

# Florida State University Football Media Conference

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## Mike Norvell

### Press Conference



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

Obviously coming off the game last Saturday, I do want to thank every Florida State fan that traveled over to Ireland to make that trip, to be there to support us. It was an incredible turnout. Obviously a great atmosphere. Just such a special fan base.

I'm sick that we didn't give you a better outcome. Obviously it's extremely disappointing. But I am so very grateful for every Florida State faithful that made that trip. It was really remarkable just to see that support.

Coming off the game, getting a chance to get back, obviously it's a big trip, a lot of different elements that go into it. Grateful for all of our operations, everybody that served a part of that, making that trip happen. It's a lot of moving pieces. I thought it went as smooth as could be. Glad to get everybody back here.

Obviously we had practice last night. Adjusting to our game week. Yesterday was a Sunday for us. Today is a Monday. We'll continue to progress as we go.

Going back and looking at the game, like I said, it's sickening that we came up short in that game. Obviously I take total responsibility and ownership for that.

I think you go back and see the game, obviously it's my job to have the team prepared to go and play to the best of our ability. I don't believe that was our best.

You could sit there and you look at a lot of different factors. When you look offensively, we really lacked the explosive play showing up. We had a couple big runs, a couple decent passes, but we just missed that explosive play. We had seven possessions in the game, which really you got to make every play count. Obviously both teams had seven possessions, so it was definitely a unique game.

I was proud of our guys. We were able to own the ball offensively. I think we scored on four of the seven drives.

A couple of those drives had to set up for field goals. Had a fourth down where we didn't convert. Just a few missed opportunities.

I thought it was a pretty clean game in the sense of not hurting ourselves. Obviously there were some things that we left out there. They did a good job in some of the things schematically of trying to add safeties. We had some missed assignments in regards to how we were trying to account for those guys.

At the end of the day it's an opportunity for us to grow and build. I was really proud of the guys offensively in that fourth quarter when we needed a touchdown to be able to put together that drive. I thought DJ did a great job. Receivers answered the call. Being able to find a way to finish in the end zone was big.

Ultimately, I mean, I've got to do a better job of getting the ball to our play-makers and making sure that we're giving those opportunities, still being able to maintain the balance that we have, that we desire.

I thought that was something coming out of the game, definitely it's something we all get to work and be better at, but something specifically for myself. I got to make sure when we come out of the game, we've been able to take advantage of those opportunities.

Flipping over to the defensive side of the ball, obviously it was a game that they were able to establish everything on the run. It was unfortunate that we were not able to create more explosives defensively. Had the one opportunity where the ball was on the ground. We got to find a way to create that takeaway, with that opportunity that showed up.

You do a lot of different things in the run game. They did a good job with their shifts, their motions, trying to keep us off balance, forcing communication.

I thought their front did a good job of neutralizing our defensive front, which we got to have more production out of that group. It is one of the best groups on this team. Those guys, for a lot of different reasons, that's something that we're going to continue and work and build.



I think one of the things I've been pleased with since the game is just the ownership of coaches, players, everybody involved, of understanding how much we have to continue to pour into each other. You take ownership in getting better.

I think when you look defensively, we continue to push and challenge that forcing unit, whether it's D-line, linebackers, safeties, corners. We got to make sure our fits are tight, that we do a better job of tackling in space.

I thought we had too many missed tackles in space. When guys got on the perimeter, they had 15 design quarterback runs. When that happens, it takes everything.

Obviously this week we're going to play another running back quarterback. It's going to take all hats. If you're forced into the fit, we have to make sure we're on point and being in position, playing with our eyes, running through tackles, and making sure we're getting guys on the ground.

Like I said, we had too many missed tackles there in space. Ultimately we got to be better in forcing and stopping a team when they are obviously attempting to run the ball, quarterback, running backs, speed motion, whatever that might be. We just have to be better.

I've got a lot of confidence in this group. Still things, being our first game, you get a chance to continue to evaluate personnel, what are those best units. I think there's some opportunities for growth there for us as well, who, when, where guys are playing. That's something being in game one, obviously sometimes you have to work through that. We will definitely be better in that regard, make sure we're putting guys in best positions to achieve success.

