

Florida State University Football Media Conference

Monday, November 4, 2024

Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Mike Norvell

Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Good morning. Appreciate everybody being here today. Coming off Saturday, much like I said in postgame, disappointing outcome, disappointing performance. Really all three phases had elements of opportunities, but obviously not the results necessary to be able to achieve success.

Carolina did a good job in their game plan and their execution and won the game in really all three phases, for what we needed, what we set out to accomplish, and just did not play or coach well enough in that game to be victorious.

Obviously with that, you continue to evaluate, learn, work to grow. We still have three games left in the season, and you have an opportunity to go and get better, and that is my sole purpose, my sole focus is for everything that we have, for these players that I get to coach, to go pour everything I have into them, to make sure that we are taking positive strides and steps to improvement.

Each individual has ownership of action. Each individual has to make the choice of the investment of what's being poured in, and then obviously the application of whether it's the things we're asking guys to do in practice or whether it's the application of schemes, of the application of things that are necessary for us to go play complementary football to achieve victory.

We've not done that throughout the course of this season, and we've had plenty of circumstances that have showed up. That was our eighth different starting offensive line, lineup that we've had in nine games. We've had two more starters that were out, which obviously had an effect, but ultimately it's opportunities for other guys, young guys to get their chance to show and to be able to go out there and compete, put their best on display, and we just have not been consistent enough across the board on really either side of the ball for what is expected and what we need to be.

All of our focus and work goes into today, and obviously we came back, we practiced yesterday, we went to work

jumping into this week. We have to go on the road against another really good opponent, and we're going to go put everything we have into putting ourselves in the best position to achieve success this week, and that is our focus as a team and the focus of every individual a part of the program.

Q. Seemed like in some of these games, particularly the Miami game, it felt like the defense kind of gave you guys a chance to try to figure things out on offense. This week it seemed like both sides of the ball faltered. Do you think the offensive struggles have taken their toll on how the defense is playing?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, no. Each side of the ball is independent of itself. We have not played good complementary football throughout the course of the year, and you go back and you look at it, our success after offensive scoring drives has been really, really poor. We haven't gotten three-and-outs. We've given up scoring drives as a result after an offensive score which obviously you need to be able to in those moments try to build upon the momentum. After a team scores, we have not responded well offensively like we need to.

When you look at it, we just haven't been able to build upon the momentum on either side when we've had opportunities to make plays. There was three different times where I thought we had a chance to intercept a pass on Saturday, and there was multiple times on 3rd downs we had a chance to be able to get off the field, and we did not make the play or execute there in the moment in critical situations for what was necessary.

I don't think that one side of the ball has something to do with the other because ultimately it's just you've got to go out there and you've got to play the game. Everybody's performance is theirs, and you've got to own it. There were some good moments for individuals. There were some positive things that you can draw from it throughout the contest, but then there were some things that are unacceptable and that we have to be better at.

You have to take ownership of what the action was, whether it was a play call, whether it was something that



you did as a player on the field that was not to the best of your ability. Sometimes it's a technique, a fundamental, an opportunity to make a play to finish in the moment, and that's what we all have to own, and we have to go and grow and be better. That's the focus.

Q. With the amount of young players that you've played this season, how important is it going to be for the future of the program to continue to get solid constructive reps with them but then to be able to retain them and keep building with them for the future?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, for us it's every play, every day, every practice is critical for each player on our team, but especially those young guys that are getting opportunities in game. You've got to be able to build upon it.

I think these guys have done a nice job in their approach in how they've come to practice, how they've come to work in terms of trying to understand the areas that maybe they need a bigger emphasis in their growth, and some of it's just going to be physical, mental, just continuing to adjust to the speed of what you see on a Saturday.

But I am excited about that young group. You look at really the last two classes, those guys that are either freshmen, redshirt freshmen or the true sophomores, we've got a lot of really good football players in that group, and those are going to be guys that I absolutely believe - as I spoke on Saturday - they're going to be a part of our response as a program for what we're going to do and what we're going to be able to accomplish.

