

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Coach Mike Norvell

Press Conference



Boston College - 28, Florida State - 13

MIKE NORVELL: First off, hats off to Boston College. They did a good job tonight. They came in, did the things they need to do to win the game.

For us, I'm just sick how the season started. Obviously tonight I failed in preparing the team to be able to go out and respond tonight. And just the things that were necessary for us, the things we talked about, things we emphasized, obviously in all phases we were not able to execute.

I obviously didn't put them in a position to showcase what I believe that this football team is, and it's extremely disappointing.

And I apologize to our fans, apologize to everybody associated with the program. I mean, that was extremely disappointing that we were not better.

And obviously we couldn't get -- a lot of factors go into it. Like I said, all phases. We just weren't good.

They had possession the entire first quarter. We went three-and-out I think the first three drives. Offensively they capitalized on third downs. Our third-down execution was extremely poor. They ran the ball. We didn't.

And we had some missed opportunities. Had some chances in the game to be able to take a step and we made mistakes that were obviously extremely costly, and they capitalized on it.

But comes down to me, comes down to me being able to prepare this team to go out there and play at the capabilities that I believe they have.

You've got a football team that's hurting. You've got a football team that -- nobody envisions ever being where we are and having disappointment, having failure.

I do believe in what this team can do. I believe in what this

team can accomplish. I've got to get better. I've got to prepare them better. And obviously we've got to do everything in our power to be able to apply the things that we're emphasizing throughout the course of the week, through the course of the game.

And we need leaders to rise up. We need to continue to push in all areas of what we're doing, and we've got to do it together.

If there's going to be -- there's going to be plenty of negativity around this program. I understand that. When you perform the way we just did, it's all part of it. But for a football team, you've got to stay together. And you've got to make sure that you're there for each other.

We've been knocked down. We know how to get up. But we've got to go do that. And it's one thing to talk about it. It's another thing to put it into action and then to be able to perform in the moment throughout the course of the game.

But I do believe in this team. I believe in what we can do. And I believe in how we can respond. But obviously there's a lot of work to be done because that does not look like Florida State football with what we just did. Once again, it's all on me.

Q. Going back to the spring and really all season, it seemed like you guys felt like this would be a team that would be able to really run the football. You haven't really run it well. Tonight you had to kind of abandon it. What do you think has gone wrong there?

MIKE NORVELL: Obviously tonight we went into it a little bit more run/pass, trying to get ourselves in the right numbers. And we missed some opportunities there in the passing game. We've got to win one-on-ones. Obviously bunch of different factors kind of tie into that.

But when it comes to the run game, it takes everybody. And we've got to be able to create space. We've got to be able to be on track. We've got to make sure that we're taking advantage of all positions doing their part.

People are stacking the box. People are squeezing the

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box. We've got to be able to take advantage of it out on the perimeter. Had a plan to try to be able to take what they were giving us. And obviously we did not do a good enough job and put our guys in a position to achieve success in that regards.

There's some things that we've just got to be better in our execution. But we've got to find ways to be able to have success on the ground. For two games, we definitely have not been able to achieve that to the level that I was expecting. And, once again, I've got to put guys in a better position than what we're doing there offensively, in the run game to be able to create angles, to create space, to let our guys have a chance to be able to sustain and excel there on the ground.

Q. With the passing game struggling early on, did you ever consider making a quarterback change? And coming out of a bye, will you have some sort of open competition or will you stick with DJ from here on out?

MIKE NORVELL: Obviously we were struggling offensively. There's a lot of reasons for that. Obviously everything that we're doing we've got to push and get better. That's what we're going to focus on doing. We're going to focus on pushing to get better, and we're going to put our guys in the best position to go achieve success. And that's what we're going to focus on.

Q. (Inaudible) really struggled. How much do you feel like what happened last season has maybe rubbed off and/or affected this team?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, obviously this team is this team. I know these guys worked hard in the offseason. You push. You try to prepare to go out there and to try to put your best foot forward, to play the best football you can play. And unfortunately we haven't done that.

And I think that when that occurs, obviously you have high expectations here. And there's always going to be and there needs to be. But when things don't go how you want them to go -- a disappointing outcome in our first game -- and obviously today it was all the things that can go wrong basically did.

I don't know if that's a carry-over from any part of it other than starting to press, starting to try to do too much, trying to -- where you want it so bad that there's times where you can get to where you almost abandon the training that you've had because you just start pressing and trying to do almost too much.

I think that's something that, as a football team we've got to be able to collect ourselves. We've got to go and continue

to evaluate what is best. And then we've got to build upon the things that we can do right now and go and get better from them.

Like I said, I believe in the team. I believe in these guys, and I do believe in what they can accomplish. But obviously we're not putting it on display right now and definitely did not do that tonight.

