

Florida State University Football Media Conference

Monday, September 30, 2024

Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Mike Norvell

Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Disappointing performance, the things that go into the preparation and work, try to be the best you can be. Good week of preparation in regards to adapting to some of the changes and the storm all things there. There in the first half, I thought we showed well in some areas, had a couple mistakes, things that cost us. Got down inside the five-yard line, weren't able to score. Had a bust in a coverage which we allowed an explosive touchdown. We didn't play as good as we could but we're still going into halftime, it was a five-point game.

You know, coming out in the second half, a disaster play on the drop ball, tip ball interception. You know, that gave them a short field and obviously a quick score. I didn't think that we responded as well to adversity as what, one, we need to, and as what I believe we are capable of.

We got to a point where even when we scored it went to a 12-point game. We came out, I felt that as a momentum boost. I felt like we went out there and we got a three-and-out, and then you know, the call on the face mask, which, you know, is what it is. I mean, it was -- that was the game-changing play for us. Got stopped. Obviously whenever that extended, the drive, and really at that point, that was probably the most disappointing aspect to the rest of the game. Because I didn't feel that we rose to the level of response that was necessary. And you know, it was really kind of a gut punch in that situation. They went down and were able to score.

Obviously we had -- they had the two scoring drives there and then we had the Pick-Six and it just kind of all built upon itself on that, and it was -- that's the things that as I talked to the team yesterday, you go back and watch film, it was the lack of response there in the second half when things didn't go the way that we wanted, the way that obviously we needed it to go and that's where you've got to have guys that step up and who is going to take control of that. You talk about leadership and what is that and what does that look like.

In those moments, the leaders go make the play. They go stand up, give all that they can, and go execute in the

moment. That's what was lacking. We've seen that in the past. We've seen that even the week prior to finish the game. We saw that in tough and challenging situations where guys answered the call. They were put in the moment and went and made the play. We didn't have those plays made there in the second half when things didn't go well. It was a disappointing outcome.

Obviously coming back, we have to go get better. This week, you know, we've got a great challenge with a team that's playing probably as good as anybody in the league, probably as good as anybody in the country right now in what they have done. Right now we've probably played on the complete opposite spectrum of that. We have to have a great focus on us and a great focus on our improvement, from the details, the work, the response, all the things that are critically important for us to go and get better.

I mean, I've said multiple times throughout, I thought our guys came back, and last night, it was a good workday. You know, I thought the ownership of action, the things that showed up and occurred, and then the willingness to go jump on a practice field, we got back at five in the morning on Sunday morning, so it was an early morning, obviously a short rest but I mean, they came out and they pushed. It was a good start to the week but you know, it's the application, all things throughout the week and making sure that we're doing everything in our power to go be our best come Saturday night.

That will be our focus and so we're going to do everything we can to put our guys in a position and then to be able to go out there and execute in the moment.

Q. How is DJ health-wise and how did Brock look when he was out there to you? What's going to go into the decision-making process this week?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, DJ, something we're going to evaluate throughout the course of the week. You know, kind of go -- see where it goes from there.

You know, I thought Brock, going into, in all reality, I said it after the game, after the interception, just kind of where the game, I decided I was going to make the change.

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

Obviously DJ did have the injury there, as well. But just wanted to see that opportunity for Brock to go in and have a chance to execute. I thought he did some good things. Had a nice throw that we didn't finish on. I thought he did miss one of the vertical shots that had an opportunity that was a touchdown play.

But overall operation of what he was asked to do was good. I mean, it wasn't shocking to me. Brock and Luke both do a great job in how they prepare. They really try to prepare as if they are going to play every play in the game. If you do that and then when you get in the game, it's usually going to translate a lot better for you. I thought he was ready for the moment, and obviously those guys both have to go and prepare at an elite level this week and we'll see how things play out throughout the course of what this week holds.

Q. You guys played a good bit of depth in that game and especially some young guys that had not gotten burned previously. How much do you continue to push and get more guys out there and see what they can do?