Everybody is at a different place in their journey, and some of those guys are playing a lot. Some of those guys have yet to play. But really excited about those two groups of what we're able to put together in those classes. It's critical for their continued development that they just every day stay focused on what they can control and maximize any opportunities that they do get.

Q. From a purely physical standpoint, was Saturday up to the standard you want, and with Notre Dame, how much of a challenge is that? Obviously they play pretty hard-nosed football.

MIKE NORVELL: There were times in the game where I did not like the physicality that we put on display. I think there were some good moments. There were times that we were playing very physical but had maybe a lapse in judgment of whether it was a gap to fit or maybe trying to do too much that opened up a seam or an opportunity for our opponent.

But there were definitely plays that going back and seeing

them on Saturday that I was displeased with, and then obviously going back and watching it on film, that's where we are in control of that. For each player -- I told the team yesterday, there is an expectation of what it needs to look like and making sure that you put everything that you have into each play, even if it is after a negative. There's going to be times you might get beat on a play. You might have something that you didn't desire, you didn't want to happen to you. But Lord willing, you get one more play, what's it going to look like and how are you going to respond in that situation.

I know we talked a little bit after the game about just the confidence of some of our players and really in some aspects just our team. It's been a challenging year in a lot of ways when it comes to that. These guys, they deal with a lot of different things externally, internally within their own mind of what they want it to look like, and at times when it doesn't, that's where you've got to stay true to who you are. You've got to stay true to what you believe and just put everything that you have into controlling the next thing that you can, and that's the next rep, the next play, the next practice, the next day that you have of putting everything in and just going to get better.

I do think there's been times where that's been shaken a little bit, and just to say pull-back hesitation, that's showing -- I think that hesitation has shown up in not wanting to have the negative or not wanting to have that experience. That's where you have to kind of move past that.

Nobody is in a place where we want to be right now, but you get an opportunity to go play this game, get an opportunity to go and compete, get an opportunity to get better, and that's what I'm obviously demanding and expecting to see in all things that we're doing.

Q. You only had eight completions against UNC, only 11 against Miami the week before. Are there ways you guys can scheme up easier completions to get the pass game going, and then along with that, are you still confident in running the two-quarterback system throughout the rest of the season?

MIKE NORVELL: You know, obviously our completions, being able to have some balance in what we're doing and being able to get the passing game going, there's a lot of different elements that have showed up that's kind of limited that here the last couple weeks. There's been times where it's been lack of separation in routes or just some of the finer details of what we're trying to do when it comes to spacing and getting the ball out.

There's been protection issues. There's been times that we've not been on time where we need to be, where



maybe our eyes haven't been exactly where they need to be when it comes to the efficiency of the passing game.

We all get to take a part of that, and obviously as coaches, it's our job to put guys in a position to be able to go and to be able to get in rhythm and to be able to go out there and to be able to execute.

With the quarterbacks, I think both those guys have shown moments and flashes of potential. Like I said last week, Luke was limited and really a little unknown certainty of just availability for the game, and so that was a part of his week. But I think Brock did some good things in the game, vertically pushing the ball down the field. There was obviously some plays that he'd like to have back in the game and some missed opportunities, and obviously Luke had his -- there were some challenging moments for him and a couple of really good moments.

For those guys, there's a lot of different factors when it comes to our offense, where they can be better, where they can obviously continue to grow, and then the people surrounding them have to continue to support that and help that position when we get an opportunity. To be able to have balance in the run game, be getting that established will obviously open up more opportunities there in the passing game, but yeah, it's for sure something that we need to be more efficient in in our passing game.

Q. You mentioned that you've been evaluating things and trying to figure out not just focus on now but also look ahead to the future. What would you say to the fans who maybe have already bought tickets for the last few games at home but it's still an expense and it's still an effort to come up here and to buy tickets in packages for next year because they don't know what your plans are? How do you expect them to believe that you're going to make changes or do whatever you're going to do when they can't see it yet?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, everything we're doing right now is to give our players this year for the games that they're coming to here at our next two home games is to do everything we can to go put ourselves in a position to win, to be successful, to pour into these players, to give them an opportunity to go put on display the best of who they are and what they're about.

