

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Mike Norvell

Press Conference



North Carolina 35, Florida State 11

MIKE NORVELL: Obviously very disappointing outcome. Congratulations to Carolina. They did a great job and really dominated the game in pretty much all phases, offense, defense, special teams. We have to be better than what we put on display today. I thought our guys, they worked in preparation but did not have the application for what I expected, what I anticipated seeing.

We talked about the importance of trying to establish and get the ground game going as well as the importance of having to stop the run against one of the most talented backs that we've played, and obviously that was something that we failed to do on both sides.

You look at 3rd downs, time of possession, it was extremely one-sided, and for us, even when we have those things, a positive play, a positive moment, just not being able to sustain that, to build upon that is something that's really hurt this team, and it's hurt us throughout the course of the year.

It showed up again today, and we've got to be able to have the explosive play or those game-changing plays to be able to flip either momentum, be able to build a little bit of momentum on our end or just continue to spark the confidence in what these guys are capable of.

We've just been pretty bad, obviously, in complementary football, and just not creating takeaways, obviously turning the football over, the 3rd downs, and really today in all aspects, the game really got away from us there.

I thought as we were about to make a spark, made it a 10-point game there in the third quarter, and then their drive down -- we have opportunities. We have guys in position to be able to go provide that spark, and we've just got to be better at finishing in that, and as I said, have to do a better job in every phase of us being a better football team than what we're putting on display.

Q. As you watched the guys throughout the week and

then on game day, do you think it's confidence that's shaken at this point --

MIKE NORVELL: Yes.

Q. What do you think is happening?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, I do. I think that just the response when there's a negative that shows up -- that was the thing that I was probably most disappointed in today was when there was a couple of negative plays that happened, just not seeing the spark, not seeing just that response that we're accustomed to, that we train for, that we emphasize.

I do think that the course of the season has shaken our confidence in a lot of ways. It's something you try to -- you guys are at practice. Some of the things that show up in the game -- we've got some young players that are playing. We've got mistakes that are made across the board. But a lot of it I do think is showing in the moment when you've got to believe and trust and have faith in those things that you've trained to do in that moment of truth on game day, that that's what shows up.

We've definitely not been consistent in that, whether it's a doubt, a hesitation. Those are the things that get magnified on that stage, and that's what you build for. That's what you work for.

I've been doing this long enough that I've seen the response from the challenges, and obviously I've seen carrying momentum when things have been really, really good, and right now we have to get that back because I do believe that we have got some really good players, I think guys that are very capable, and we're not showing consistently what that is within this team. Obviously that builds upon itself throughout the course of a game.

Q. Following up on that, you mentioned response. With all due respect, were you happy with the effort out of the guys today? Do you think they quit in the second half?

MIKE NORVELL: I don't think that they quit. I do think that



the confidence was -- I thought they got caught up in some of the negative things that happened. It's obviously disappointing. Like I said, that was one thing I was most disappointed in was just seeing that.

Q. North Carolina won the time of possession battle by nearly 20 minutes just not being able to get off the field. You mentioned some of those momentum plays. How demoralizing is it when these guys are going on these long drives for multiple minutes in the game?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, they were 11 of 16. I think they were close to 80 percent most of the game there on third downs. When you have opportunities, whether it's a one-on-one, whether it's a chance to have a sack, have a takeaway, those things, they change the dynamics of games.

When teams are able to sustain drives and do that, it has a huge effect. It has a huge effect on the number of plays that you're playing, the time of possession, field position, all those things. We had opportunities. We had opportunities on multiple 3rd downs to be able to get off the field, and we didn't. We weren't able to accomplish that throughout the night.

Q. You talked about you thought the players have lost a little confidence with a season like this, and I feel like I asked you this a few weeks into September, but you, somebody that's won so much and won so much last year, where is your confidence in where this can go and how much better it can be next year? Can you figure this out by the end of this season?

MIKE NORVELL: I absolutely believe in it. I've lived it. I've been through it. I've seen the highs and lows in the game of football, and hell, in the game of life, just to be honest with you. I know and believe in what can be done, how it can be done. I don't need a motivational speech or even an encouraging word. I don't care. It doesn't matter to me.

I know what it needs to look like. I know how you need to work. I know how you need to apply the lessons that are learned, and I damn sure know that I can do that, and I know that I can put together a team and a group that absolutely can respond to that, and we have not done a good enough job of that, and I do believe in those players in there.

I want extremely, extremely bad for them to be able to put on display what I know they're capable of. I've not done a good enough job of that, we've not done a good enough job, and in all reality they haven't done a good enough job. We're all accountable to this. But this all comes back to

me because I have the privilege of being the leader of this program.

