that we do.

I can't go through the season and say, well, don't worry about those things and then, oh, now this week now it's going to be important because that's not real. We are going to be true to who we are.

These guys, to say that they don't hear it, no, that's not real, either. I'm sure they hear it. But thank God the opinions of others don't dictate what our actions are going to be. This team a year ago, nobody thought we were worth a crap. They proved them wrong.

Big expectations coming into the season, and people waiting for us to slip and fall. They're continuing to get better. Quarterback goes down, oh, that must be it. That's why we get to play the game. That's why we get to go to work. That's why we get to continue to push and build and go be all that I know this team can be. We'll take care of the rest out there on the field and what we do, and if we take care of our business and continue to grow and get better, I'll put no limits to what this team can accomplish because I believe in them, and I believe if we can put that on display, maybe a few more will believe in what we can do.

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