

Florida State University Football Media Conference

Monday, March 17, 2025

Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Mike Norvell

Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Appreciate everybody being here. Excited about spring ball here before us. Looking forward to getting out on the field Wednesday, finishing up our winter program there before we hit spring break, and was pleased with the eight weeks that I got to see our guys grow, come together.

Really the on-the-field aspect of it with our Tour of Duty was something I was proud of. It was a challenging workload, what we put in front of our guys.

I thought that they really took a lot of ownership in the work that was being done but also just the accountability that was necessary to try to hit the standard of what we're looking to see from them on a daily basis.

The word "accountability" has been big this winter program as we get ready to jump into spring practice. It's going to be something that we're going to continue to emphasize, of working to be the best that we can be on a daily basis, not just with what you're seeing on the field but continuing to challenge all of ourselves off the field and making sure that we're taking the proper steps to that our best shows up.

I've really liked the way this group has come together. I think it's a group that is filled with great personalities, guys that are outgoing, that are engaging, supportive, challenging. I've seen players taking some ownership in that realm. It's just something that is an absolute necessity. It's something that you need to see within a team. It's something I've been encouraged with through this first two months.

A lot of things you can talk about, but you actually have to go do it. As we get ready for spring practice, we've got 15 days to really continue to forge and develop the identity of what this team is going to be. I like the athleticism. I like the size. We've had a good last couple months in the weight room where you're seeing the strength numbers are trending where we want them to go, and I'm excited about what this team can do and what they're going to be able to put in through this spring ball that will put us in position for what's ahead this fall.

There's a lot of excitement. I think our coaching staff has done an extraordinary job hitting the ground running, from coming in in late December to what we've been able to accomplish up to this point. I've been really pleased with the work that they're putting in. You're obviously seeing a coaching staff grow together just as you see players growing together. Some new faces. There is a great deal of energy and excitement. I've been able to spend a lot of time with our players, whether it's on an individual basis and being able to connect with them and where they are, and I can tell you that from a player perspective, they're excited about what's ahead.

Offensively, defensively, I think we've utilized the time that we're allowed in the winter program for the meetings, the walk-throughs. I think they've done a great job of having early and base installs of what we've been able to get accomplished. I think that's gone well.

But come Wednesday, we get to see it put into action. I'm really looking forward to that.

From a health standpoint, we do have a couple guys that are going to be out this spring. Right now Jason Jenkins, Conrad Hussey and Shyheim Brown -- Conrad and Shy have a chance to get a little bit of work there towards maybe that last week, but those guys will be out for spring ball. Unfortunate, obviously all those guys are guys we were looking forward to counting on, but am expecting them to be ready to go beginning of the season. If there's anything that changes within that, obviously we'll let you guys know as we get closer.

I have some guys that are going to be limited here early. Gunnar Hansen, Jaylen Early will probably miss the first part of spring, but we're expecting them to get some good work as we're rolling through.

We have some guys that might be limited just probably that first week. We'll see how it goes. Guys coming off off-season injuries or working themselves back in, we'll have some of them limited, but excited about where we are from a health standpoint and the work guys have put in preparing for what's ahead for spring ball.



Looking forward to getting kicked off on Wednesday, and I'll take any questions.

Q. When we spoke to the newcomers, a lot of them talked about Tommy reaching out to them individually. Was that something that you spoke to him about when you brought him in, that that was something that was needed, or is that just who he is?

MIKE NORVELL: I think, one, it's who he is. I think for a big-picture perspective of our team, something that I was looking for -- obviously quarterback is the position that everybody points to. It's one that you have to have guys that take ownership of a team more than just even a position, but it was something I looked at across the board at all positions. Anybody that was coming in, we needed that. We need guys that embrace the opportunity to make an impact.

Leadership can be done in a lot of different ways. Some guys are outgoing. Some guys are a little bit more hands-on just in regards to maybe just the one-on-one conversations. I've seen it all. We've helped develop it throughout the years, but this was something that -- I'm excited about the guys that we've had on the team and the potential that they have to grow into being great leaders, and I think I'm seeing some of those steps.

But anybody that we brought in as a transfer, it was an active part of conversation and an active part of my evaluation of making sure that we were bringing guys that wanted that responsibility. They wanted that opportunity to be able to impact guys that are around.

It can't be something that you just put on. It's got to be natural to who you are. I think Tommy, it is just a part of his personality.

It's a natural spark, and so I think he's really done that, whether it's helping guys when they moved in or just seeing him interact through Tour of Duty, seeing him interact just in the meeting rooms, and obviously anytime that we get out there on the field for walk-throughs, you can feel his personality, wanting to help support, encourage, challenge teammates. I think that's something that we're seeing big picture across this team, and it's something that has me encouraged for where we are and where I think we can go.

