

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Coach Mike Norvell

Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: I appreciate you all being here. Obviously, jumping into a new week, new opportunity, you know, coming off the game Saturday. Disappointing outcome. Disappointing beginning to our season.

Obviously we're not playing to the level that I believe we're capable of. There were some positives that did come of the game. I did think there were some improvements that are showing up.

I thought defensively the interior of our defensive front definitely played at a higher level, a lot more production. I thought you saw flashes there from the edge. You saw some young players that were able to, you know, get opportunity and I thought did a good job.

I thought Justin Cryer did some really good things there in the course of the game. K.J. Kirkland, getting his first start. I thought he did a nice job. Some things that he'll get to continue and improve upon, but it was a great experience from him. We were better in stopping the run. Still some things in third down situations that we can continue to improve, but I did think there were some positives.

You saw the defense get put in some tough situations where we had three turnovers in the first half. They were able to hold firm and obviously respond in a good fashion there.

Offensively it was obviously not the type of game that we needed. Not the type of game that we expected. We've got to continue to push and get better. We've got to be able to find rhythm. We've got to be able to sustain drives on third downs. It's really been poor execution and production in that situation. Too many third down and long situations that we found ourselves in.

It was just a variety of different issues, and it takes 11 guys going out there playing as one. Everybody has a job. Everybody has a responsibility. I would love to say it was just this one situation or this one position, but we have to be better.

When you sit there and go through practice and preparation and you're not seeing the mistakes that are showing up there on game day, for whatever the reason, whether it's a route depth that we're emphasizing or a certain technique or fundamental or a certain call there in protection. You make it through the week, and it's pretty clean with very similar looks of what we get on game day, but in the moment we've got to be able to go out there and perform and execute.

Like I said, it's every single person. Myself, all of our coaches, our players, we all have to get better. I can tell you that there's a lot of work that's going into that improvement, but we've got to see it show up on game day with everybody involved. I think our team, they understand the expectation of what it's supposed to look like. Obviously our coaching staff understands the standard we've got to continue to push to.

I thought our guys came back yesterday, and they did go to work. I've challenged them that we have to be different this week. We've got to continue the values, the objectives, the standard of how we're operating, but we've got to make sure that that investment is even more. We've got to continue to reflect on what we're doing throughout the course of the week that's going to allow us to be better on game day. We need to see that improvement.

We're playing a Cal team; they're undefeated up to this point of the season. They've been on the road. They won. They beat an SEC opponent on the road. This is a team that defensively, they play fast, they are aggressive in how they attack. You can tell they're very well-coached. Offensively they've got a very versatile attack in the run game and a quarterback that's been really efficient in being able to make a lot of different throws.

Obviously they're playing at a high level here at the early part of the season. As we go into this week, we need to see that step. We need to see that improvement, and I'm definitely looking forward to how our guys approach the preparation and are excited for the opportunity that we have here this week.

Q. You guys obviously didn't have your tackles -- your

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starting tackles on Saturday. Any update on the possibility of getting those guys back? Then, also, just overall the offensive line struggles. Is it more execution, technique? What are you seeing?

MIKE NORVELL: You know, so with the first question with the tackles, promising that we could get one if not both -- and I say both. Obviously JB, we'll see how that's going to progress through the week. Darius, that was something that happened in pregame. So kind of unexpected. We'll see where that goes as the week kind of progresses.

But I think when you got into the game there the other day and even here in the early part of the season, you know, there's been a couple of different issues. It's nothing that -- like I said earlier, it's not just saying, oh, this is the one point or this is the one time. There were a couple of communication issues there with a couple of variety of looks.

We got a lot of pressure and things trying to take away the run game there in certain looks on Saturday, and then there were a few times where we just, whether it was a miscommunication, misidentification, you know, across the board where it just wasn't as clean as it needed to be.

When it comes to protection, I mean, that's everybody involved. When it comes to run game, obviously you incorporate tight ends, running backs, tracks, all those kind of things. We've got to be better.

I know that it's a frustrating thing to sit there and look at, and it's frustrating for everybody involved, for those guys that are out there playing. I mean, they want more. They want to be better. They're working hard at it. But it's some of those little things that we have to improve on and just the consistency of it.

