

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Mike Norvell

Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Good morning. Appreciate everybody being here. Obviously coming off the bye weekend, it was -- I thought we had a good work week there last week trying to really, really hone in and focus on some of the details of the fundamentals -- communication, all elements of trying to help transition the work we're doing on the practice field so it shows up there in the game to the best of our ability.

Gave the guys a couple days off this weekend to be able to kind of just refresh, clear minds, clear bodies and spirits, and get ready to go be better this week.

I thought our guys came back with a really good meetings and practice last night, a lot of energy, flying around. So guys definitely have a great sense of purpose for improvement, and that's our focus.

Everything that we have this week to go be the best that we can be. Coaches, players, everybody involved trying to put our best foot forward to accomplish what we're setting out to be, you'll hear for this week. Trying to block out all other things -- the things that you learn from the experiences that we've had the past couple of weeks, you work to get better, but really all our attention and focus here is on a very talented Memphis team that's coming in and making sure that each of our players and our coaches go and do our jobs to the best of our ability with the week ahead.

Do have some unfortunate news. Jaylin Lucas will be out for the year, sustained injury there in our last game. Really disappointed for the young man, very talented player, explosive athlete for us. But unfortunately, he has an injury that will keep him out for the rest of the season.

He does have a redshirt available, so he does have a couple years eligibility left with that, but just our thoughts are with him as he's jumping into the rehab part of recovery with the injury. I know he's going to do a great job of being able to continue to help the guys that are there on the field and obviously working through his process, you'll hear moving forward. Still very excited about what his future is

going to be as a Seminole, but it is unfortunate we're going to lose him for the rest of the season.

Like I said, it's a big week for us. We need to continue to push and challenge each other, and I think our guys have the right mindset for what is necessary as we head into this week.

Q. Going back three years ago now when you guys had a rough start, and one of the things you talked about is not changing anything, just doing what you're doing. Is the challenge any different, though, when you've had success like you've had the last couple years and now trying to get through something like this as opposed to the approach you took three years ago?

MIKE NORVELL: It's funny because we have a good number of guys that have been here through that journey and some guys that -- just about every position group has at least a player that was here during that time.

But when you reflect back to that, we were still at the very beginning stages, and it was probably a bigger leap of faith then to stay the course and trust the process of what we're doing than what it is now.

We understand what, how, and the steps necessary for us to go be successful. That's got to translate better from how we're practicing, for what we're doing in our preparation, for that to be able to show up there in the course of the game.

I think we've all been out there, we've all seen it. We've seen the ability that our guys have shown in preparation, but for whatever reason we have not been able to translate that in the course of our first two games as good as it can be. There's some elements of our consistency that need to be better. The details, the fundamentals.

Then guys cutting it loose, playing fast, playing free, and going to just enjoy playing this game. I do think there's been some moments, just due to whatever situation, circumstance, where we've played tight, where we've kind of pressed a little bit. I think that, when you get your opportunity to go play this game, you've got to cut it loose

and just trust your training, trust your fundamentals, trust your communication, the guy to the left, and the guy to the right.

It doesn't mean there's not going to be a bad thing that shows up in the course of a contest, but it's the response that you have in that. I've got a lot of confidence in where this team will continue to grow to.

I believe in the young men that we have. I believe in what we're asking them to do. It's just building them for that moment.

I've seen a good response from our team in the last week and how we've worked -- I mean, everybody's disappointed, but ultimately it's disappointed knowing that we haven't played our best. That's where we got to go take the step.

So, no, there's not wholesale changes to what we're doing. Our guys believe in what and how we do it, but obviously we've got to execute that, and we've got to help that translate there to the course of the game.

Q. Coach, you mentioned the word pressing multiple times over the last couple weeks. Is that something that's contagious in the locker room? Do you think over the bye week you were able to figure out what the issues were? Is that a confidence issue? What kind of comes with that?

MIKE NORVELL: I think a lot of elements can pour into it. You start a season -- nobody goes into a season thinking, oh, well, hey, here's the struggles that are about to show up. This is going to be the adversity that's going to show up. But you have a picture of what you want it to be individually, as a group, as an offense, defense, special teams, and collectively as a team.

When it doesn't go that way or if you face adversity, it's how you respond in that moment. To say confidence, sometimes I think it's -- guys going out there want to do everything in their power, I would say, almost not to lose or to not miss a tackle, to not miss a throw, not drop a ball, or whatever that case might be.

Ultimately, you're flipping that mindset. You've trained. You're prepared. Go make that play. Go cut it loose and enjoy the game that we get to be a part of. Obviously you'll learn from every experience that you have.

I think that showed up a little bit more this last week, and different dynamics in the game that kind of play to that sometimes. We struggled early on third downs on both sides of the ball, and then all of a sudden they've extended

drives, we're quick off the field, and then you look up, and you feel like, oh, man, I've got it, got to do this. I've got to do that. Or you just play a little bit tighter than -- I would say tighter and more hesitant in those situations.