Special teams-wise, I was really proud of Ryan, Ryan and that field goal unit, to have two long field goals. One was a career long for him. You see the confidence he has. Did a great job in his kickoffs.

I thought our coverage unit was good in the opportunity we had. We were limited. I think only 21 special teams snaps, so really limited in that. Saw some good things; obviously some areas we got to work to get better.

I'm excited and grateful for the opportunity to go respond. Everybody's disappointed in coming up short. That game came down to one play. When you sit there and you look at it, I mean, you could take 30 plays in that game, any one of those have a different outcome, I mean, we're probably in a lot better mood right now than what we're in.

How you respond to it, what you do... I mean, nobody ever

wants to find yourself in this situation, but I believe in the character of the team, I believe in this coaching staff, I believe in the talent and ability that we have.

We got to go play better. It starts with me. It's my job to make sure that in all things that we're doing, come Monday night, our best football shows up.

Last week there was a lot of different logistical things that we worked through. Obviously I don't know when our next game of traveling abroad will be. You look at all things. Why did some things show up the way they did? Obviously we're going to learn and work and get better from it.

I thought our guys did a really good job in practice yesterday. There's definitely the right edge that we need.

Just for this week, obviously we're playing a Boston College team that's kicking off their season, new coach, new coaching staff, some very talented players, very dynamic quarterback, some experienced guys defensively that have been through it and done it. We know obviously they're coming in ready to kick off their season.

For us, it's all about us going to get better. I want to see us play our best game. We have to have our best week of preparation in order to be able to do that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. When discussing the forcing unit, is it physicality? Eye discipline?**

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, you could sit there and go through the course of an entire game. We gave up I think three really explosive runs. I think you see a little bit of all in that.

There was a play where we might have had a missed assignment, thinking something else was coming rather than staying the course of the job and responsibility. If you have a little bit of extra space in there, you let a guy be able to make something happen with that. Our eye discipline, making sure our communication is on point, our fits are tight, we're running through, being able to make tackles there in open spaces.

I think there were some times where there was some hesitation that showed up. I know as we talked a week ago before the first game, you sit there, What is the concern going into the game? I believe in the talent and the ability. In the moment of truth, when you're out there, do you trust your discipline, your details, are you able to go put that on display?

That's not just for new players. It's also older and experienced players. In that moment, you've got to trust the things you've trained yourself to do. Whether it's open-field tackle. It's those fundamentals. Do you rely that on that moment? If it's your block construction, how you are fitting the gap, how 11 guys are playing as one there defensively. It so critical.

I think those are things that you have to grow from, you have to learn from, but you also see the importance of it when you come out of the game. When those things are the things that hurt you, I mean, it's the sense of urgency to get that fixed and to be better. It has to be done.

**Q. How do you counter a game having such slow tempo, limited quantity of possessions? Did you try to do anything in the moment that just didn't work?**

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I mean, it's the fewest possessions I've ever been a part of in a game. It was really both sides. They were able to extend drives there offensively. We got to be better on third down defense, getting off the field. Some of those things are a part of it.

On the flip side of it, we were methodical with our drives offensively. We had multiple drives of nine, eight, ten-plus plays. We need to see those explosive plays show up.

We did take our shots. We did have some opportunities. Some of them didn't play out the way necessarily that we wanted. Those were a part of the plan. When you miss out on some of those explosive opportunities, you have these longer drives, it does shorten the game.

Like I said, it's the importance of every play, making sure you can execute. We tried to mix a few things up, just what we were doing. Like I said, I've got to make sure I do a better job as we roll through, putting our guys in the best position to achieve success. We're going to do that.

**Q. Did you expect there to be so few possessions in the game on both sides? How big of a part did the helmet communication play?**

MIKE NORVELL: I think it definitely plays a role. No, I didn't expect there to be that few. I think we had one possession, if I remember correctly, one possession in the fourth quarter. It was three possessions in the second half, which is obviously very unique to have. Only had four there in the first half. You don't expect that few, but it's something that plays out in the course of the game.

