

Florida State University Football Media Conference

Monday, November 25, 2024

Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Mike Norvell

Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Appreciate you being here. It's good to have come off homecoming with a victory there Saturday. Really proud of our guys. Like I mentioned afterwards, going back and watching the film, thought they came out -- I thought they gave really good effort, had a real focus of trying to correct some of the issues that we've had.

It was good to see some guys that rose up in moments, made plays. We were able to create a couple takeaways. We had some explosive plays offensively.

It wasn't all clean. Some things we definitely get to improve upon, but I thought a lot of younger players really got a chance to go and -- you saw the growth. You saw the ability, to have to work through a sequence of a game, some good, some bad, and I was just really pleased with how they responded throughout.

It was a good game for us. Our guys gave us a little bit of a positive as we're heading into this week, which is an absolutely huge week for us. It's the last game of the '24 season. It's the last opportunity that we have. Obviously it's against an opponent which is playing their best football of the year. Ultimately, when it comes down to this game, every little bit matters. All that we've done, all the work that's been invested, we've got to go be our best this week.

I'm excited about being here at home. It's Senior Day. It's an opportunity to celebrate the careers of a lot of guys that have poured so much into this program. This one is an opportunity for us to go and finish the season on a positive note, and obviously I'm excited to see our guys go and compete with everything that they have.

Got off to a great start last night with our practice and our preparation, and there's definitely a continued sense of urgency for the improvement that's necessary as we've got a huge game come Saturday night.

Q. After evaluating the film, what did you see from Luke, and is it fair to assume he'll remain the starter for this week?

MIKE NORVELL: I was pleased with Luke. He's one of those guys that I was kind of referencing that, as the game went on, you saw him really kind of settle in. I thought he did a good job of, I'd say, relaxing but kind of letting the game come to him in some regards. To be able to have three touchdown passes, made a lot of good decisions. There's some throws that he missed, some parts of different reads and progressions where I think he's going to continue to even become that much more efficient around it.

I thought he did a really nice job, and throughout the course of the game, my expectation is that it will probably be the same of giving him an opportunity to go out there and continue to get better.

I was pleased with Brock, I think we mentioned after the game, kind of as we got into that rhythm. I thought Luke did a really nice job of creating the explosives, saving some drives, had some big plays throughout. I was really pleased when Brock got the opportunity to go in, led us on a touchdown drive, made some really good decisions, was on rhythm, on time with his throws. It was an impressive drive for him. So I was proud of him for that being prepared, being ready when his number was called.

I know those guys will continue to work as we go through this week, but the expectation is that Luke will be starting, and obviously we'll go and throw everything we have into it.

Q. Wanted to get your thoughts on DJ Lagway, what he's done for Florida and what stands out about his game.

MIKE NORVELL: You see him as he's progressed throughout the year, he's playing with more confidence as the year's gone on. He's made some big strides throughout the course of the year. He's definitely a player that you've got impressive arm talent, can throw the ball all across the field. He's done a good job of extending plays. When things break down or if he needs to be able to move, he keeps his eyes down the field and can definitely hurt you if you don't stick in your coverage. Then he's obviously athletic enough to be able to make you pay with his legs as well.

So I think he's a very talented young man, but it's also one that's been able to play with more confidence with each rep that he's gotten in the different situations that he's found himself in. So he's playing his best ball of the year here at the end of it.

Q. Roydell is on the depth chart. Do you expect him to be a full go, 100 percent for this weekend?

MIKE NORVELL: I do. He's done a good job of being able to push throughout the course of the last few weeks. We'll see exactly how many plays he's going to be able to get for us there come Saturday, but full expectation is for him to play.

He started this last week, you saw the burst, you saw the balance, the things that you want to see from a back coming off of an injury. Excited to see him back in the lineup.

Q. That was probably the first game all season where the offense went into halftime feeling decently about themselves. What was it like in that could you sense that, any difference in terms of confidence? How does that change managing the course of the game when there's things to build on as opposed to kind of treading water or struggling?

MIKE NORVELL: Obviously there was plays in the first half, some drives, some protection, some things we wanted to be better at. I was really pleased with how we ended the second quarter, getting a couple of touchdown drives.

Then it was at halftime there had been some positive, but it was still about let's clean up the issues we've had. We knew we were going to get the ball there to start the second half, and we wanted to kick it off the right way.

I thought our guys did a great job, first play going and you're having a long touchdown pass. That really was a big spark there to how we wanted to start. I thought the guys handled themselves -- it wasn't -- we didn't go into the locker room celebrating at half, but we were thinking about still what were the areas that we need to get corrected, what do we need to improve upon so that we could have the best second half that we possibly could.

I thought the guys had the right mindset and were able to come out and execute early in the second half.

Q. Was there one or two specific plays that Luke had in that game where you're like -- and you could -- feel free to go into detail if you want, but were you like, okay, he's starting to get it. That's a check. That's a

throw. That's a decision where it's starting to make sense to him a little bit more.

