

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Coach Mike Norvell

Press Conference



Florida State 14, California 9

MIKE NORVELL: All right, just first off, just so proud of our team. You know, we needed -- every part of what that game showed, what that game had in it, we needed to experience.

It's been a tough first three weeks of the season. You know, just disappointed in the beginning.

Going into this week, you know, you say challenge, you say opportunity. You know, we talked about bouncing back. You know, we're in control of that. Not who we're playing, not where we're playing, not any of those things.

It's about us and just can the choice we get to make on what we want it to be, what we want it to look like. I will say that I was so proud of our team for how they approached the work this week in practice. There was energy. There was competitiveness. Guys were really pushing each other.

I thought that showed up today. You know, I'm not sitting here saying we haven't worked up until this point. When you face disappointing outcomes, there is a lot of things around you that can get in your mind and that you might want to pull back, might want to just hold.

But these guys, they didn't get distracted. They continued to believe, continued to push. I thought the week of practice showed up big today in just how we were able to respond throughout the course of the game.

This was a tough game. This Cal team, obviously they have got some talented guys, some playmakers on both sides of the ball.

Everything had to be hard-earned tonight. Our guys, I thought they definitely played with a relentless spirit. I thought they played with just great effort and a lot of physicality. A lot of hits on both sides of the ball.

But at the end of the day we made the plays that were

necessary to be able to go get that win.

For the defense coming up big with the stops, I mean, you look this week we spent extra time in the red zone and focusing on our red zone work competitively.

I mean, that showed up big. Our defense being able to keep them out of the end zone. I think there were two of five total in the red zone. You know, this was really just a special performance. Very impactful.

I thought our defensive line played are very well. Saw some young guys that are continuing to get in. Edwin Joseph with the interception; sack there late was big.

I just like the growth that I'm seeing. You know, obviously it's one game, but we needed this game. We needed to be able to find a way when everything wasn't all all right. But find a way to be able to go win.

Big touchdown catch by Ja'Khi there late in the game to give us the lead. And then just guys fought their tails off to make sure we put the our stamp on it there to finish it at the end.

Got to give a shoutout to our crowd. I mean, it was remarkable. The energy throughout the game from the very beginning to the very end, you just felt their presence. I don't know how many false start penalties Cal had, but that directly goes to our fan base.

It was loud down there. You could feel it. It was definitely a wonderful environment to be able to be a part of a college football game, so I appreciate the crowd. Just the impact that they had here tonight.

Q. You mentioned the energy from the team this week. Felt like Edwin Joseph during the week of practice, you can feel it and sense it when we were out there. To see it translate over to the game, the journey he's had, what can you say about the preparation to succeed tonight?

MIKE NORVELL: I would say probably over the last three weeks we've seen some huge steps from Edwin. I mean,



the talent has always been there. It's the just working to the consistency, working to the details, working on just being the best him.

You know, I would say these last few weeks, I mean, he loves playing the game. He's so competitive. He loves it. All parts of it. But you're seeing him take another step in his journey.

He earned more opportunities and that's what he got tonight. He's capitalizing on that. Ans it's still very surface of where he's going to go as a player, but he has the right intent.

I thought Quinn was another guy that was remarkable this week. Another young corner that had multiple big plays and pass deflections, being in a great spot. Really proud of him for what he was able to do.

And you just felt it. You felt it this week in practice, the competitive drills that we had. It was good back and forth. I mean, I think that edge and that toughness and obviously the fight to finish, it showed up big for us.

And a lot of those guys that just chose to bring that energy on a consistent basis, right, was what I think really kind of pushed this team today.

Q. When you mentioned the team needed it to go this way, do you mean coming from behind late and then also getting the stop to seal it?

MIKE NORVELL: All. We needed every bit of it. From the stop -- coming out I thought we were able to establish the run game offensively there early. That Cal defense, they've been pretty good. They're a good defense. They got good players. We knew there he was of going to be some challenges that would show up.

I thought our guys, they fought. Got a really good start early. I didn't like our third quarter. Thought we missed some opportunities there just in what we did.

Then to be able to come back and score the touchdown late, to be able to do it on a third down situation, all the things that were stacked up and see our defense, I mean, when they had to respond they rose up.

They had their backs against the wall. When Cal got into the red zone they continued to push and fight. We needed to see the -- I, mean that's one of the best running backs in college football and he showed some good bursts. That's something we knew would be a challenge coming into this game.

I thought our guys for the most part did a really nice job there, but we were able to create the explosives and that was big.

Q. I just wanted to ask about Ja'Khi. Obviously the touchdown catch was a huge one. The third and 18 catch, I think it was third and 18, that he made over the middle, him just going and attacking the ball and going and making a play, is that just something this whole team needs but specifically the offense, just guys go and make plays?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, absolutely. That's what it takes. When you get your opportunities, I mean, you have to be the aggressor. Don't worry about a negative of what could happen. Don't worry about the different things that are around you.

You get an opportunity to go make it, go be the guy that you're built to be. I think Ja'Khi, you know, we challenge him every single day just to continue to push. He's got it. I mean, we've seen it in big games. We've seen him rise to the occasion, and he definitely did that tonight.

You know, even early in the game there were a couple things that weren't great for him, and he had to respond. You was able to answer the call when it came down to it in clutch times, big situations, he was able to deliver.

Q. I know you had a lot of optimism; a lot of people did about what this defensive line, especially that starting four, could be. How nice is it seeing? Not the start I'm sure they imagined to the season, but Josh, Pat, Marvin, just all the plays those guys made at a very high level?