MIKE NORVELL: It's going to be a continued push to put best guys that can go out there and be productive and be able to make plays there in the moment. There are open doors of opportunity and there's a lot of evaluation, and you know, I mean, it is an absolute push at every position for guys to raise the level of productivity and for guys that are looking for more, they have got to go earn more. Anybody can talk about it and sit there and say, well, I want to be playing, or this guy should be in or that guy should be in.

But ultimately, they have to show that they are prepared for that in the way that they work throughout the course of practice and then if they do a job that shows -- that builds confidence in their teammates and in their coaches and in everybody that they are ready for that, then that door opens. You've got to go perform.

I thought there was some good things. I thought there were some good plays and there was also some moments where some of those young guys can see the areas of improvement and that sense of urgency for improvement is there. Obviously we'll build upon it.

Q. When you played Brock, was it because of DJ's hand injury or just time?

MIKE NORVELL: I was going to -- when we had the Pick-Six, I mean, that was going to be an opportunity for Brock to go in there and it was 13 minutes or something in the fourth quarter, I believe. I was making the change at

that point.

I'll say this: It was -- there's a lot of things that we go back and look at in the game, and you know, DJ did make a lot of good throws throughout the course of the game, some good decisions, he made some poor decisions and a couple bad throws that you know, it's -- but you've got to surround and you've got to help the quarterback position.

I don't think we've done a good job of that consistently, and you know, at the end of the day we all have to have ownership in that, and so you know, for what that was, I mean, it was. You know, from protection to finishing plays and catches when you get the opportunities and then making sure that the quarterbacks are making the right reads, putting the ball where it needs to be and playing at a high level.

So it is all things but you know, at that point, I mean, definitely you're going to make the change there for that game.

Q. In the second half when your team doesn't respond like that, is that more of the coaches' messages falling flat or the players not playing with the right attitude?

MIKE NORVELL: A coach's message doesn't really change here. It's go be the best you can possibly be, and you know, you go and respond. Don't be driven and affected so much by the circumstances; it's still about the opportunity.

You know, if you're a real one, you're going to rise up. And I say that in all -- and I believe we've got a football team full of real guys, and guys that have done it before.

But if you get caught up in the circumstance, right, you put yourself in a position, right, to be, to be swayed by the emotion; and you know, nobody wants to be down. I'm not sure wants to be put in tough situations. Nobody wants to have anything bad ever happen to them. But when it shows up, I mean, who are you? And the real ones, they rise up and they go make the play. They want that. They are willing to step forward. They are willing to take the brunt of all things and still just put themselves out there, and that is a challenge.

I told the team right there after the game, I told them again last night, that's leadership. Because you know, a leader is not affected just by the swaying of the wind, because that, then you're going to be -- you'll up some days, you'll be down some days. You know, hot and cold.

But if you've got a purpose and you're an absolute -- knowing what you think you are or say you are, then go be



it and be it consistently throughout the course of the game; whether you're up, whether you're down, let that show up.

If you get discouraged or disappointed because the outcome is not where you want it to be and you hold back, there's the hesitation. And there's a lot of things that go into that, whether it's the fear of failure or the fear of disappointment of coming up short. But that's part of it, right.

Ultimately, you've got an opportunity, you go out there and you go make the play. You take all the things that you have worked to do and you put them into action in those moments, and you know, it's our job as coaches to help put those guys in the best situation to help showcase that to help them in that response but yeah, I mean, that's where we all have to get better, and you know, as a coach, as players, I mean, you know, in those moments, that's where we have to be our best. And we have to be the realest to who we are and what we're all about.

You can play back the reference and look back, you know, a year ago, we won 13 games during the season and a championship, and four of them we were down ten points. What happened in every one of those opportunities? Well, the real ones stood up, and some of those guys that are on this team right now were those guys.

But now, as we -- and I said this, you know, throughout preseason and all of it. It's like, watching a team, you always -- you build it, you put it together, and the excitement about what the potential can be, and I am the ultimate optimist. I mean, I see what people can do. I see what I believe they can become. I see what I feel and what I have a sense of the potential of a group. But it still comes down to the moment of truth.

I was asked the question, maybe in the opening press conference, what's your concern? It's in the moment of truth, what's it going to look like. Because you still have to have those guys that step up in that moment and be what they are capable of being. You have to have coaches, players, everybody involved. Like when it doesn't go the way that you necessarily want because it shows up in every game, every year, very rarely, will you look at a team that wins a championship and see just the smoothest of rides. Because that response has to be a part of building the core of it. And I don't think we've handled that very well.