I wholeheartedly believed we would come out and play better. But there were definitely enough mistakes that we made that kept us from that there in the first half. And then obviously I thought there were some things in the second half where we started to press and just obviously did not play very well.

Q. What didn't click with the pass game, especially early?

MIKE NORVELL: There's not much that did click. We struggled to win one-on-ones early. There were times where we were giving up, getting pressure. There were times where we missed a throw or missed an opportunity for a catch, trying to get some things to find a rhythm offensively. We weren't able to do that very well.

I thought we did get into that a little bit later as we were rolling, had a couple of explosive plays that showed up.

And we've got to be able to start fast. We've got to be able to go out there and compete and to be able to win our one-on-ones, to be able to execute, going through progressions. We've got to be able to protect. And obviously we've got to have balance in the run game.

I think all that plays off each other. Some of the things we were doing were run/pass options and they were playing hard, stacking the box in the run. You've got to capitalize on the perimeter.

When they're doing that, you're going to find one-on-one situations, and we found some. But obviously we did not do a good enough job of being able to execute in some of those situations.

Like I said, that goes to am I putting them in the best position in what we're doing. And obviously in the things we're asking them to do, being able to go out there and being able to make it happen.

Q. Second straight week where an opposing offense had a good bit of success on the ground. A little different this time. Felt a little more up the middle, direct. I guess, I know there were a lot of people inside and outside the building that were confident in that

defensive line and what they could accomplish. Were the problems the same today? What are you seeing that's not clicking with that group through two games?

MIKE NORVELL: You know, I'll have to go back and watch the film on it. Obviously it was our guys being on the field for as long as they were. I think that definitely played a factor in it, especially late, with some of the explosive runs that showed up.

But it's not just the defensive line. Linebacker, safeties, everybody, especially when you get into condensed sets, you're going to find condensed sets, unbalanced sets. Everybody has a role to fill.

And we've got to be able to aggressive in our fits. We have to make sure we have our eyes up. We have to run through tackles. If you get athletic players -- obviously they have a couple of athletic backs, athletic quarterback -- if you give them space, they're going to make it happen.

Obviously we had couple just complete bust on the back out of the backfield that gave up two explosive plays. Would have had another one, but they dropped it. That was extremely disappointing. It's something that we obviously work a lot, but in the moment we were not able to execute.

You sit there and you go through -- I thought early they were trying to run the football between the tackles and whether it was three, four, whatever that might be. But when you get to third-down conversions, you get into longer drives, things are sustained in that -- and obviously on the field as much as our guys were on the field, it gets challenging. And obviously some of those explosive runs showed up late and it really hurt us.

Q. Going into the season as a team that, you talked about working very hard and having a lot of athleticism and raw skills, do you have a sense of what the disconnect is to where those aspects aren't translating over to results that you guys want on the field on Saturdays?

MIKE NORVELL: Obviously that's going to be something that we've got to continue to evaluate. I mean, like I said, I believe in this team. Who I believe we are didn't show up tonight. That's on me.

I apologize to everybody, just that's not good enough. And for what we saw, obviously there is obviously a disconnect in how we were able to perform tonight and what we did. So I've got to be better. This football team has to continue to push to be better.

I can tell you it's not from a lack of work, not from a lack of work from coaches, players, everybody involved. But for that identity that I know we have, we've got to be able to put it on display, in the moment to translate practice to the game.

And when you're playing athletic people, sometimes bad things will happen. Sometimes you get beat on a play. You can't allow one to turn into two and then turn into five and then to let things spiral and go down hill.

That's why I do think that the leadership and the guys that have been here, the guys that have poured through, the guys who have been through so much, you're standing up, sticking together and just making the choice to continue to push to do more.

And I know that's what I'm going to do and I know that's what we're going to do as a coaching staff for these guys. And we're going to put them in the best position to go get better. And at the end of the day nobody wanted to sit here 0-2. I sure as hell didn't want to look like we looked tonight. It was not very good.

But at the end of the day we have an opportunity to get better and that's what we're going to do. That's what we can control. And I still believe in this football team and what we can accomplish.

Q. You guys lost a lot of talent and leadership from last year's team, but you were quite aggressive in evaluating and plugging those hole going to the transfer portal. Is it too soon to say some of those evaluations might have been off, and was there a risk of it looking like this with how quickly you had replenish the roster?

MIKE NORVELL: Obviously I've not done a good job putting our guys in a position to showcase what I believe that they are. So I'll be better.

Q. What attributes of the running game are you looking to improve the most?

MIKE NORVELL: Once again, it's a lot of different factors in the running game. We all have a job. We've got to create space. We've got to make sure that at all three levels we are taking what they're giving us. We can't let somebody put seven, eight people in the boxes and different sets. We've got to be able to take advantage of space on the perimeter.

But on the flipside of it, we've got to do a good job when we get opportunities of being able to give the backs a track to run. We've got to be in position where we're supposed to

be.