I do believe in that group, and it's been a really tough season. I mean, like I said, for our fan base, I understand the frustration. There's no fan that's more frustrated than I am. There's nobody that's pouring more into what these players and this program than what our staff is, and I'll watch the work, and has it been good enough, no, it hasn't. We haven't had the results that any of us desire or what

needs to be expected here.

But we are going to pour all that we have into making sure for these games, to finish the season, it's the best that we've got and we put ourselves in a position to go achieve success in these next three games. It all starts going on the road this week.

On the flipside of it, I am aware of where we are, the things that have happened, some of the things that I'm evaluating throughout the course of the season, evaluating over the course of the last few years of, one, why did this happen, why have we come up short, and then what are the issues and what can be done, changed, addressed, all of it, that's going to allow us to take a monumental step here this next year and for the future of the program.

I do believe, and the guys that are in that locker room do believe in the potential of what we have. We've got to do a better job of making sure that the application of the things that we work, the things that we train, the things that we do, that the evaluation of the positions we're putting guys in and sometimes the guys that we have, where can we improve that.

All those factors are going to, I guess, continue to be evaluated, and then I can tell you that there's going to be -- there's going to be a change in what we've seen from this year to this next year coming up.

But right now my entire focus is going to be on what's ahead for these next three games, to go be the best we can be.

Q. A few injury questions. How is Justin Cryer? I know that looked pretty serious on Saturday. Then Maurice, I don't know what his status is coming into the week, if you think you might have him available again this week.

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, Justin, preliminary was probably a little bit better than what I feared, just being out there on the field with him. But it's going to be -- he'll be out this week, and we'll see what the extent of that is for the long-term. But definitely a scary situation, going out there and being with him.

But there was -- preliminary diagnosis and things that we've seen is a little bit better than what it could have been. Obviously it's still something that we'll work through with him as it moves forward, and then with the guys that missed the game this last week, we'll continue to evaluate them as we jump into this week and hopefully have an opportunity to get those guys in -- Maurice and Rob were unavailable for the game, and we'll see what that looks like

here this week.

Q. You talked about the quarterbacks. How hard is it to even evaluate how well they're playing in the game if things aren't going well around them?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, it's really -- to me, I'm watching them. I know what they're being asked to do. You see the intent. You see the things that they can control and how they are executing that. They don't control receiver separation. They don't control protection all the time. There are some things in the sacks that we gave up the other day, there were two that are on run-pass reads that one could have made a better decision, and another one we didn't get any separation and didn't win a one-on-one and the quarterback held the ball and got sacked.

There were also a couple times where you have coverage opportunities and things that we can move better or just be on time and on rhythm, and then there's times we just got beat up front.

You look for the quarterbacks, saying, all right, are you controlling the things that you can control, and there's been a lot of plays really from both those guys where they have made something happen when maybe there wasn't much there, and they've been able to create either an explosive play or they've been able to generate a positive, and then there's still, like I said, times where they get to grow and they get to be better and they get to see the importance of maybe the efficiency of a drop or where they're starting their eyes or going through a progression and just all those things for a young quarterback, those can be monumental steps for them as they build in that confidence.

But it's really just -- you've got to control the things that you can control. I get a pretty good evaluation of them. Obviously we haven't done well offensively, so sometimes you've got to look past the immediate result to what are they being asked to do to evaluate that position. I definitely have been proud of the work those guys have put in, and I think they're both very talented young men.

Q. You mentioned your optimism overall and how you know what this team is capable of and you see some good things at practice. Week to week, how surprised are you at where you guys are, or if you would have known in July that you were going to have this offensive line that was constantly going to have change and receivers that couldn't get separation, would that have made sense if you're going to be dealing with that stuff to be where you're at or would you have had faith in the talent and the coaches you have to overcome those challenges?

