

Florida State University Football Media Conference

Monday, November 11, 2024

Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Mike Norvell

Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Good morning, everybody. Appreciate you being here. We'll just start off today, just want to give a special thank you to all the veterans out there here on Veterans Day, just for their service to our country, for the work and the sacrifices that are poured in from themselves, and the time and investment that helps allow us to have the freedoms to do all the things that we get to do here in this wonderful country. To all the veterans, definitely appreciate you, and it's great to be able to celebrate the work that you have put in and all the investments into our country.

To Coach Pensky and the soccer team, just so very excited for the ACC Championship there yesterday. Obviously a great day, and just an incredible season. That's not done yet, but definitely want to congratulate that team and the way that they've worked and responded throughout the course of the season to finish as ACC champions. Definitely proud of them.

Coming off the weekend, it's been a really hard weekend. Obviously from the game, I told you afterwards, extremely disappointing, to the performance, how we played. It was a game that we had our moments, we had our opportunities early, and then kind of snowballed on us there in the second half, and the game got away.

I thought even going back watching the film, I did not question our players' effort. I thought they played hard. They tried to fight throughout it. But ultimately were not good enough in our performance, and that's in all three phases, everybody involved in the program.

Yesterday with the decision to change with the three coaches, obviously, it's hard. Those are great men, and they're great coaches. Obviously this season and where we are is not to the standard of anyone, and in all reality not to the standard of them, either.

But the decision to make the change was one that I deemed was best for the program, and obviously we are going to bounce back. We're going to bounce back quickly. Obviously it's my job and my task to make sure

that whatever we need to do to help accelerate that process and to continue to pour into these players for the next three weeks -- this week being a bye week and the next two games, we have to do that.

Had a team meeting last night. Did not have practice. Was able to inform the team, and then we had meetings on both sides of the ball and kind of refocused for what these three weeks need to be.

This week is going to be a week about work, as I mentioned after the game, and we've got to go get better. We have some guys that need to get their bodies healed up and ready to go play their best for the next two contests, and then obviously all of our focus is on that.

For me, there is obviously the task of what will be next when it comes to the leadership on both sides of the ball and what we're doing there, so obviously I'll have some kind of a split role, especially this week as we're kind of going through, have some preliminary plans, and obviously it's been a season full of evaluation as we've gone through it, and I'm going to continue to do everything I can to pour into these players but also make sure that we're doing the due diligence and identifying the right fit for Florida State as we're moving forward.

With that, I'll take questions.

Q. Talk about the decision to make the coaching changes now and how you ultimately went about making this decision.

MIKE NORVELL: Obviously there's never a good time or a right time to do that, but I felt like it was a time that was necessary for us, and I felt it was in the best interest for our program, and that's why I decided to make that decision there yesterday.

Ultimately it's still about the focus of what we can do to go finish the season the best that we can. The results have not been to what anybody expected, but we are where we are, and I made the choice to make a change, and it was what I felt was the right time to do it.

Q. You talked to some of the players, but how did they react to that, and what was their thought process in moving forward?

MIKE NORVELL: Well, it's a hard day. Anytime there's change, and you couple that with it's change because of results and the results on the field. There's joint accountability to that. It's players, coaches, everybody involved. It got real yesterday. Three great men that have poured a lot into this program, their families -- I love their families. They poured a lot into this program. Each of these guys have had that relationship.

It's hard for them. It's hard for everybody. But at the end of the day, we all still have a task and we have responsibilities of what we need to be and what we need to do from here, and for our team it's to come together, it's to control the things that we can control and our work, our effort, our improvement.

Even though those three coaches won't be here, I still have an obligation to them. I have an obligation to them to make sure that everything that we're doing, all the work that they poured in over the last five years, Ron being here for six years, that it's continuing to build upon where our program is going, even though they're not going to be a part of it. There's a lot of effort that they've poured into it, too.

We all have responsibilities, and for this university, for this program, for our fan base, it is with every part of my spirit and being to get this right, and we're going to get it right. We're going to bounce back. We're going to be on track to where we need to be going.

Message to the players and message to everybody around the program is that their best is going to be required. There can be plenty of circumstances that arise, and we see it through the course of games, you see it through the course of life. Sometimes you don't necessarily feel good about what's happened. It doesn't always work out the way you want it to, but you still get to make choices.

Our choice now is to go fight for our improvement, to believe in each other, to believe in what the standard and the expectation is to be a part of this program because there will be no letup, and there will be no pull-back. It doesn't matter who it is.

To be a part of this program, there's going to be one way that we're operating moving forward, and I can promise you, it's going to be with everything that I've got and all those that surround me.