But no, I absolutely -- am I pissed off about it? Yes. Can I tell you that I understand all things that I see on the field? Not all of it. There's some things that I just -- for whatever reason, it shows up in the moment. Even some of the responses that I get of the why, those things, there's some challenges that have showed up in that regard. But when it comes to my confidence, I absolutely believe.

I've been knocked down before. I've been a part of losing streaks. I've been a part of challenging times, injuries, things that you've faced. I know how to rise up out of that, and I fully believe that we're going to, and I fully believe there's going to be a lot of guys in that locker room that are going to be leading the charge when it comes to that.

But we've got to be better now in this moment. You can sit there and talk about what's ahead and what's in front of us. I really just care about today, and today we failed. That did not show up. Lord willing, I get to wake up tomorrow and I'm going to promise you I'm going to put everything I have into getting it fixed and better for tomorrow. If we will do that, we will accomplish what we're capable of accomplishing with the day. You build a little bit of confidence on that, you take that, you apply that for the next one, you get a little bit better. That's the process of it. It's not a secret way or method. You just have to show up every day, be willing to pour everything out to get what you desire and be true to who you are.

I mean, the circumstance of our record, it's not going to change who I am. I know why I do what I do and I understand how to do that at a very high level. I've experienced that through my entire life. You know what, even when you're doing it at a high level, it doesn't mean that the results are always going to be exactly what you desire, but your response to that is what has to show up, because that's where your character, that's where your belief, that's where -- obviously the talent that you have as players and just -- that's where that gets to be put on display. That's what I'm going to focus on, that's what I'm going to continue to work to do, and we're going to push forward, and we will have this program back to where it's supposed to be in a very short time.

But apologies don't -- it is what it is. I'm sick for everybody that has to watch what we put on display because they deserve better, and so do those kids, to be honest with you. So do the coaches, too.

For the reasons that have -- the reasons that it's showed up and as disappointing as it is, we've got to take ownership of it. It's my job to get it fixed.

Q. You won the toss and took the ball. Is that trying to breed some confidence into the offense or did you think the offense would have a big day today?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, I wanted to try to get out and see if we could put ourselves in a position to play from the front. I have confidence in what I believe we can do and what I believe we can accomplish. So yes, it's a little bit different than what I normally do, but today I wanted to try to hopefully be able to provide a spark by being able to get ahead and see if we could stack some positive plays.

We did get an early lead with a long field goal from Ryan, but we haven't been great in the answers. When we've scored, we've given up a score. When we've gotten a stop, we haven't been able to go down and score. We've played awful complementary football throughout the year, and things that you need to do to be able to win games, we're not doing.

Q. You've been very thoughtful and deliberate about how you've built this program, and this staff has been with you for five years. Reassigning a guy or relieving a guy of his duties in season, is there value in that, or is that just something you're not comfortable doing as a head coach?

MIKE NORVELL: I think when you go through the year, we all have jobs, we all have responsibilities, and my number one is to make sure I'm doing everything I can for the players that we have to put them in a position to be successful. If I feel that the best thing to do is to make a change because a leader has a negative effect on a player, if a leader is -- if it's one of those issues or if, like I said this past week, if I see the pull-back -- we all have to answer to ourselves, and at the end of the day, each player, each coach, what are you pouring into it, what are you pouring into the program, your performance, the things that are ahead, and if I felt that that is what's in the best decision -- if I feel like that's in the best part of the program because of a negative effect to a player, then obviously I'd make the change.

I'm evaluating everything. I've already evaluated a lot of things. I care about these players. I care about this year. I care about this game that we got to play today. I obviously care about the one that's here this next week. It's my job to make sure that everything I'm doing can help put our players in the best position, and if that means requiring a change, then we'll make the change. If that means that we continue to pour in and invest and try to work to get better, then that's what we're going to do.

But I'm evaluating all things.

Q. I'm sure you heard the boos today. What is your message to fans and boosters about why they should keep believing in this program even if it seems like they're starting to check out?

MIKE NORVELL: Well, I really didn't hear them, so I would just -- I know everybody is frustrated. I'm frustrated. At the end of the day, we work really hard to be able to try to represent the program the way it deserves to be, and we have not accomplished that in the way that we play.

We've got to respond to that. We have to continue to believe. We've got to be able to push forward. When you're a fan or somebody that comes to observe the game, you want to see things done a certain way, and you can have big feelings about it. Our fan base, we've got a great fan base, and we've got one that's extremely passionate. Ultimately I'm sure it's not the first time that a team or players have had that happen to them. I know it's happened to plenty of guys that became some of the greatest players here in Florida State history. They get celebrated at that point.

Our job is to go be better so that we can put ourselves in a position for these guys to be the best that they can be, and the rest of it is going to take care of itself.