I've talked to the team about that. I want to see them go play this game, and we're playing a very talented team this week, one that I think is definitely a top 25 caliber team as they come in here. They're probably going to make a play or two in this game. When that happens, where do you go in that moment? That's part of college football, being able to respond to the adversity, and also when things are going well, respond to the success.

So I'm excited to watch our team and the preparation, excited to see them take that to the game, and just cut it loose and go play.

Q. With the loss of Jaylin Lucas, does that leave an opportunity for young running backs to step up and fill his role?

MIKE NORVELL: I think you look at guys, some of those younger backs that are going to have probably more opportunities. Micahi Danzy has moved up, and he's practicing with the offense. He's been on the scout team units, getting him a couple more looks to see as he grows and progresses throughout the season, if there could be opportunities there. I've definitely been very excited about what I've seen from him.

We've got some of the younger backs we're going to continue to look at. I've been really pleased with those young guys' development. Obviously Kam Davis has got a chance to get out there and make some plays there in the first couple games. Got guys like Sam Singleton, Cazia Holmes that I do think have really good potential and ability.

So it does, I'd say, force and open the door of opportunity for some of those guys. They've got to be ready for when their number's called.

Q. You've talked before about how the quarterback gets most of the credit when things are well or blame when it's not going well. Can you evaluate big picture how D.J.'s playing and how many of the miscommunications or errors that are happening during the course of games are on him versus the whole team?

MIKE NORVELL: I'm not going to get into specifics, but there have been issues. I say issues, it's not pointing to one person, to one group.

I think that we have to be more consistent overall as an offense, and there's been times where obviously he's been on point or maybe we're a couple yards too deep on a route depth or maybe there's protection issue. There's different elements. I mentioned during a game there's been a few missed throws he's had, whether that was due to a drop or a progression. I think those are all opportunities for us to get better.

It's definitely not been all on him. I've really liked his mindset and his approach. He's got a lot of experience, and he understands how to play the game. He understands how to respond to good and obviously to responding to some of the challenges that showed up. I think he's brought the right attitude and approach to what we need and to what we need to continue to do as this offense is growing together.

We all have to be better -- myself, all positions. That's part of us continuing to forge the identity of who we are and just the consistency of our execution. Like I've said, I said it coming out of the last game, I've got to do a better job of putting our guys in position to go be successful, doing the things that I know that they can do. That's got to translate on game day.

Q. How long do you expect to be without Jeremiah Byers, and how did Jaylen Early do in his first real heavy playing team?

MIKE NORVELL: We'll see how J.B. progresses. Not expecting that to be long term, but we'll see what that looks like as we go into the rest of this week and, if it happens to extend beyond that, what that looks like. I thought Jalen came in. This was his first extensive, meaningful reps. Obviously Rob was able to start but still working through some of his situation just coming off of fall camp.

We knew Jaylen was going to play and still expecting Jaylen to be a part of this game and get his opportunities. But I thought there were some good things and a few plays where trust in his technique, make sure he's playing with his eyes where he can be better. But all in all, I thought Jaylen had a solid kind of first outing where he got extensive reps.

Q. I know we'll talk to Adam also, but defensively, can you quantify where some of the lapses have been in terms of not being able to get off the field third downs, things like that?

MIKE NORVELL: It's been kind of a big picture approach. Obviously last week there was a few times where their quarterback did a great job of being able to extend and try to make plays -- and made a play to be able to extend

drives. There's not been just a ton in the drop-back passing game that we've faced in third downs.

I feel like back to back weeks we've faced quarterbacks that are extremely mobile, whether it's a quarterback run/read option game in that, it definitely adds different elements and challenges to it.

That's something where we have to continue to be better. There's not been a whole lot of straight drop-back game where we've had this huge communication bust. There's been a few elements where we've got to be better in just communication and making sure we're on point with the specifics in the passing game.

Ultimately, we've got to make sure we're stopping the run. We've got to be obviously accountable to our gaps and making sure that we're doing a good job, when we have somebody with an opportunity to make a tackle, whether it's open field or in short spaces, we get him down and we'll be able to get off the field during those situations.

That's our big focus, and we know we've got an offense that's coming in this week that is very multiple. They've obviously got a strong running back, went over a hundred yards this last week. They're multiple in formation. Structure is what they do. And they've got some really good receivers, and one of the most experienced quarterbacks, best quarterbacks in the country that's coming in.

We're going to have challenges in both the run and the passing game. So it's going to take all 11 guys to make sure we're doing our job stopping the run and obviously being able to limit the vertical pass and make sure we're tight in our coverages.

Q. Just wanted to ask you about your time at Memphis. You've always talked so highly of it, said it was such a special time being there. Just emotions heading into this game and what it's going to be like to play them?

MIKE NORVELL: I've got unbelievable respect for that program, a great love for that city. It was truly a wonderful experience when we got to live there and got to be a part of that program and continue to try to push and elevate it, really to where it is.

I do believe it's one of the top programs in the country when you look at the success that they've had, that they've been able to sustain. Ryan, Coach Silverfield, he's done a great job with the program, continuing to push it on the trajectory that we were on. When you look at what they've done over the last 10, 12 years, it's really been impressive.

