

# Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Tallahassee, Florida, USA

## Coach Mike Norvell

### Press Conference



MIKE Norvell: ... (in progress) especially will change this week, kind of adjusting our practice schedule just a little bit with the extra day.

But coming off the game Friday night, you know, obviously disappointing outcome. As I mentioned there after the game, just unfortunate.

Had some areas of growth and improvement that we saw in the game. Defensively I thought guys battled at a very high level. We were put in some challenging situations and were able to really do a good job of holding Duke's offense at bay.

I mean, I think it's under 200 yards total offense. I think we had eight three-and-outs, which is something that was really big for us. We talked about the importance of getting the ball back. Obviously want to see that in creating takeaways.

Obviously if you are getting three-and-out that's getting the ball back as quick as you possibly can, so something to really build upon. Was proud of our guys for how they played and definitely limited the big plays, and really the two explosives they had were some things that were self-inflicted that were opportunities for us to go and get better.

I thought special teams was outstanding. We had the first kickoff return for a touchdown this season for Sam Singleton. Great to see him as a redshirt freshman to go have that play. It was big for all the guys in that group.

We were able to execute a fake punt there to extend a drive. Had the blocked punt. So you saw a bunch of different phases. We did unfortunately have our first mishap in execution there on a field goal, but I thought the response was great by Ryan. Just shows his maturity, the player that he is, and what he's been able to do. Definitely very proud of him.

I thought Alex helped flip the field position and did a really good job in regards to that as well. So offensively, really

came down to the turnovers.

You know, I thought there were some good things that we were able to do there running the football, something we put a lot of time and work in there in the bye week. To see some of that come into play, there were some good seams, some good runs by backs. Obviously created a couple explosive plays.

We got to continue to work and build upon that. Had some opportunities there in the pass game. Obviously with both quarterbacks playing, I thought both guys really did some good things. I was proud of Luke when he came in. Thought he located the ball well.

Still some things that obviously just his first college action of being able to go in and see the speed, see the spacing, and just I thought he handled himself very well a lot of areas he's going to be able to continue and work and improve upon that.

Brock, the early turnovers were something that nobody wants, nobody is ever expecting to have. I mean, for that to happen on three consecutive plays was really tough.

But I thought he showed an unbelievable amount of maturity. I mean, I did expect there to be a time that he would be able to come back into the game. I thought he handled that really well and was able to kind of maintain his poise and go out there and do some good things there when he returned.

So for those guys, I mean, they're both so young in their careers, every rep, every opportunity you got a chance for great growth. We expect that here as this week progresses and as we continue to move forward.

We got to eliminate the missed opportunities with the dropped balls. I thought some of the penalties and perimeter blocking have got to be better. We just have to continue to improve on that because those are things that are absolutely hurting us and leaving points, leaving explosives out there on the field.

We got to capitalize on all those opportunities. You know, I

thought going into the game we knew Duke was going to be -- they were leading the country in TFLs. We know it's an aggressive, attack-style defense. We gave up two many sacks in the game. Some were protection issues. Some were obviously things where we can be better in getting the ball out our or creating separation and getting open in space for the ball to be able to come out on time.

So it's really kind of a big picture approach and just having to improve in that area. For this team, after the game obviously it was a disappointed locker room, but it's a locker room that cares about each other.

You know, I definitely am grateful for these guys and just the mindset that they've chosen to bring, and even in a difficult season that we found ourselves in.

We've earned where we are at. That's something that we can all hope and wish and want something different, but we are where we are right now. You know, we still get to make the choice of what we're going to do here moving forward.

I've seen a team that's chosen to fight. I've seen a team that's continued to invest and work. I'm grateful for that.

We came out yesterday and had practice. I thought it was a good workday. Obviously this is a huge week for our football program. I mean, this game is a game that we have an emphasis on 365 days a year, but we're fortunate to be at a place that you get -- we get two rivalry games every single year that mean a ton to our football program, our fan base, university.

And for those two weeks, I mean, it's a year-long process to put yourself in the best position for when this week shows up that you can go play your best. That's an absolute necessity for us this year as we get ready to kick it off and go on the road.

This is a team that's playing at a very high level. Undefeated this season. Top 10 ranking. I'm excited for what we have in front of us. It's going to be a great challenge but a great opportunity. I know our guys are excited for the chances to go down there and compete. I'm looking forward to a great week of preparation.

**Q. Luke having a few series on film in real game action, what can that do for him? When you guys watched the film, how did he respond to it? Does it change anything what you saw on that day in terms of how you'll approach things going forward?**

MIKE NORVELL: No, those guys are both going to continue to work, continue to prepare. That's what I think

showed for him, is that when he went out there he was ready for the moment.