And always gotta have a one-on-one at some point. We've got to win those one-on-ones, whether it's in the run game or passing game. We've got to be able to build on that and we've got to establish part of that run game. As we get into this next week and obviously the next opponent, it's got to be something that we get established and build an identity of who we are up front.

Q. On the fourth down, on the first drive of the second half, I guess maybe going into the thinking of going for it there. And was DJ just trying to make a play because he was feeling pressure? What was the breakdown on the play?

MIKE NORVELL: It was right at the brink of just analytically, thought to go -- we've had success in some of those fourth-down situations. Obviously, they got a little bit of pressure. Obviously tried to force a ball. Came out poorly and obviously was a big play in the game.

In those situations you try to play to put your guys into position to go achieve success. We are trying to spark some momentum, trying to spark an opportunity. But obviously that was a bad decision in that regards, especially carrying with the results of the play, turn the ball over and giving them a short field.

But definitely it's something that was thought through. We felt in all aspects of what we needed, analytically, what I thought would occur on the play. Was confident in it. But definitely was not the result.

Q. With the bye week coming up, you mentioned this team pressing and kind of wanting it so much. How important is kind of instilling their confidence, getting that back over this two-week period heading into this next game?

MIKE NORVELL: We've got to build upon the things that I know we can do. And we've got to build upon just showcasing our identity and what we're about. And we've got to work. Obviously we've got a few days here this week, opportunities to go out and work to be better.

We've got Memphis coming into town that's a very talented team. And right now it really doesn't matter who we're playing. We've got to continue to work on ourselves. We've got to continue to push, continue to build that confidence through the work and then to be able to execute in the moment.

That's the -- like I said, coaches, players, everybody involved, you only get so limited opportunities. And when

you get there at game day, you've got to be able to go perform and be your best.

And that confidence, it's something that you've got to earn. And we work to build it through practice. We work to build it through competition. And what we try to do, but when you get out there on the field, that's where you say trust your training, you've got to be able to put that on display.

It's the same thing for coaches. And as you're going through game plans, you have a sense of what you believe your guys are, that's going to put them in the best position. There's times you've got to adapt, adjust throughout the course. But also gotta make sure you stay true to who you are and not press as a coach, too.

And I think there's times that we've done that as well. And ultimately it's my job to go get it better. And we're going to continue to build these guys up, and you allow them to go build confidence through the work they're doing on the field.

Q. Piggybacking off the confidence thing, with the third-down struggles today, do you think that's an area if a couple of the three-and-outs go your way in the first quarter you could see more confidence put in your offense? Do you think that's something you'll look to do moving forward?

MIKE NORVELL: It's a big point of emphasis for us. It's something that I believe that would be a strengths of ours and how we would operate in third downs. And unfortunately we've not operated as well as what I believe we could.

It's offensively, defensively, and we've got to get off the field on third downs defensively. We've got to make sure that for the guys, whether it's in the passing game, being able to create the pass rush, being able to be tight to receivers, got to make sure that we're great.

Obviously their quarterback made a couple of nice plays with his legs to extend drives. And for us offensively we've got to make sure that with our playmakers, in those moments, rise up and be able to keep possession of the ball, allow us to get into a rhythm.

That's one of the things that's hard when you're not being successful on third downs and you're not achieving the explosive plays within those drives, it's just hard to get in a rhythm.

We had the one drive in the first quarter with the three-and-out. And then you get out there, what, it's a sight mistake within those set of plays. Missed opportunity. And

you sit there and find yourself, you've had limited possessions and limited plays as you get through the entire half.

So obviously we've got to make sure we put our guys in a great position. And obviously we've got to be able to have success on third downs.

Q. DJ missed some throws, but there were some other breakdowns also, some dropped passes, some pass-protection breakdowns things like that. But when the crowd, the students are making chants that are not supportive of him, how did he handle all that? When you talked to him between possessions, is the pressure part of what's going on?

MIKE NORVELL: That's part of the game. At the end of the day, everybody is going to have an opinion on what it is. And obviously it's playing quarterback, being the head coach, being part of a great university, great program with high expectations.

It's our job to go and play to a high level. And there's times that you might hear things that you don't want to hear, might have to go through hard and challenging situations, and those are all -- it's all part of it.

But I think DJ, he's mature. He's obviously been through a lot. I think that he was very encouraging there on the sideline with his teammates. Very encouraging there in the huddle as we were going trying to go push to make the next play. That's what you have to live with.

And when you play this game, it can be against you. But if you be able to go out, execute, control that next play, you'll be able to work yourself through it.

But I thought he was fine on the sideline. He was able to respond there a little bit in that third quarter and have a couple of explosive plays. Him and Kentron, they were able to hit some explosive plays. Not enough for us tonight. We'll continue to go work, get better as an entire team.

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