I'm sure that was a big part of their plan, what they wanted to do. Obviously, as it all kind of played out, it played out

pretty good for what they were trying to accomplish.

The helmet communication, I mean, it was good. In the second half they said that their helmet communication went down. We actually weren't using it there in part of the second half because the official came over and told me it went out. Whenever we tried to use it, it wasn't in full operation there later in the game. That was all part of it.

I mean, that's just the game. It's different factors and elements that you work through. But it was definitely unique to only have 14 total possessions in the game.

**Q. You talked about finding the balance on offense, the explosiveness. The first half, the passing game, the only real shot downfield was negated by the pass interference. Is that what you thought was going to be effective? Was that to help DJ settle in?**

MIKE NORVELL: It was a part of our plan because we felt like we'd have a chance to get leverage, get in space, let guys have a chance to go make plays. Some of it was just reads, being able to take something quick.

I thought it was a good start to it. I thought DJ settled in, was able to get the ball out, spread around. Like I said, you look at the first half, I mean, we were able to move the ball on every drive. Unfortunately their corner made a great play, great call on their part on the fourth down that we came up short.

We were able to move the ball. Unfortunately we got to make sure we finish those drives with touchdowns. That was something that obviously you work to build off of. We did have a couple opportunities didn't go the way we wanted. It was all kind of part of our plan.

**Q. What has the mood of the team been like the last few days, traveling around Ireland? Any leaders that stepped up after the loss?**

MIKE NORVELL: Obviously one of the things of staying there the day after, we got up pretty early on Sunday, we had a team meeting, met offensively, defensively. We went through the film. Got a chance to watch the game. Nobody was in a good mood.

Also with us going over there and playing the game, probably over 90% of our team, the first time outside of the country. I didn't want to just go there and miss the opportunity for them to have an educational experience. They did get to go and see some of the town. Guys got a chance to get that experience.

I am grateful for this team's mindset. Like I said, the



ownership of it. Being a part of a team, you pour so much into so few opportunities. There's guys, even directly right after the game, some of our best players, obviously us as coaches, when you're willing to take ownership of action, obviously the commitment to do everything that you can to go get better, to fix areas of mistakes, to understand the importance of the smallest things, whether the play calls, what you're doing, a technique, a fundamental. We all have a job and responsibility to each other.

I think our guys have had the right mindset in what we need to do. It's still all in front of us. We got to go and just get better. I'm not worried about anything else beyond that. I am not worried about anything we can't control right now other than going out there and putting our best foot forward today, being prepared for our Tuesday practice tomorrow, obviously as we'll build throughout the course of the week.

That's what I desire. I think I got a football team that understands that. Definitely showed it last night in their approach.

**Q. Do you think some guys during the game were tentative, afraid to make mistakes?**

MIKE NORVELL: I think it's one of the things, when you have some newcomers, guys that are in different roles, different opportunities, that's where you talk about you got to trust your training, you have to be able to trust the things you've done and prepared.

Do I think there are guys that played hesitant at moments? Yes. That's where you got to be able to work through that. At the end of the day, as a coach, you try to do all the things you can do to prepare them for that moment, how you train, what you do, making sure that guys are going to play fast through that.

There's some guys that were a little bit limited there throughout the course of camp, that were available for the game, got opportunities. It was a mixed bag of results in some of those things that we saw.

Obviously we got to do a good job as coaches of making sure that we identify and make adjustments as we need throughout the course of a game.

I think as guys are getting out there, guys having to play as one, we've got to make sure that when we step on that field there's no hesitation, guys cutting it loose and being the best that they can be.

**Q. You mentioned earlier, but with Boston College having a new coaching staff, is it difficult to get a read**

**on them heading into the game, especially when you faced them last year in a shootout?**

MIKE NORVELL: We obviously got a lot of respect for the guys that they have, for the players that they have. Coach O'Brien and his staff, obviously extensive, very successful coaching career. Obviously with him, Coach Lewis, their defensive coordinator, it's a team that's going to be very well-coached. They're going to be tough, they are going to be physical, be able to attack you in a variety of different ways, offensively, defensively as well as in special teams.