You know, it's not from a lack of want-to, but for whatever it is, to make that connection, to go execute then, to be able to make the catch, make the block, make the tackle, you know, to make the throw, whatever that part of it is, and now we've seen flashes of it, right. I have seen some

positive responses. It's just not being consistent enough for us to play the way we are capable of, and that's what we have to work on getting better at.

Q. The change on the depth chart with the co-starters at quarterback; that because of the uncertainty of DJ's status or is there a world where change is made independent of injury even if DJ is good to go?

MIKE NORVELL: Obviously DJ, it's one of those -- I really don't care about a depth chart to be honest with you. It really means nothing. To put a status -- DJ couldn't first name the game, one he couldn't finish the game. I said that I was going to put Brock in at that moment, too, but obviously right now there is a little bit of uncertainty in status. We'll see what that looks like as the week goes on. But doesn't really matter what I put on a depth chart.

Q. Another depth chart question, I'm sorry. I had to. You've got three tight ends. Obviously the interception, Kyle bobbed it but Landen gets his first touchdown. What did you see out of those guys in the tight end room to lead to that decision?

MIKE NORVELL: You know, that's a position where we have to be better. You know, you look a year ago, I've got confidence and belief in Kyle, I do, and you look a year ago, you look for percentage of opportunities and targets and catches and guys making the play, you know, he was as good as anybody we had. And we had some really, really good pass receivers last year.

You know, this year, there's been some struggles. There's been some tough moments. There's been -- that was obviously a huge play in the game and you know, there's nobody more disappointed than Kyle.

But right now, it still comes down to production, to execution, and so the doors of opportunity are there; guys have to take advantage of that. Obviously really happy for Landen to be able to get that first touchdown. You can go through the game and there's still some things that he's going to have to take some great strides in to continue to be what I know he's capable of.

But you know, that position has to go and get better, and you know, so you can see it across the board in this wonderful depth chart that we put out. There's a lot of positions that have to be better. We're not playing very well.

I mean, did I suggest put an "or" on everybody but you know, it's not -- at the end of the day, we've got to go do it. The belief that I have in the guys that I get to coach, that's unwavering. Because I am around them as much as

anybody. So with that, it's what you do in the moment. That's where we get to prepare our butts off and go push to be better, and then when we get out there on the field, better has to show up. And if it doesn't, there's got to be somebody that takes advantage of the opportunity and goes and helps this football team win games.

Q. I want to preface this, I'll start off with an individual player but it's about the position group. I was watching Darius before the game and he seemed to be very animated, like he was trying to get guys fired up and he was the one that was giving the speech before they went in the locker room but then he has a false start and Maurice had some bad snaps and that offensive line, would you think that that would be a group that the team could lean on. What do you think has gone wrong for that group?

MIKE NORVELL: There's been a lot of change in availability, guys that have played, where they have played, what they have done. We do have probably the two guys that are -- with JB being out, he did get to play there in the last game but with Darius and Maurice, those are two guys that have played well here and have played at a high level. They have to be it.

I've got, once again, just preface the last question I just answered, I've got the ultimate confidence in what they can do but in those moments, they have to, as the leaders, I mean, it's got to show up.

I think that's where -- that's a responsibility, it's a challenge, it's all of it. But they are built for it. They have lived through it. They have been through it and it's what this team needs.

And guys that have been out and been productive in critical, challenging, hard situations, well, we need that now. That is where the -- it's like put your finger on why. That's what's -- you get frustrated with as a coach of, you know, the things you're looking at through preparation, the things you've done that even these individuals have been very successful with.

Now it's, you know, what are the squeaks; what are the things that -- where we can eliminate some of those mistakes because they are amplified mistakes when it comes from them. If it's a first-year starter, somebody that's new to it, still some things that they are working through, that's another part of the challenge to them and a challenge to us.

Because we've got to make that connection, and I would tell you, if I sat there and watch these guys and I felt that they were pulling back or it wasn't -- I mean, you

mentioned, like in pregame, Darius doesn't even like to talk. I mean, he's not -- doesn't really just enjoy doing that.