Q. At the end of last season, obviously you made coaching changes, but talk about any changes to your operation and things that you normally do?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, you want to make sure you're

putting coaches in the best position to accomplish what they need to. Looking at different aspects of new offense, new defense, making sure that we're tying all that together. Obviously there's things that we've done that I strongly believe in that we're going to continue to get better at in our approach and making sure that we uphold the standard of how to do it.

But yes, we evaluated a lot of different things. There will be some minor tweaks and changes of what we're -- probably maybe orders and some maybe individual focuses or areas of focus that we'll do throughout the course of practice. But as a big picture approach, we're going to stay true to a lot of things that I know help put a team in a great position to grow and develop through spring ball.

We are going to have a real focus on just this team and meeting them where they are and where we know that we need them to get to through 15 practices in spring ball.

There's some dynamics just with our fieldwork. We're not going to be able to be outside for scrimmages, so we're going to have to be in the indoor for scrimmages, which will limit some different dynamics. I don't love it, but I do love the facility and I love the work that's going on here in Doak Campbell.

It's just one of those minor adjustments that we're going to have to do. Like I said, we'll evaluate it a lot, and we'll continue to work through some of those adjustments that we've put in place.

Q. Going off of that self-evaluation, things that you've reflected on yourself from the past season, experiences, what have you changed or looked at maybe adapting, and then the addition of Coach Malzahn, what has he done to help you alleviate stuff with offensive duties, whatnot? How has he changed your workflow?

MIKE NORVELL: It's been a big change for us. It was something that I knew when the opportunity presented itself to get Coach Malzahn here, it was huge for the program, was huge for me. It allows me a lot more flexibility to be able to connect where I believe I need to connect. Whether it's more time that I can be able to spend around our players in the weight room, whether it's more time for when guys -- if there is an issue that occurs or a guy needs to come up and to be able to have a one-on-one sit-down where it's not as focused on a side of ball. I've got two tremendous leaders and coordinators and being able to allow them to take ownership within that I think is big.



It is something that has obviously allowed a lot more flexibility on my day-to-day that I think has really been positive.

When it comes to the self-evaluation, I think a lot of -- for a student-athlete in today's age, it's different. It's different than it was three years ago. It's different than it was 10 years ago to an incredible scope. So making sure that I'm able to meet them at their needs and to help them grow through this process, this time. There's so many outside elements that guys get pulled from, and to be able to help them manage their -- whether it's time, their focus, making sure that they don't get -- that they don't find themselves chasing things that are not going to be beneficial to what they're trying to accomplish during their time here as a student-athlete, that's a big thing for me.

I think whether it's helping them in their leadership, helping them connecting with teammates, helping them continue to build the identity of what they want to be as a man and as a football player here at Florida State, we're all blessed. We're all in an incredible place with an incredible responsibility, and I don't want guys to miss out on that. I don't want them to miss out on who they get to do it with. I don't want them to miss out on the understanding of what we represent and who we represent.

When you look at a team, and we'll have close to, I think, 40 newcomers that will be a part of this team, I think 30 guys that came in here, 30 or 31 guys that came in in spring, and we've got probably eight to ten that will be joining us here in the summer, that's a big number. It's what we've dealt with in the last couple years, but not to that scope throughout most of my coaching career.

To see that type of infusion of new personalities, of new players, new positions. Obviously with two different schemes. There's a lot that can go into this experience for student-athletes that I just want them to make sure that they're capitalizing on everything and all the benefits of what this can be.

We are a part of just a wonderful program and a wonderful university, and I want them to experience it all, to enjoy the guys that they get to do it with, and really just to put themselves in position for this to be the best year of their life.

That's something that I've tried to make sure that I'm able to help guide, to help inspire, to help challenge for those guys in their day-to-day lives being a student-athlete.

Q. Heading into the off-season, you mentioned evaluating all aspects of the program. Within your recruiting operation, what did you identify as things

that maybe needed some tuning heading into the off-season, and what steps did you take to address some of that?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I think when you look -- evaluation is the -- I think it is one of the biggest determining factors of success. I think throughout my coaching career, I think we've done a really good job of that and being able to evaluate the right fit and guys that are in place and then making sure that when there's guys that are those best fit for us and guys that are top targets, we've got to get the job done, and we've got to make sure that we're being able to present the opportunity, obviously making sure that we're making those connections, those relationships that are going to allow us to help share and communicate the why. Why Florida State; why this place, this staff, this opportunity that's in front of them to help them achieve the dreams, the goals and desires.

We've done that at a very high level over the years. Obviously last year was a disappointment where we didn't get the job done, and it was at an extreme level. There were some extreme changes that we made, and being able to help put ourselves in a position to accomplish the goal of getting those guys here and to make sure that we're putting them all in the best position to go out there and fulfill the potential that I know they have.