MIKE NORVELL: He had a couple of checks based off of looks that I appreciated. You could tell the film study, you could see the confidence. It wasn't one of those things he was looking over to us. He saw and understood what we needed to get into.

I thought he was very aware of his protections, of making sure that he heard the communication if it was something from the line or that he was on point with kind of playing one step ahead, which for him is really, as each week has gone by, he's grown in his confidence when it comes to understanding.

I felt he got better in his rhythm and timing throughout the course of the game. I mentioned after the game on Saturday, but you look at the third and 11 play to Ja'Khi, that was a play to me that you're in a longer yardage situation. We kind of needed a spark in that moment. To be able to go through a read, fit it in a good window and just to be able to have that spark, and that boost was big. I thought he did just a really nice job of managing it.

Really from that point on, I thought he managed the game really well. He was able to locate the ball where he needed to. He got some one-on-one throws, and he was decisive with that, but I thought there was a handful of those plays early where you felt him -- I don't mean to say take a deep breath, but he really did. He was able to go out there. It was on rhythm, on time execution, and you build through that.

I think that's something coming out of that game, it definitely is a confidence booster. When you're a true freshman running out there for the first time as a starter, there's some nerves that go with that. You want it to be a certain way, you want it to look a certain way, and ultimately we missed a few things early just in different parts, but I thought he handled that well and just kept playing. He was able to get rolling and build some of that positive momentum.

Q. You mentioned it in your opening and after the game that you guys had already started looking ahead to Florida. There's a lot of these guys on the roster getting their first experience in the rivalry game. What is the message to those guys, and what are you looking for out of them when they take the field on Saturday?

MIKE NORVELL: It's going to take every bit of energy, focus, passion, fight that you have in your body for 60 minutes or however long that this game is called to go. It's

going to be -- it's going to be one of those games where obviously it's a lifetime to remember, the results of this game. It takes every bit of your preparation -- what you do throughout the course of the week, how much film are you studying, how hard are you pushing in practice, what are the things that you're doing, whether it's in the training room, you've got to get your body right and prep for this one, what you're doing in the weight room, all parts of it.

This is what college football is truly about is when you have these games that they don't like us, we don't like them, it's all part of it. You go out there and you put your best foot forward, and you go fight for victory. That's what our focus is. We want everything that we have to go put our best effort out on that field. I've got a lot of confidence in our guys in what's going to show up.

Q. Coach, you kind of alluded to this earlier, but with the seniors, being this is their last game playing for FSU, what do you say is going to be like the message, or what are you going to tell those guys who have been with the program since the beginning?

MIKE NORVELL: Let's go finish with everything that you have, all the work that's gone in. I mean, go finish the right way and put all that we have into it.

I'm grateful for the work those guys have poured in. I'm grateful for the impact they've made. Some of these guys have been here five, six years, and they've seen the ups and the downs. This is their last opportunity to play as a Florida State Seminole. To be able to play at home and be at Doak Campbell Stadium, it's really, it's a special experience. It's one that a lot of these guys dreamed about it when they were growing up as little boys, and they've got to live out that dream.

What better way to go out? This would be a really special opportunity for them. There's going to be emotion that's going to go into this game regardless, but knowing that it's their last one, you've got to go empty the tank this week, and you've got to put everything that you have into being your absolute best.

Q. Florida's defense has played pretty well all season, but these last few weeks, it seems like, particularly in certain situations, red zone, they've also created some turnovers. What do you see from them in those situations and challenges they present?

MIKE NORVELL: You see some changes throughout their defense throughout the year. I think they've done some things to, say, simplify, but you're seeing the consistency and what they're being asked to do.

Yes, they have the variations. They have the different fronts, different pressures that they'll bring, obviously how they mix and match coverages. But you see those guys, they're playing fast, and they're being very opportunistic around the ball. They've been able to create takeaways. They've had some big stops there in critical situations, whether it's fourth down stops. This last week I think they had two fourth down stops inside the 10 yard line.

Like I said, they've forced multiple turnovers, and you see the confidence that they're playing with. Obviously they've been doing it for these last few weeks at a really high level. We know we're going to get their best effort, and obviously it's going to take everything we have to go and be aggressive in our attack and obviously to control the things that we can control.

Q. How much progress -- you said last week your time was divided. You're trying to put together a staff and devote to the players on this team. How much progress has been made in the staff building? That's part one. Part two is I'm sure there's some guys you might be interested in that might only not play in conference games but maybe coach in a playoff game. Would you wait until then to make an announcement, or would you make an announcement before they're -- if you've hired someone, before they're done coaching that particular team?

MIKE NORVELL: Evaluating all situations when it comes to that. There are guys that probably are on a pretty good track to be playing in a playoff that I know have interest in opportunities here. Obviously we're going through all parts of it, just trying to find the right fit for our football program, for these players, for what we're trying to do and build immediately and obviously for the next few years as we continue to bounce back from where we are right now.