I mean, there were still things that he immediately know even on the sideline before he had to watch it of areas where maybe it's his eyes or a drop or little things where he can be a little bit better.

But also he had some really nice plays. I mean, I thought he showed his toughness. The homerun post ball, couldn't have placed it any better. Had the ball on the sideline there in the two-minute drive. I was glad he got even one of those situations to have to go out there and compete and execute.

He stepped into pressure on one of those throws; took about as hard of a hit as you're going to take. You just see his presence. You see just very poised. Absolutely did not think the moment was too big for him.

But there are things he's going to grow exponentially from just by each rep he gets. He's got to continue to earn those opportunities. Got to continue to do what he's been doing.

You know, but I'm very proud of him for how he's been working to put himself in a position to go out there and to be able to execute and still knowing that there is things that we're going to be able to improve on now with that live game action.

**Q. Following up on that, will Luke have an opportunity to play this upcoming week? Will you rotate quarterbacks?**

MIKE NORVELL: We'll evaluate all things as we go into this week on that. You know, obviously like I said I was pleased with Brock and how he was able to respond coming back in the game; you know, obviously for Luke, what he was able to do. So those guys will continue to work. We're going to continue to push forward and every single one of us, we're going to go be better.

**Q. Coach, you mentioned the missed cues earlier. How disappointing was that off a bye week? A lot of those came from the veterans that were here last year. What do you tell the guys that were here before still making the same mistakes?**

MIKE NORVELL: You know, we got to take advantage of our opportunities. You know, I mean, as guys get out there and we need plays to be made and need guys to step up in that moment, you got to rely on all the things you've done.

It's not just coming off a bye week. The work this year, I

mean, it's a career. You got years of investment to put yourself in this position to be able to go out there and execute in the moment.

You look at Ja'Khi Douglas, someone I'm really pleased with. I think he's done an exceptional job being able to maximize his opportunities. He's somebody that we're continuing to try to showcase a variety of things that he can do.

But I'm really pleased with some of the steps he's taken, and it's been a career worth of work to be playing at very high level here at this stage in his journey.

Whether you're a freshman, senior, we all have our path. When you get to work you focus on those fundamentals, you focus on the details, you focus on the things that are a necessity to be able to go execute in a moment that needs to show up.

You're continuing to see younger guys that are working to gain more opportunities and they're having to take advantage of it there in practice, which are opening doors for what they'll have in the game.

Really for all of us, we got to -- you got to show up and be productive in the moment. It's something that for myself, coaches, everybody involved, we go through a plan, we go through our preparation, but we got to see that response.

I'm definitely expecting to see a positive step. But, yes, there is an absolute sense of urgency for those continued steps. And guys that have absolutely done it and done it at a high level, you know, some of it is mental. Some of it I do think is we're allowing maybe some of the external or sometimes even some of internal just to be able to affect performance.

We got to be able to relax and go out there and do what you have trained to do and perform like you have before.

**Q. Fourth quarter we saw Kam Davis get hit pretty hard low and Darius Washington got banged up. Any update on those two?**

MIKE NORVELL: We'll see. We'll evaluate how they progress throughout the week. Both those guys were back and getting evaluated with all things here this weekend. We'll see where they are as the week progresses.

**Q. Coach, you talked about it a little bit earlier, but some success with the run game. Do you feel like the offensive line is kind of finding ways to open those holes for these guys? I know I think it was the sixth offensive line change for you guys. Do I feel like they**

**stepped up and provided some gaps for these running backs to hit?**

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I thought they did some good things. I thought we were able to create a little bit of space. I thought the backs -- you know, because it is a coordinated approach. It's not just one position. I thought the tight ends did some good things throughout. The line, being able to create some space, and then the backs were really good in some of tracks they were able to run and the position they were able to put themselves in.

Had some good explosive runs. Really takes all levels. I thought the quarterbacks, when they had the opportunity to be able to pull the ball and be a threat, they showed to be able to do that.

So I think that's one of the things we got to be able to continue on as we're moving forward.

**Q. For whatever reason seems like Kam Davis a lot of times this season when he's been back there, he's facing defenders in the backfield. Hasn't always gotten even a clean opportunity. In that game seemed like when he had some changes seemed like he made some really nice runs. How much better has he got from the beginning of the season to where he is now?**

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I think Kam is one of those guys that being here in the spring, was able to gain a comfort within the offense of things we were being asked to do.