But this game is, you know, it's our next game. Memphis will always have a special place in my heart, but this is about our players. It's about us going out there and being able to compete, improve, and get an opportunity to showcase all that we are and what we can be against a very talented team.

Q. You guys were able to go out on the road recruiting as a coaching staff. What kind of messages are you getting from recruits and sharing with recruits as you go out?

MIKE NORVELL: Obviously being able to go out, trying to utilize the bye week to get out and see guys, guys that are either committed to us or guys that we're continuing to evaluate for this year or next year's classes.

Nobody's excited about how we started -- I'm talking about ourselves. We're not excited about how the start of the season has gone, but obviously we know where we're heading, and we have a tremendous amount of belief in the guys that we have and the guys that we're bringing into the program that's going to continue to help us ascend to ultimately where we want to be.

There's great excitement for opportunity and ultimately a belief in where those steps are necessary for us. For these guys that are going to come in, the opportunity to be able to impact and be able to continue to push this program forward.

The message hasn't changed a whole lot in regards to that. I believe in what we're doing and the guys that we're going after.

Q. How much does it help that you finally have a normal work week and now that menu of what you're looking at on the opponent is somewhat smaller because you actually have film?

MIKE NORVELL: That's something that I'm grateful for this week is a more regular week for us. It was good getting started last night and being able to see at least a couple of games, watching Memphis from this year, getting a sense of the personnel, how they're utilizing the personnel.

Like I said, it's a talented group. We know it's still early in the season. They've won both of their first couple games really handily. They haven't probably had to dip a ton into the menu of things that they do, very well-coached team.

So we fully expect that we're still going to see different elements of things schematically, but it is good to be able to get a better sense of how these guys have aligned and

how they're being utilized within the course of the offense, defense, and special teams.

Q. When it comes to giving new guys opportunities to perform in games, they have to earn those opportunities, but is it enough, when the guys in front of them aren't playing good enough, does that give them the opportunity to then be able to help out the team in the game?

MIKE NORVELL: Our job is to play the players we believe are going to give us the best opportunity to go win games. We want to continue to push to see that in game. We want to continue to see that in practice.

But it definitely has to be earned. Obviously we're going to continue to push at every position to see that, to evaluate that, and obviously work to see that show up on game day.

Q. Coach, I know you mentioned about preparing for Memphis, but thoughts what about having a chance to see Ryan Silverfield again?

MIKE NORVELL: I'm grateful for Ryan. Obviously he was part of the first staff at Memphis. I think the only coach that was there from the beginning through the entire four years. A lot of guys got different opportunities. Obviously we're able to go, whether get promotions or different jobs. Ryan had his opportunities, but he chose to stay and be a part of what we were building there.

I'm just so excited for him and the opportunity he gets to lead that program. Like I said, he's done a great job with it. We stay in touch. Definitely somebody that I got a lot of respect for. He will definitely be there.

Q. The B.C. game, Hykeem was going through some warmup stuff, but he wasn't available that day. When he does come back, what can he help in terms of not just the passing game, but also the running game?

MIKE NORVELL: Fully expect Hykeem to be available this week and to play. He really had a good fall camp. He was on track for for what we believe he can be. He's taken some positive steps and still needs to grow and do that.

Obviously you get another big, fast, strong receiver that we feel has an opportunity to win one-on-ones, get an opportunity to showcase those attributes in the passing game, but like you said, also in the running game. That's something that we've got to continue to build upon on the perimeter.

We faced a good number of looks where guys, the secondaries are getting incorporated heavily in the run fits,

and so how can receivers help when it comes to that? That's something that you look at Memphis' secondary, that's one -- with the type of defense they play, I mean, I think it's as good of a secondary of fitting the run, fitting -- being physical out there on the edge, getting involved and being disruptive on the perimeter game.

We need all of our receivers to come and bring obviously their best when it comes to that, but Hykeem is somebody I'm very excited about. I think he can be a big play receiver for us, but also a steady, consistent force. I'm really proud of Kentron and what he was able to do in the last game. He looked more like his old self of speed and being able to get in and out of routes.

Obviously had some big plays down the field. So definitely looking forward to what Hykeem can bring, but also the continued growth from those guys on the outside.

Q. Coach, there's been some changes in college football this fall. The tablets on the sideline, the two-minute timeout, I guess they call it now. How comfortable have you been feeling with that through two games, and how much do you think it's helped or hurt the team through the first couple of weeks?

MIKE NORVELL: I think the helmet communication is something that's been good. We've worked a good amount of that throughout the course of spring. To be honest with you, the tablet, the first time we got to use it was in Ireland. With the construction here at the stadium, it was -- there were some challenges, just with everything how it's wired. So that's still a little bit of a work in progress with us.

I think our guys have done a nice job in the communication and being able to do that in the course of the game, but I still think there's some different elements of what is best. How does that best fit us, the information that we need to see, the communication of that, and still making sure that we're transitioning that to the next series, to the next half or whatever that dynamic might be, as we're rolling through that.

So it's definitely still a work in progress, but feel comfortable when it comes to all of it.

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