Q. Coach, as you're aware, early signing period is just a few weeks away. What will be your plan? What will

be your message to recruits right now with obviously some vacancies in the coaching staff to try to hold those kids and also recruit ones that are not committed yet?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, obviously a lot of communication last night. I was able to -- I think I was able to connect with every commit in this class, guys that are our top targets, and one guy whose phone was not available in the younger class. But I've touched base with all of those guys.

You spend a lot of time building relationships, and there's times that when those roles are -- positions change, it's hard for kids, but they also understand all the things that are in store for them and the opportunity that's here has not changed. It's just about being able to share as much as I can with them, just the vision for what's ahead. We all know the expectation. Nothing has changed with that, from all the things they've done in the recruiting process.

But these are not the results that they've wanted, either, and obviously I think a lot of the guys that we have, they're either committed or guys that are our top targets, they're going to be part of that spark. They're going to be those difference makers that we've talked about throughout the course of the year that I think can come in and be able to put their stamp on this program.

We've seen it before, and we saw it a few years ago when we were coming off a couple of underwhelming seasons on the field. Guys have made a choice. They've said I want to go and I want to be a part of and I want to help spark the change, and they did. You got to lift a championship trophy. You got to win 19 games in a row, I think the second most ever in program history. You got to experience a lot of good things. A lot of those guys are now playing in the National Football League and benefitted from that choice.

We've got guys that are in this program that are freshmen and redshirt freshmen and true sophomores, some guys that have already come in and been able to play that were a part of that, part of those decisions, and even though right now they might not be physically and some of them even mentally where they need to be to make that play-in-and-play-out impact, they're going to be great players here. It's just trusting that development, trusting the process of what people talk about of just going to get better.

We've got older guys that obviously get to continue to push and work to lead and work to inspire the guys that are around, and like I said, it's a choice for all of us. We're going to bounce back, and the messaging and even how it

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was received last night and how it's going to be continued to be reiterated throughout these next few weeks, I mean, it's just all going to be real.

The real ones will show up, and I'm very confident in that.

Q. The release mentioned that Randy will handle DC duties in the interim. Who will handle OC duties as well as O-line coaching and receiving duties?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, obviously having a couple spots there, we're going to work collectively as a team in that regard. Obviously with Gabe, he's kind of assumed that role there earlier in the season in the absence of Alex, so he will continue to be kind of the key and point there on the O-line, and then at receiver, Guy will kind of handle things day-to-day. He's been working with that group, but then also Austin Tucker. We've got obviously a great coach in Coach Stockstill that will be able to help where we're down a couple of coaches. He's going to be around and involved and helping the majority of positions. But got a great background there, as well.

I've got a lot of confidence in the coaching staff that we have and what we're going to be able to do over these next few weeks. Everybody's responsibilities, it's kind of a heightened sense of importance because there might be a little bit more crossover for guys and making sure you're connecting with the players, make sure that we're meeting them where they are, and then obviously doing all the things necessary for us to go out there and be our best these next two games.

Q. With the early signing period so early, do you have a timeline for coaches, hires? Is it realistic to get some in place before then?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I have a desire. I'd love to say that December 1st would be a great day to finish the season and -- but how real is that going to be? Obviously I want to respect everybody as they're going through their process, guys playing in championship games. We're going to respect the process of what that could be.

Got even a very short period of time, had some tremendous interest in positions and roles even from guys at the next level. We're going to evaluate all things just to be right. Obviously we want to make sure that in all decisions that we want to be able to expedite the process as much as we can, but as long as it's right -- and would it be good for guys on signing day to know exactly who's going to be in place? Yes. But I'm going to communicate as much as I possibly can with the guys that are committed to us, the guys that -- kind of where that journey has taken us, and we'll make the best decision when the time is right.

Q. Do you foresee a scenario where you're interested in an OC and an OC is interested in you and there's a conversation about is it my offense, is it your offense? Do you see a scenario where you bring in an OC and it's his offense?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, I would say yes to all. All those conversations are real. I'm open to -- we haven't been good enough offensively this year. It's been awful. We all know it. We've all watched it. There's been plenty of reasons for that, and there's been plenty of things that we have to improve and be better. But my job is to evaluate every part of our program, what we're doing, how we're doing it, and then make the best choice of what's going to -- where are we going to take the biggest steps obviously as fast as possible to be able to go be what I know we're capable of becoming.

So yes to all questions. I will evaluate all those things, and everything is on the table.