We're continuing to work as coaches to help put those guys in the best position so we can go out there and play fast and be able to utilize the techniques, fundamentals, and showcase the skills that these guys have.

Q. Do you have an update on Shyheim Brown's availability and Jalen Brown and Cam Riley as well?

MIKE NORVELL: Expecting Shyheim to be available this week. When it comes to Cam and Jalen, we'll see how they progress throughout the course of the week. Both those guys went down there pretty early in the game, and that was a game where we had a lot of guys that had to step up due to different injuries.

Obviously that experience is invaluable for those guys when you sit there and look -- or it's valuable for them to be

able to go out there and be able to get those reps and to build their confidence and what they can do and also to see some areas where they've got to be able to improve.

We'll see how those guys progress as the week goes on.

Q. You've talked a few times recently about seeing success in practice not translate to game days yet for this team. I guess in your time as a coach, a head coach, coordinator, position coach, have you seen an extended stretch like this where you've seen that happen? I'm sure it's not a thing where there's one fix for every time that happens, but what have you seen fix similar issues before?

MIKE NORVELL: There's been times -- and whatever the issue is, I mean, whether it's a confidence issue at times, whether it's guys just understanding issue. Sometimes you see some young players, just some of the finer details. Those things will show up.

It's really you are working yourself through and finding the success. That's something that we need. We need best players to go be best players. Guys that have, you know, high ability and high potential need to go live up to it.

Coaches need to make sure that we're putting them in the best position to be able to get out of the challenging situations or difficult experiences. We've got to help pour in to build up and try to create some of those successful moments.

We're really kind of all in on that, but you know, it's challenging. When you don't have success or it's not going how you want it to go, whether it's starting to try to do too much, starting to get tight in those moments, you're not playing fast and free. So we've got to get ourselves through that, obviously, offensively. I really have a lot of confidence in these guys and the guys in what they can do.

I'm believing that that is ahead, and we're going to continue to work hard every day to make sure that shows up.

Q. After the game on Saturday, you said that you are going to be evaluating all aspects of the team. Do you expect to make any personnel changes this week, or will you be going with the same rotations you used on Saturday?

MIKE NORVELL: We'll continue to see what this week shows. There is an expectation of guys to go out there and perform and respond and to improve and get better. I'm going to work my butt off to make sure that we do everything in our power to win this game. That's what the job is, and that's what we're going to work towards.

I think you saw guys that get opportunities. You see guys that what they do with it. You're going to see what guys do in practice and how they show that they are ready and prepared to go out there and make an impact. Then we'll be able to go from there.

Q. How would you evaluate perimeter blocking and when there are miscues --

MIKE NORVELL: It was bad. It was awful. There's no easy way to put that. There are times that you stop the film and you see one-third of the field with -- we have as many or more than what they have, and you get no production. That sucks.

It was a challenge. That was something that was issued. We work really hard and we've had a really good standard of how we've executed in that moment -- in those moments in the past, but that was awful. Kind of directed my response to that.

Q. Seeing how DJ performed in the second half, do you feel like he kind of took another step forward?

MIKE NORVELL: You know, looking at DJ, obviously there's been -- it's been a challenging start for everybody. There are 11 guys that -- it takes 11, and we all have a job. We all have our responsibility.

I think when you look at the game, there were some things that DJ did really well in putting guys in a position and trying to give opportunities. There was also a few times that we had some missed opportunities on his part and in our overall execution.

I am pleased with the way he is preparing and the things he is doing. You see the moments. He has given us a chance. He is giving us an opportunity to have big plays.

I thought there was a lot of the reads and things he needed to do and the position that he needed to put the ball that was positive. Like I said, there was a few times that we've got to be better.

I'm believing that we're going to see growth from every position that we have. We're going to see continued competition at that, but I know what he is putting in, and I see what he has seen.

Obviously we all have to be more consistent about the execution of that and making sure that for this offense we get the spark that's necessary to go and be what I believe we can be.

Q. In some situations you talked about the perimeter blocking. You do have some new players, but you also have some of those guys that were experienced players. It's not a lack of understanding. What responses do you get from guys?

MIKE NORVELL: That's where -- guys that we've seen perform, guys that we know capabilities and I know desires too. I mean, we've got a team -- this is not a team that's just throwing their hands up and, "Oh." They're working. I see it in their eyes. I've been a part of teams where you have the highest of high moments, and you have some of the lowest of low moments. We've been a part of that.