In all reality, we're looking at everything, anything you can imagine in preparation of what we might see. Obviously there's going to be things that they're going to be able to take from week one and probably try to utilize here for them.

We got to stay focused on ourselves and be able to adapt, adjust to whatever shows up.

**Q. Curious about two guys on offense. Jaylin Lucas, is there an expanded role for him? Also Hykeem Williams, you announced he wasn't going to be able to play against Georgia Tech. What is his status?**

MIKE NORVELL: You'll see Hykeem progress through this week. We're hopeful that he'll be available. Obviously that's going to be something you have to see throughout the course of the week. He is progressing.

Shawn Murphy was another player that was out last week, linebacker. He's missed the better part of camp. We're hopeful, I don't know if it will be this week, but hopefully here in the next couple weeks.

Jaylin, he's a guys that is an explosive play-maker for us. He's one of those guys, like I said, coming out of the game, the fact of him, he was limited in touches. I got to do a better job.

Obviously sometimes there's a variety of different ways of how the ball gets to somebody. But that's a guy that we need to be able to make an impact. He'll continue to work. He'll continue to do the things that he's doing to be better and continue to be ready for those opportunities.

He's done a good job throughout fall camp. It was unfortunate I wasn't able to get him to be a bigger part of that game there on Saturday.

**Q. You mentioned the game plan with DJ was to spread the ball around, stretch the defense horizontally. The last drive, when he made those throws downfield, did that open anything up in your**

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## head about how you can use him?

MIKE NORVELL: Didn't go into the game not wanting to stretch the ball vertically either. We called our shots. A couple looks where obviously different dynamics. We checked out of a couple based on the look that we were getting.

There was opportunities we did. You try to push. More confidence? Less confidence? I woke up on Sunday confident. Going into Saturday, I was confident. I know the guys that I coach. Sometimes there's different elements of a game plan of what you want to do, how you want to try to get guys in space. That's what we went into it with.

Just unfortunate that connecting and being able to have some of those vertical plays down the field didn't show up for us in week one.

We'll continue to work and be better and try to capitalize on those. It's going to be something we do each and every week.

## **Q. You only really used six offensive linemen on Saturday. Was that part of the plan? How do you think Coach Fertita did filling in for Coach Atkins?**

MIKE NORVELL: I thought the communication went really well. We used seven guys. Rob and TJ both played throughout the course of the game.

Continuing to work through. I think we got guys that have experience. I think there were some really good things that showed up. As you go back and you watch the film, how fine it can be with having to have guys all together. Obviously it's not just offensive line, it's tight ends, running backs, everybody being on the same page.

The finest of details where we had a couple of those runs that were extremely close to being what you're looking for, the explosive plays that can be created.

I thought Gabe did a great job in his communication with the guys on the sideline. Obviously with all the things we're doing within the staff, we're going to continue to build upon that throughout these next couple weeks.

I thought he did a really good job working with those guys.

## **Q. How much was footing an issue there? How much does that play in setting the edge with a quarterback like Haynes King?**

MIKE NORVELL: Both sides had to deal with the same

thing. There's times of guys slipping. That was all part of it. Every surface is going to be unique to itself. A few times that we lost our footing and allowed them to get to the edge. We got to be better. I don't think it was a huge part of it. Definitely shows up. Those are things that sometimes you can and can't control.

We got to make sure we're doing everything in our power to have an edge defensively. Obviously whether it's on offensive or defensive side, make sure we're staying on our feet, having an opportunity to make the play.

## **Q. Last week you said going into the first game you have the biggest menu of things you could see. Does that still apply this week with Boston College having not played yet? How different do you expect them to be with Bill O'Brien being the head coach?**

MIKE NORVELL: First two weeks we're going to have a huge menu of things that we could potentially see.

Obviously you got to prepare for all things. We'll have our thoughts of what we might see. You got to be able to adapt and react to what shows up. That's a part of it when you play in week zero, your first opponent is playing in their first game, especially with a brand-new staff. It's a very talented staff with some talented players to be able to work with.

We're excited for the week of preparation, doing everything to put our guys in the best position to go in and have success this week.

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