MIKE NORVELL: One, I am shocked in where we are. It was not expected.

You look at some of the results that we've faced, you look at some of the circumstances that have shown up. You go into a season and you have a picture in your mind of what things are going to look like. I'm not blind to it. I'm optimistic but I also know challenges. Anybody that asked before the season my concerns, it's what was it going to look like in the moment when things went well or when things didn't go well.

We have a very talented group that left this past year. A lot of those guys are showing that they were really good players in the moment and guys that have been very productive for us in the past that are now in new roles and new opportunities and new supporting cast of guys that are there next to them.

I don't think we've handled the negative or the defeat well in being able to bounce back from that, and I thought there's been a lot of times where we've had guys that have been pressing. We've had a good number of injuries and we have two of our top three running backs coming into the season were done for the year after a couple games.

We had a couple playmakers that we expected that would have good seasons here last January that are not available. I mean, obviously the challenges that we've had on the offensive line and some of the injuries we've had, it's hard to maintain continuity there, and some parts of it we just haven't been good enough.

It really has been shocking some of the things that have kind of evolved throughout this season as we've experienced defeat, as we've lacked the progression of what anybody wants to see.

But it's one of those things that I don't always have the answer on why some of these situations or circumstances occurred, but you continue to go to work. You continue to try to put guys in the best position. It does look different than what I anticipated. If you know all the challenges that are going to show up at the back end of it, would you do a couple things different? Would you look at a couple different schemes or things that you can plug in? Yeah, of course. But that's part of going through the process of a season, and obviously it's not gone very well for us and just the different elements that have showed up.

Q. Looking at two guys, L.T. and Ja'Khi, who have been here -- only a handful of guys have been here the whole time. Obviously I'm sure this isn't how they imagined their last season going, yet they're still out there making plays. What's that say about them and

how much can they be an example you point to for the younger guys of what you're looking for?

MIKE NORVELL: Well, those guys care. I'll tell you, for as bad as our record is and as bad as the results have been, I feel our team and the care that they have for each other. I see it in their work and I see the investment of the coaches pouring into our players and trying to connect with them where they are and just to help them go and work to be better.

Like I said, for players, coaches, none of it, it hasn't translated the way we want it to to that level, but it's a willingness to continue to invest. For those guys -- and I love them. They came in in that first class, and they've been a huge part in helping the positive -- winning 19 games in a row, winning an ACC Championship and all of that. Even through the negative of what is now their senior year of a result, they are pouring their hearts into this program. They're pouring their hearts into each other.

It's a great example for those young players, and it's something that -- being a part of a team, it is special. Sometimes when you face the disappointing results, you get to show just the amount of care that you have by what you're willing to continue to invest on a daily basis, and those guys have been remarkably consistent.

You've had guys that have joined the program even here a year ago. You look at guys like Malik, Sione. Those guys are putting it on the line. They've only been here for a year, and in each game and each practice, it's definitely something that I'm proud of those guys. Even though they're only going to have a year with us, they're still making that investment on a daily basis and they're pouring into the younger players that have their careers still in front of them.

But every day counts, and every day and every moment matters, and those relationships are important because they're going to last them the rest of their lives.

Q. You mentioned earlier making changes in the off-season. Does a new recruiting calendar with the early signing period getting moved up affect when you make those changes, or how does the beginning of the off-season change for you now?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, obviously we're going to have signing day the week after the season ends. For us, every game, every day, we're recruiting. We're having those conversations with guys that are committed to us. We're having conversations with guys that we're going after.

Man, we're putting everything that we have into the growth

for this program. Obviously it's all going into the players that we have to finish this season and then it's a focus on where we're going and who we're doing it with moving forward.

We've got a really good group of guys that are going to be a part of that here in this next class, and obviously as we continue to identify those newcomers and those guys that are going to be joining the program, it's all about having the real conversations of some of the things that they can expect and what we're going to expect out of them.

It's all part of the process of how we're working through the end of the season and preparing for what's ahead once it's over.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