Q. On the other side of the ball, looking at defense, are there traits or experiences you're looking for with the next defensive coordinator?

MIKE NORVELL: Yes. I've got a plan in place for what -- you don't make decisions like this, to this scope, without having an idea of what it is that you are looking for, what are the areas where I think we can continue to improve and support our players and highlighting the guys that we have and also highlighting the guys that we're going to go get.

I do have a plan in that. Don't want to get into too many specifics at this time. But yes, I've got a picture of what that's going to be.

I've been fortunate throughout my career, I've had to hire a lot of coaches, and very few times have I had to hire coaches because of the situation that we're in now. Usually it's been from guys getting promotions and other opportunities that have presented itself. But I know what it looks like.

Even coming here, the guys that have been here for the last five years and some guys that have joined in throughout this journey, we've had some really, really good coaches, and they've proven themselves throughout the time, and unfortunately this year has not been good enough.

Tough decisions have had to be made, and those guys are going to go on and have great careers in their own right. But I would say there's a ton of focus, investment and belief in what we need to be and where we're going.

I'm going to rely on what I know, and there will be absolutely no change to the character and the characteristics of what I think it is to be -- what's necessary in great coaches. That's what we're going to be able to provide for our players. Guys are going to impact them not only on the field and helping them grow and develop but also help them develop into the men they're going to be. That's going to be a key figure in that profile. Yes, the on-the-field development, absolutely critical, but if they're not about their hearts, if they're not about helping them in their journey of life, probably not going to be somebody that is going to go very far in that process.

Q. Obviously yesterday was an emotional day. If you could share the reactions and emotions from the three coaches that you let go.

MIKE NORVELL: You know, I'm not really going to go into that. I love those guys, and every one of them I was five plus years with. So it's hard. I don't go into it just like, hey, I'm the CEO of the football program and this and that. Those are family members to me. That's what I pour in and that's what I'm going to continue to pour in. It makes days like yesterday that much harder when you operate the way we operate.

That's what I said earlier, I have an obligation to them. I made a very tough choice in that decision. But I also have watched them for the last five years of what they've poured in and how badly they want this program and these players to be successful. So I'm going to bust my ass doing everything I can do to make sure that I honor them with this decision in what we continue to do for these players and where this program goes because I will always hold dear the work that they put in to get us to where we have been but also just how they did it.

It was hard, but I'm not going to get -- I don't want to get into specifics of all of it. But those are remarkable coaches and men.

Q. As you noted, probably the realistic earliest time to hire new coaches would be December 1st so you have three weeks. What happens during those three weeks leading up to that? Is it vetting of candidates? Obviously you're going to want to move quickly once that window opens to make the hires.

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, anytime there's an in-season decision with a unique early signing day that is the first time we're operating under this new schedule, there is work that's being done, and I will say that it is a benefit that we have a bye week this week, to be honest with you.

I've always kept -- since I started nine years ago being a head coach, I've always had a list. Even when I was a coordinator I used to do it. I always had a list of guys that, hey, this is maybe somebody I've seen, somebody I know, somebody that I've watched throughout their career and respect. Does it fit us? Is it something, whether their interest, their time, the fit for what we're looking for? Just like anything, there's going to be people that just, because of what we've done, who we are and where we're at, that are going to have interest in the opportunity, as well.

I'm having a very open mind. Like I said, there's been -- it's going to be a highly sought-after opportunity. When you look at it, it should be. It should be attractive to potential coaches, and for what this program and obviously both sides of the ball and the opportunity to be around the kids that we have, I'm excited because we've got a great group of young talent and we've got obviously great potential to be able to bounce back very quickly.

Yes, it will all be a part of -- there will be a vetting process. There will probably be some early conversations and just making sure to see what all is real throughout this experience, and then obviously we'll work through that journey as it progresses here over these next few weeks.

Q. Because Alex had a unique role as both coordinator and offensive line coach, would your candidates have to be an offensive line coach, as well?

MIKE NORVELL: No, like I said, I'm very open and different potential roles, pieces, how all that can fit and what it can look like. No, it doesn't have to be in that role. Still looking for the best of what we need. That's kind of how we'll go through that decision-making process.

Q. You talked about what yesterday maybe meant to the recruits and you talked to all the recruits. I'm not saying you did this for the fans, but after what happened Saturday night and 1-9, what do you think what happened yesterday says to your fans about the results on the field and how much they matter?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, obviously everything we do, and I love our fans and I love the people we represent being a part of this program, past players, all. But I've got to do what I feel is best, to the best of my ability in leading this program and the decisions that I make. There's going to be a lot of emotions, and there's going to be a lot of times that our fan base might disagree with a decision that I make, whatever that might be, in game, out of game, personnel, who we recruit, who we go after, that's all part of it. The passion of that is what makes this place wonderful.