I've been a part of it through my coaching career. The eyes will usually lead you to what's in their heart. When you see the approach, the work, the things that they're trying to do, it's not from a lack of desire, and I don't believe it's from a lack of ability.

In those moments that's where we're working to see a disconnect -- working to fix the disconnect of execution, of obviously making the play in the moment. That's one of the things that is frustrating and it gets frustrating for players, it's frustrating for coaches, all of us, because I know what guys are capable of.

If I hadn't seen it, if it wasn't something that we've been able to do, then that would be something else. But, you know, we just have to be able to go out there and cut it loose and play and trust your techniques, trust your fundamentals.

If we're sitting there, and if it's a finer detail, if it's, obviously, one of those specific things, we have to trust that and go apply it. You have to build confidence through that, through the work that we have throughout the course of the week, and we have to build confidence of that for what we're doing out there in the course of the game.

That's where I have confidence in what this is going to be. I don't need a pep talk. I know where this is going to go. I know what it's going to be. It's just we've got to go out there and get it done. Like I said, I've got to help create that, that confidence, and we're going to continue to push the way we push in practice. We're going to continue to prepare, but we all have to be better.

That's what I have challenged our players with. What is your week looking like? What is it leading up to the game? What are you allowing in? That's one of the things we've talked about bouncing back this week.

What are you putting in? It's how much film study, how much extra are you doing on your own? What are the

things that you're doing to prepare yourself so in the moment you're not thinking too much and you're not trying -- because we have really tried to simplify even more things just to see guys play fast, but some of the day-one basics that when you show up and you see hesitation or a mistake shows up, those are the things that I know we're better.

We've got to go be better. For coaches, everybody involved, just helping guys take that step to where we can go out there and play to the level we're capable of.

Q. How did you evaluate the defensive line's performance against Memphis on Saturday? It looked like there were some improvements. Especially how did you evaluate Joshua Farmer's performance?

MIKE NORVELL: Josh was one of the guys, as I said in opening, I thought that was a step forward. I thought you saw Josh -- obviously Josh missed all spring. He had some limitations there in fall camp, but you're starting to see the strike, the explosiveness, some of the things that we're accustomed to seeing from him.

I thought you felt that impact. I thought Darrell did some good things. You saw that interior really being able to work. I thought that guys on the edge, there were some flash plays and some good moments. I think we can still have more there that can show up. I thought there were some real quality plays, quality steps that we're going to be able to build upon there from Saturday.

Q. Obviously when you have had so much success as a play caller and just an offensive coach in general going back to Arizona State and what you did at Memphis and what you have done here, how much does the confidence in your own self waver at all when you have a start like this, or do you go back to all the success you've had in the past and say, We'll get through this? I doubt you've ever had a start quite like this offensively where it's been so bad for three games, but you've also had so much success in your career. How do you weigh that?

MIKE NORVELL: Every team is unique to itself. That's the challenge to every coach is -- I can tell you, I haven't been good enough. I have told the players it's my job when we step on the field for them to go out there and be able to showcase who they are, what they are, the identity of offense, the identity of defense, special teams. That has to show up.

Right now we've had an offense that in these first couple of games, we haven't had that identity. That goes back to me. Now, my confidence -- I am ultimately confident in

ability, of what I see, what I believe we can do and helping put guys in a better position. My confidence is not wavering when it comes to that, but it's still about the execution.

That's where I can firmly stand in front of our players and say, look, I will be better. It's through the work. It's through making sure that the things that we see, that we're trying to do, that's got to -- we've got to be able to translate that.

We're all in this thing together, but for however it sounds, I mean, I know my capabilities as well. I'm very confident in what that will be.

Q. Coach, talk about having Alex Atkins back, having him back for the Cal game coming up.

MIKE NORVELL: Alex, he is so important to this football team. It's been unfortunate, the circumstance we've had the last three games. We're grateful for his presence.

Obviously a great coach. What he brings there every day, but especially on game day, that presence, another set of eyes that see things as the game is progressing and evolving. Obviously just he is a leader of our offense too. I mean, in that role he has a big stamp on all things that we do.