I've really liked the progress that has been made. We'll kind of see the timeline of how that all shakes out here in the next week, next couple of weeks, and then anything progressing from there, I think all options are open, all things are being considered, and we'll make the best decision when we need to obviously as it unfolds.

Q. I don't know if in the history of this rivalry both teams have started a true freshman at quarterback. Will Saturday speak to the trajectory of either program? And you talk about how important this game is. Is this game just about Saturday? Will it speak to a larger trend of where these teams could possibly be in the future?

MIKE NORVELL: For us, it's about Saturday. Everything you do is about progression, it's about growth. You want to

see that in what you're doing, but our focus right now is to everything that we have for this team, this group.

We've got a really good group of guys that are playing in their last game, and they put a lot into this program. I want them to be able to finish it the right way, to finish it by playing their best football of their career here at Florida State.

Then, yes, we are playing a lot of young players, and these guys have a great opportunity in front of them for what they're going to do and helping elevate this program. The next opportunity in front of us is this Saturday. So my expectation is to see growth, improvement, and for us to go out there and play to the absolute best of our ability.

If we do that, I've got a lot of confidence in what that will be. I'm definitely very confident for what the future holds as we continue to progress and see these guys grow up.

Obviously the new members that will join this program here moving forward, all things will be pushing upward as we finish up here this next week.

Q. Even though he's not playing, Richie Leonard is a guy who transferred from Florida. Do you see him being a little bit extra motivating this week around or on the sidelines or practice or anything just because of that connection?

MIKE NORVELL: I think Richie's done a great job of trying to connect to our players. He's one of those guys I've been really pleased with. Even though while being unavailable, trying to be an inspiration, trying to be an impact for some of the younger guys, some of the guys that are still working their way through kind of their growth.

Richie is a guy that I think has a chance to be a great leader on this team, obviously now, but obviously this next year with having another year of eligibility with the redshirt. So I don't know if that's going to be any extra motivation for him or any of that, but he wants to see this team be successful. He wants to see his teammates go out there and be the best they can be, and he's going to do everything in his power to help prepare us to be that.

Q. A number of freshmen made their debuts against Charleston Southern. Looking at defense, DD Holmes, Ricky Knight, Jamorie. I wonder if you can reflect on film watching what those guys on defense showed you, and if you want to mention any of the guys on offense too.

MIKE NORVELL: I think it was good for those guys to get live work. Charles and Cai both got a little more extensive

work. Debo got some work at D-tackle too. It was a good game for us to see those guys get out there and to have to go out there and execute, have to get the communication, to see them, in some instances, utilize the techniques and fundamentals.

Some guys, when you get out there and the speed of the game the first time that you're out there on the field, just seeing the importance of the communication and being able to apply those techniques.

I was really proud of them for the performance that they were able to have and just to be able to get out there and go out there and play fast. I think that's a really good group of young guys and excited about what they're going to do.

Offensively, basically the entire game was a bunch of young players who went out there and did some really good things. I was really proud of Landen made a big catch over the middle in traffic, getting a chance to finish a play. Even just seeing Hykeem Williams, he's still a true sophomore, battled with injury at the beginning of the year, but seeing him have a couple big catches was good.

You saw Lawayne, you saw BJ, both those guys. Micahi Danzy with the big catch, that was all impressive. Amaree Williams scored another touchdown, Kam Davis getting back in. You kind of go through, and you've got a laundry list of freshmen or redshirt freshmen, true sophomores, that have had to step up and go make an impact.

You feel their confidence. You feel some of the explosiveness and the ability that they have. So really excited about where that's going, for those guys to take that experience and go take another step here this week.

Q. Coach Shannon had a big role on the defense since he's been here, but first time getting to hear him call a game and just the way he approached things, what were your takeaways?

MIKE NORVELL: He did a good job. Obviously there was changing and different dynamics, guys moving in the box, Randy was on the field. I thought he did a good job of organizing just the defense and the defensive staff.

He cares so much for these players and has done a great job of pouring into them. It was great just to see them go and play the way that they did. Coach Shannon is excited for the opportunity he's gotten the last few weeks.

Obviously he's done it for many years throughout his career, but just kind of putting his on this group here the last couple games, and definitely appreciate the work that he and the defensive staff have all poured in to put our

guys in a great position, and it's going to take a great effort here this week.

Q. With the coordinator hires, what kind of say will they have in helping complete the staff or bringing in coaches with them, that kind of stuff?

MIKE NORVELL: We'll evaluate all those things as we kind of get to it. Depending on who, what positions, things of that nature, how it all kind of ties together.

I've always looked for input from guys that are coordinators. Obviously you're working on the side of the ball with a group. You've got to have guys that are familiar, guys that might understand a little bit more of the terminology, language, some of the ins and outs.

Sometimes those guys are in position roles, sometimes they're in analyst roles. We'll evaluate all things as we continue to progress and identify who that right fit is for us.

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