But I would say that this year has been unacceptable, and that's from the job that we've done to how we've played. There is a standard here at Florida State that when you come here you embrace, and I will say it is part of this job and for the players that choose to come here, I tell them all the time, it's not for everybody. You have to be an absolute real one to be able to come in and understand the expectation of what it needs to look like and what it has to be. It's not just what we do on the field but how we do it on the field is all important, and we haven't been good enough this year.

It's hard to make changes, but when change is necessary, then you've got to be willing to change. That's not anything against guys that have been here. It's not anything against guys that are currently here, guys that are in that locker room. But we need change. We need the best to show up, and it has to look and feel and be a certain way because the results matter.

We're all accountable to it. We want more, and our fan base and everybody around it, we all desire this program to be what we know it's capable of. We've seen them, the flashes of it, and it hasn't been too long ago since we've had that.

But it's going to be back, and it's going to be back quickly, and we're going to work our butt off to make sure that's our reality in the very near future.

Q. When you were coordinator at Arizona State and when you've hired coordinators, or when you were one, how much do you want a coach on that side of the ball that knows your system and how you operate?

MIKE NORVELL: The easy answer is yes, you always want somebody that knows. I will evaluate all those things as we get there with it.

I remember, I think, my first year as a coordinator at Arizona State, I had every assistant that was on staff, I had never worked with. There was not one that I had ever been with, and they all had different backgrounds. Nobody had ever been a part of tempo, and we were running a tempo offense there at the time. It was really a unique blend, and it worked.

Even with the players coming in, I remember I think we had maybe three or four returning players from the previous year. It was all new for everybody. But when you find those like-minded individuals, regardless of their background, regardless of who's there, who's not there, what that is and what that has to be, it just has to be right. You've got to be able to work together in making that, and like I said, I'm open to all things as we move forward

because it still comes down to this being the best fit for Florida State.

I've got a lot of confidence in the coaches that we have. I've got a lot of confidence in the players that we have. But at the end of the day, we've got to make it right. The willingness to do the hard thing and the willingness to take the steps and the accountability for all of us is a necessity. We'll keep an open door to all of it.

Q. How understanding was AD Alford when you went to him and said you had to move off a pair of coaches and an assistant that you guys had made significant financial contributions to in the last year?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, our administration is remarkable. Everybody has a job to do, and everybody has -- they're tough decisions, but when you work with people that care about people, he's empathetic to all of it, as well, and he knows that it's a hard decision to make, especially after the commitment to a staff. That was a well-earned and well-deserved commitment there with what we had accomplished, and in reality some of the things that we had done here.

But like I said, he's very supportive of us. He's very supportive of me, of the things that we need to do to continue to push forward, and from AD Alford to the president to the board of trustees, we've got a great group here. I understand my responsibility, and I'll say that, that it's just -- we're going to go get it right. Like I said, we're going to work our butts off to make sure we're honoring the commitment, the investment, to every fan that's out there, to every booster that has invested into our program.

I don't take any of it for granted. I don't take -- it's heartbreaking to me when the product that we do, the results that we have are not to the standard. This year, like I said, we've not achieved anywhere near what expectation or what we desire it to be.

We're going to get it right, and I've got the support from the administration. Obviously you can look out behind, and you see the commitment to building facilities, to the renovation of the stadium. All of it matters.

You look at what we're doing in recruiting, obviously it's going to be a new age with the NIL and the component of the revenue, I guess, distribution there with players. All of that is going to tie in, and I feel very confident in the support that we will get and continue to receive.

But yes, we've got a great AD and administration that help support in even very difficult decisions.



Q. With Randy Shannon taking over defensive coordinator responsibilities, how do you want the defense to look different? I know you're not going to go into specifics, but broadly schematically what can you do in season? What would you like him to do?

MIKE NORVELL: Having a bye week gives us a little bit of time for -- I want Randy to go run the defense, and I want him to be able to put his emphasis to it and really for our guys to be able to go out there and play fast, play confident, to be free in playing within the calls of what we need to do.

Will it look a little bit different? Yes, there will be some differences. There will be some things that probably mirror. Yeah, we're 10 games into a season so it's going to be probably a healthy mix.

I had the opportunity to compete against Coach Shannon there before we came here, and I've got a lot of respect for his mind, how he attacks and calls games. I think he'll definitely do a great job with those players, and they'll rally behind it.

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