MIKE NORVELL: No, it's what these guys are capable of being. Wherever we are, we are. But just like I said earlier, the choice that was made and the choice just to go be better, choice to go and cut it loose and go play -- don't worry about the circumstances. Those will always be there. You'll have those.

You worry about what you can control and with the opportunity that's in front of you, are you willing to go put it all on the table. I thought our defensive line did a really nice job of that. I saw flashes from our linebackers. There were opportunities that we had just big plays in coverage that needed to be made.

It was just a collective defensive effort. But absolutely started with the spark of those guys up front. We need them continue to build upon that. Hopefully that can boost the confidence of capability. Something that we expect, but great for that to show up.

Q. LT didn't seem like a guy that felt real good this week in practice. What did it mean for him to go out there tonight and run like he did and give you guys what he gave you?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, unfortunately Roydell went down this week. LT really had to battle throughout the week. He's such a consistent person, player, just remarkable young man.

I was really happy for him and the performance he was able to put. Kam Davis got banged up a little bit early. Was able to come back in the game. I thought he did some good things. Yeah, LT, we needed him to be a workhorse tonight and I thought he definitely answered the call.

Q. You mentioned the run game. Seemed like the offensive line was firing off maybe a little bit more. What did you see from the offensive line tonight?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, you know, I thought they did a good job. You know, we've had better challenges and it's -- going into these first three games, I mean, the first three games we had eight different starting offensive linemen due to injuries and things that showed up. So some moving pieces.

It was great getting Darius tonight. Rob was out; couldn't play. JB couldn't get back. Jaylen Early made his second start obviously with the unexpected one there a week ago.

I thought those guys understood what was being asked of them. They knew we needed to be able to have some balance in this game. I mean, against that defense with just how they fly around, if we got in a drop-back game, there was some challenges that could present themselves.

So I thought being able to work to establish the run was good. Having some success early was big. Some things later in the game that we got to absolutely clean up.

But I really liked just the mindset those guys brought, knowing that it was a necessity for them to be able to get things going.

They were aggressive in their play and obviously some things we'll be able to go back and watch on the film and continue to clean up.

Q. So much noise around the quarterback the last few games. How important was that 36-yard touchdown throw in the fourth quarter, and how can DJ build upon that?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, it was a big play in a big moment. We have to have it. There was still as you go through today, there is things that you can control, things that you need to get better at. It's every position.

We'll go back and watch and continue to have opportunities to go get better. Because offensively we did what was necessary to win the game, but still don't feel that that was a performance that offensively of what we're capable of.

It's going to be a consistent and constant push, and definitely was proud of those guys. Some of those third down throws, some of the plays that were made, they were big. We should all grow in confidence with that, but then also understand that there is so much more out there that we need to be able to do and accomplish.

But tonight was about this one game and doing the things that were necessary for us to win. We were able to accomplish that feat.

Q. What do you hope just getting a win would do for these guys? Just taking pressure off or...

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I mean, more than anything else, it's hard to win a game. I mean, it is. It takes so many different things. I think obviously we lost or first one on the last second field goal. Did not respond very well.

That's as much as it is, every person has expectations. Players, coaches, fans, the university. Here at Florida State you need to embrace every bit of it. This is a special, special place. We have not started to the standard or anything close to what we wanted to be.

But even when you find disappointing moments, it is -- it does go to the response of, I mean, just continuing to push, believe, continuing to work. It's taken us three games, and the road that we have, I mean, it is what it is.

You got to show up and you got to find a way to go win. That's why I said at the beginning we needed this game to be exactly how it played out. It was not perfect; we didn't play the best game I think we can play. But we have all the emotional parts of it.

There are things that we were up, we were down, we had to respond. We had to finish. That's what this team needed. I think that is a good Cal team. They have done some good things. Went on the road. Had an SEC win a few weeks back. Defense is going to be one the better defenses within the conference.

You know, got a lot of respect for how those guys have played. I knew that would be a challenging game for us, but we needed every one of those experiences for us to just build.

You know, to have a little bit of confidence, to see the response, to experience the joy of seeing guys work their butts off throughout the week of practice and then get to celebrate in that locker room.

Because it's hard to win a game.

Q. Two-part question. How important was getting Coach Atkins back tonight, and did Jordan Travis help on the sideline in today's a game?

MIKE NORVELL: I thought Alex did a remarkable job. He's had such a great presence, just all things he does as the leader of our offensive group. I mean, he is just really a special coach. I loved having him back on the sideline with the rest of the offense staff.

I mean, it was great to hear that. I thought just -- when our staff was whole. I loved the way everybody was working together. Coach Fuller and the defensive staff, the response. Even though there was a tough situation, just hearing the encouragement back and forth.

It's a great group of men. Yeah, it was wonderful find ever having him there.

For Jordan it's really special just to see him back. During one of the breaks I know they recognized him, put him up our on the jumbotron. That ovation is a well-earned ovation.

He's one of the greatest Florida State Seminoles of all-time. I believe that with everything. What he did in that jersey was special. But who he is and what he means to this program is really even more, because he cares so much about this institution, so much about the guys that he got a chance to play with.

You know, I'll just forever be grateful for him. Yeah, it's great when all your past players come back and just the -- it is, it's uplifting. You think back to the great plays that they've made and they're here just to support the guys out there now.

And so it was good to have them back on the sideline.

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