Yes, I'm over there. I do call the plays, but I mean, he is such a strong presence when it comes to all things that we're doing. Definitely glad about having him back and I think it's going to be, obviously, a benefit for all of us having him back on the sideline.

Q. You talked about the special teams being an identity unit for your team. Can you just talk about the fumble and the offside call and kind of how disappointing that was for you to watch?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I thought the offside call was awful because the ball moved. The guy is keying the ball, and for whatever that is, it's a redshirt freshman that's keying the football. The ball goes up like it's about to snap, so he steps. I'm upset about that call because I thought it was a terrible call.

For the kid, he is doing exactly what I told him to do: You see the ball move; you stay, you go. That play went from fourth and eight, we're going to get the ball back, to fourth and three. They went for it, they converted, they did a good job on their part of it.

The fumble on the punt return, you know, that's one of those situations we've got a very talented young freshman that is doing what we asked of him. He is communicating



the fair catch. You saw one of our players heard it. The other one did not.

He gets blocked into it. The ball hits, and obviously an unfortunate play that shows up. It's something that you work, you rep. It's a daily focus for us, but it's something that we could continue to grow on and making sure that all guys are getting that communication in those situations.

Yeah, that was just an unfortunate play in a big moment.

Q. We haven't been around Luke as much, but we've been around Brock definitely, and we saw him kind of embrace the opportunity last year. When things aren't working on the offense, do you have to manage? I'm sure their feelings are, Hey, we could do something, we could help this team if we get out there. Do you have to manage that, or is it just life and you have to deal with it?

MIKE NORVELL: No, it's all things. I want that. Every player that's not on the field, I hope they have -- I hope they see themselves as the X factor of what's going to be the difference in a spark, in a change, and anything that could happen because you want that type of confidence.

My challenge to everybody on this team, you continue to prepare for your moment. There on Saturday Jaylen Early was not expecting to start the game. That was not an expectation, but in pregame he became the starter.

His preparation, all the things that he did, what went into that. You never know when your moment is going to be thrust upon you. Are you ready for it? Are you showing it in practice? Are you putting yourself in that position that continues to fight for those opportunities and those reps? Ultimately that's where I love what I'm seeing from Brock.

I said it after the game. I have a lot of confidence in that quarterback room, and those guys of what they're doing and how they're continuing to push. It's going to be a daily push from all of them to go show where they are and, obviously, if the opportunity presents itself, what it's going to look like.

I'm definitely pleased with them in that. I think they both have that edge of what they can do and what it can look like.

Q. You mentioned trying to create a spark on offense. I know obviously for the offense to be good it's a matter of doing it consistently the right way. Is there a way to try to create a spark in a short-term window doing something different, i.e., wildcat in the past, things like that?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, there are certain things that you look for because you have to be able to say, well, why? Why this? You can always have a thought or a suggestion, but it's got to be able to point to you have to be able to answer that question of why. How is this putting us in a better position to be successful?

If you are getting cover zero looks and everybody is down and pinching all gaps, sometimes wildcat good, bad, indifferent. Sometimes going into empty and spreading them out, you know, why are we doing that? What is the benefit that we're going to see from trying to create a different spark?

I'm not the biggest trick play person in the world, but, you know, a couple of weeks back, I mean, there was an opportunity. We saw one that we saw a look that we liked, and we tried to take advantage of it. It did provide a spark.

We had one of the vertical shots there on a P and 10 the other day. It provided a spark. We definitely are looking for all opportunities to provide sparks for this team. Sometimes it might be play. It might be concept. It might be personnel. Whatever that's got to be, we are going to continue to evaluate that and look at it, but I think more than anything else -- because it's real easy to say, well, change this. Yes. Or do this.

But if you can't answer the why, right, if it's not something that is where you see it's going to be better, it's going to give you that competitive advantage or it's going to give you this, then those are things that now you're just throwing it up and grab bagging at things. We spent a lot of time working, practicing, preparing trying to put our guys in the best position from what we're going to ask them to do. We've got to do a better job of doing that and of the execution of it when it comes to game day.

Like I said Saturday, we're evaluating all things to be better. We're going to continue to do that in all aspects of our presentation. We're going to continue to develop the personnel and go out there and play better.

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