Kind of like we talked with the quarterbacks, with each rep you've seen the growth, the improvement, seen having to be able to react to a lot of different situations, whether it was somebody being on him quick.

And there are still, even throughout the early part of the year, he's had the chance to learn through some mistakes and then he's been able to see in this last game some of the benefits of that work.

You know, I really think that he's got a great future in front of him. It was nice to see him get out in the open field a little bit and make the guy miss.

You know, the thing I think stands out about Kam is when you watch him play, he's going to finish moving forward. It's a great trait to have there as a back. Excited to see him continue to get better.

**Q. Miami quarterback Cam Ward played a lot of football. There is a lot of film out there. What have you seen from him in the past, what have you seen from him this season in terms of growth what he's**

**done for that program?**

MIKE NORVELL: He's playing at an elite level. He is as good as any quarterback in the country. You see the confidence, the poise. He's able to extend plays. He's done a good job of being able to find receivers on rhythm and on time.

And then also if things break down, I think those guys have done a great job continuing to play throughout it. He's been able to locate them, and so he's playing as good as any quarterback that's out there.

So we know we got a great challenge in front of us this week. Like you said, he's played a lot of football and seen a lot of the different things. I think you see the confidence in what he's doing and how he's playing.

**Q. You kind of touched on it in the opening statement, but with this week being Miami week like you said with the rivalry that comes with that, with the way the season has gone how much more important is it this week to try and get that good result, and can that build some confidence for these guys, especially maybe some of the kids coming from South Florida to play here?**

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I mean, every week brings such value to what we're trying to do and accomplish. You know, we are disappointed with where we are sitting right now.

I mean, like I said, it's everything that's gone into it. It has a huge affect on our program, on the guys, just each experience. But when you come into this week, I mean, it's different.

I'm not one of those coaches that say every game is the same. No. I love these games. I love the fact we get to be a part of it. No matter what, people will remember this game. These players, the opportunity they have to compete in it, to be a part of it. We got a lot of players from South Florida, but I don't care where you're from. This game is the tradition, rivalry, you go back throughout all the years and no matter where you're from, the country is going to still be watching what happens in this game practice.

You know, definitely am excited for our guys, for the guys that are new to the program and maybe this is their first opportunity for them to go and have this experience. You know, excited to see our guys pour everything they have to go showcase the best of who we are and what we're all about.

**Q. You mentioned the dropped passes. It hasn't always been the same guys. It's been different guys. How many different things have you guys tried to do? Are there different approaches? What can you guys do to help them?**

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I mean, there has been a lot of I'd say extra work, different elements we're trying to tie into our drill work. Maybe trying to take the different things that have shown up that we feel maybe have resulted in that, whether it's taking your eyes off the ball, you're trying to make the next move, or making sure that we're snapping our eyes, keeping our hands together, catch the ball out front, above your eyes, all the different things that have showed up at some point throughout the course of that year.

We're trying to implement that within the drill work, but then it's taking that in the moment and being able to execute that. There is all different working mind, body, and soul to make sure we're finishing plays.

So we're trying to hit on all different aspects of it. Hopefully this is the week we're going to see that positive step in being able to finish plays.

**Q. Coach, offensively you're 2 for 14 on third down. But for Duke it says they were 3 for 17. What were you able to do defensively to get them off the field and what do you need to do on offense to start extending drives?**

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I think offensively you still look at too many long yardage situations we found ourselves in.

We I think, for whatever the reason, TFL, negative play, couple of penalties that showed up throughout the drives, I mean, we've got to be more consistent in being able to stay ahead of the chains and not put ourselves in those long yardage situations where teams can kind of tee off on us.

But then even in some of the short yardage situations where we weren't able to capitalize, I mean, we got to make sure that we're doing a good job, whether that's in the run game, keeping space, making sure that we're prepared and ready for all different elements of the run game, twists, blitzes, things like that. We got to make sure we execute there in the moment.

Because I mean, that's a huge component of what has kind of hindered us offensively, is our third downs have not been good enough. I mean, we've been probably one the worst in the country at that. We have to take the positive stepped to be able to execute in those situations.

And so defensively I thought it was a big step this past week. I thought our guys played at a very high level. You look at the plan that Duke had and being able to get the ball, whether it was protection or getting the ball out, they weren't going to sit back and hold the ball very long.

So I thought our defensive backs played at a very high level. Everything was contested. I want to say nine pass breakups and we got our hands on the ball, to the ball. And even though we didn't create any quarterback sacks, I thought that the pressure that we were able to put on the quarterback was something that was definitely a positive in those situations.

You know, just thought our guys executed at a very high level.

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