But he wants it, and he wants it for this team and he's willing to try to push, to try to encourage. But then in those moments, you've got to stay focused on those little things. I'm grateful for him, willing to take those steps. Now it's about just control things we can control as well and continue to bring both because that's what this team needs.

Q. On the interception return for a touchdown, a few players seemed to be hustling. Did you see that enough widespread from everyone responding to the miscue there?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, were there guys that accounted for those, yes. It was not uniform of what it was, and you know, obviously those are things that every play would be great.

But I did, you know, you celebrate the guys that are putting on display what the expectation is, and that's wherefore us, you've got to continue to push that standard. Obviously there's accountability in all things, and how we play in the good and how we play in the challenge, like I said, it's a reflection of the identity.

Q. I see Leonard not on the depth chart after he didn't play. What is his status and the two guards that got in, Bryson and Andre, how did they perform?

MIKE NORVELL: I meant to mention that in the opening but Leonard will be out for rest of the year. He's got an injury he's been dealing with, and it's kind of got to a point where it's greatly affecting his ability to be able to go out there and play. So he'll be out for the rest of the year unfortunately. And then, you know, obviously with the opportunities of Otto and Estes, those guys, obviously Bryson has been in the program for a long time. He had an injury coming out of spring, basically missed the majority of fall camp, and so he had to -- he's had to work himself back into it. I thought he had a really good spring. But you know, our guard play has not been as good as it needs to be. That's the reality of it.

Those guys are going to push for opportunity and we've got to go get better, and I thought Andre, he's still young and still growing in a lot of areas but I mean, you felt his presence. He moves well. He plays with physicality. That's with those guys, every chance they get to step on that field, they have to go play confident, play fast, and be able to transition those techniques and fundamentals that they work on in the course of action.

Q. Two weeks in a row -- is there one thing you can

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

point to of what you guys need to do on the defensive side of the ball?

MIKE NORVELL: We have to help eliminate the explosives. I think it was five different plays where -- a couple coverage issues, and just to be real, we have to make sure that we set the edge and guys are aggressive to setting the edge of a defense because too many times the ball got outside when we have people that are in position and need to go force to get it back to everybody else and just the -- just a little bit too much hesitancy when it came to that. I did -- they are with the negative, there also some guys that I saw that played at a higher level and some guys that were more sure tackling, playing aggressive and playing with more confidence in the things we were asking them to do. We have to build upon that with all 11 guys that are out on the field.

Q. Aside from the quarterback situation, how many different things have you guys tried to do offensively? It feels like from week-to-week there have been things, tweaks you've put in. Are you finding anything that you feel like this offense can do or do you have to keep trying new things?

MIKE NORVELL: I think even in that game the other day, you see the opportunity. I mean, you see the opportunities for -- whether it's for the explosive, for the routine, whether it's -- but it's the -- we have to eliminate the self-inflicted issues. And I mean, whether the first -- I guess second, third down, we have the snap. We got -- we had a couple missed assignments of things ad nauseam that you go over and it's executed in practice and even when it's been a mistake, you go back and you hit again, and if it shows back up further then that's where you have to look at where is the disconnect. Is it focus? Is it understanding? Whatever that is. But as say -- somebody that has a history of being on the offensive side of the ball, you look, are we creating space, or we creating opportunity, numbers, leverage, those things that are important.

And then for guys, we had a couple explosive plays that got called back for whatever -- for holding penalty or we get, you know, dropped ball or a missed opportunity or something that's -- those are the things that we have to be able to finish on; and which you know, it's one thing if I had never seen them do it. But it's also, you've got to carry it over.

And you know, we are going to continue to adapt and adjust. Our performance on offense has not been good enough. But when you have those opportunities and you have the space, we've got to capitalize on that; and the play-making ability, which I do think we have, it's got to show up.

That's one of the things we'll continue to push towards but I do believe that it is there and I do believe there are capabilities of what it can be. We have a great challenge this week against a great defense to try to go put it into place, and that's what we'll work towards this week, and I'm excited to see our guys respond to it.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...