The belief in what's ahead, that is a choice that you get to have. You can speak victory into it or you can go the other way. But if you truly care about something -- anybody can point to the problem or talk bad about it, but what good does that do to help the individuals that are going through it.

The motivation of not getting it, fine, but what's built this program and what's going to continue to build this program is the belief in what it can be and obviously the people that are part of it and what we get to represent.

I pour my heart into that. I believe in that. This is one of the greatest places in the United States of America because of the fan base, because of who we represent and what we get to do, and that passion -- yes, I understand. Some of the things we put on the field deserve to be. That's all part of this game, and it's all part of it.

But when it comes to belief, that is a choice that people get to make. But I absolutely know and believe in where we're going, and we will get it done.

Q. You had mentioned change as well as team and player confidence, does that have any correlation in the quarterback changes that we saw mid-game, and was there anything specific you told Luke when he

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

was sent in on the first and the second quarterback change?

MIKE NORVELL: I think as that's going through the game, trying to help these guys, Luke was limited this week coming into it. He wasn't able to get the full week of all practice in some aspects, and there's still some uncertainty of just what availability would be even as we got to later in the week.

But I thought his approach into the preparation, his approach into obviously what we're doing, the way that Brock is continuing to pour and invest, I thought he had a couple good drives that showed up.

These guys, they're two young and very talented quarterbacks. They have a lot of incredible traits about them, and I've really enjoyed how they've worked together in trying to prepare and trying to go out there and execute with the opportunities that they have.

When I tell them to go out there and I tell them to trust their eyes and trust their feet and try to make the best decisions based off the things that you've prepared and the things that you've done, that's what we work to get accomplished.

There's some good and there's some bad, and some of it's on them and some of it's other positions that have to continue to be better.

There's times we had great protection tonight and we didn't get separation or release off the ball, and the quarterback has to hold it. There were times we had bad protection and we had opportunities to be able to capitalize down the field, and then there was a couple times that our eyes could be better and just rhythm and timing of where we're going with the ball, and really when you look at all those things, it is -- we've had a lot of different moving pieces. The fact that we had our eighth different starting offensive line group this season, which nobody ever wants to do, nobody ever wants to have to experience, but we're down three running backs. We've had multiple guys that have gone down when it comes to that.

We've got to have more consistency, and with some of the receivers that are getting opportunities, it's the consistency of that performance, of being able to go out there and make the play when you have the opportunity but also creating that separation and being there when we need you.

Q. With all that stuff on offense not clicking, how difficult does it make to properly evaluate your quarterback play and then when they're coming off the field, as well, is it concerning at all when Brock and Luke are telling you what they're seeing on the field

when you're talking to them when they're coming off the field?

MIKE NORVELL: Obviously there are some difficulties in evaluation, and to be able to hear them, what they see, and sometimes they see the right thing and for whatever reason we weren't able to execute because maybe another position or an issue that showed up. It's the growth and the confidence that, hey, you've got to be prepared, you've got to be ready, you've got to do your job, take care of the things that you see, be great with your rhythm and timing, and then when you get the opportunity, deliver the ball where it needs to be or make the right read or the right check, whether it's in the run game or whatever that might show up.

For us, it's part of teaching guys. It's part of helping them grow. They're both getting in-game live experience that if you sit there and you watch this game, it's a tough position to play when you have a lot of great things happening around you. It's still a tough position to play as a freshman. When there's challenges, when there's inconsistency, when some of those things have shown up for our offense, it makes it really difficult.

But these guys are tough. They are absolute winners. They're about the right things. They're going to continue to work and they're going to continue to push and get better, and they're going to continue to be great quarterbacks.

Q. Obviously Hampton is a great back, but he had a big day last week, ran the ball really well. Talking to Coach Fuller and the staff, are there things that you guys can still try, or do you think it's personnel issues in terms of trying to stop the run?

MIKE NORVELL: We had our opportunities, and there's times that we're in position and we've got to be able to make the play. We've got to be able to get the guy down. When you play defense, you've got to fit and win your gap. When it comes to the run game, that's a huge part of it.

If you're removed out of your gap, then that's something that's technique, fundamental or ability, one of the three things that have to show up. If it's in the open field and it's your place to fit, once again, it comes down to the one-on-one. You see that in all parts of it, and it's our job to help teach, train, develop for those one-on-one situations, and we've seen that applied well at times, but obviously it's also cost us at times when we've missed those opportunities.

That's something that we're continuing to push, and there's times that it comes down to technique and fitting and making sure that -- then there's times we try to be

aggressive and force pressure into it. Whether you're blitzing right into the play, you've still got to go make it and you've got to make sure that you're putting yourself in the right position to finish it, and obviously it's our job as coaches to do the best that we can to put our guys in the best match-ups, the best situations, and then all of us working together to accomplish what we're setting out. Obviously we've not done that well enough in the run game.

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