Q. You talked about it, but in hindsight, not maybe bringing in the types of fits personality-wise, was that one of the miscalculation -- this year it seems like you made a concerted effort, I want to bring in guys with this type of personality. How much of that in hindsight something that wasn't a factor last year?

MIKE NORVELL: I would say personality is one thing, but also some elements of the experiences. I want guys that are absolutely desperate to go be successful, and to be successful, to win, to do everything they can to leave their mark on their time that they get to have here at Florida State, whether it's three years, four years, whether it's one year.

To be able to have that edge and not necessarily just banking on the potential of what it can be, but also guys that have experienced highs. They've experienced lows. That was one of the things that in just looking at what this team needed, they needed that type of individual that was going to embrace every single day. They were going to embrace the challenges for what we needed to do, and obviously they have the right mentality to be able to go and pour everything that they have into the opportunity that's in front of them, and that's whether it's their teammates, whether it's their job, whether it's what they're doing in the weight room, what they're doing in the community. I

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wanted that.

To say that it's a type of personality, there needed to be a type of edge. You can do that and be maybe the quietest guy in the world, but if you're willing to show up every single day and pour that in, you're going to inspire others. If you're willing to pour that into building relationships -- we don't have to all be cookie cutter and one type of personality, but I did want that edge.

I think we were able to find that, and that was something that -- I know I used the word desperate. I wanted guys that were desperate to be their absolute best with the opportunity that's in front of them, with every player that was returning, with every player that was coming in.

I've liked how guys have put that on display for the last two months. So we've got to carry that over to this spring, and rather than talk about it, we get to go show it in our preparation.

Q. Some of your players are experienced being dual athletes, seeing Micahi Danzy doing well on the track, seeing BJ Gibson doing well in baseball. Thoughts on how they are approaching being a dual-sport athlete for football and other sports?

MIKE NORVELL: I think they've done a great job. You visit with both those guys, yesterday as we came back from spring break, they've been staying busy, and there's a lot of individual sacrifice that they're having to make to -- obviously a huge focus with both those guys. BJ is getting a chance to get out there and to play and to be able to make an impact. Really proud of him.

Micahi is doing something pretty special out there on the track.

But those guys are also spending a lot of their own time, whether it's going through installations, making sure that they're putting themselves mentally in the best position so that when they do get to transition, when we do have the opportunity to balance whether it's a week or a workout or whatever that looks like we can get a little bit of both, then that they're prepared to go out and be their best in that moment.

With college football and what the summer is, I'm not really worried in either of their situations about their preparedness for what it's going to look like when it comes to the fall because I think both those guys, they know what to expect. They were able to go through a freshman year. BJ played a little bit more. Micahi was able to get some work.

But they understand there's an expectation. But really excited about what their future can be and really proud of them for the impact they're making in those other sports.

Q. I know we talk about the chemistry of players a lot, but you brought in a lot of new coaches this off-season. You talked about Malzahn and how good it's been working with him, but how has it been working with this team of new coaches?

MIKE NORVELL: It's been great. For some guys that I worked with before, it's great seeing just the way that they've grown through the years and what they bring to this program and what they bring to the players that they get to coach. For some guys this is the first time I get to work with them, I would say as advertised. Guys that we did a lot of background, a lot of insight into who they were, not just what they know. You can turn on film and see how somebody attacks when it comes to a coordinator. You can watch a position group and try to get a sense of character traits of a coach and how guys play.

But going into it on a day-to-day basis, this is a great group of men that have joined our staff. We've got guys that have been here the entire time with us and guys that have been here for a few months, and just seeing them gel together, I do look for common characteristics in coaches. Obviously guys that are great teachers, guys that can communicate well with the student-athletes and make those connections, but more importantly, I want guys that are led from the heart and that really embrace who they get to be a part of -- as I said, the job, but be a part of a career with.

To see the investment that they've made into the fellow coaches and coworkers and the staff and just really everybody within the university has been great, and then obviously what they're pouring into the players has really been special.

I've been very pleased with how the staff has come together and excited about that dynamic of what it's going to look like moving forward.

Q. Coach White said that what he does here schematically might be different than what he's done before based on personnel. What's that process been like in terms of your involvement, maybe the returning coaches who are still around, educating him on that, or has it been just his evaluations from Tour of Duty?

MIKE NORVELL: It's a little bit of both. So we've gone through -- every player on both sides of the ball. What makes Coach Malzahn, Coach White, those guys are great coaches because they're very adaptable to who they get to



coach. Trying to tie a scheme to the talents of a player, I think it's the mark of a great coach. That's what both those guys throughout their career have shown the ability to do that.

So trying to allow them to formulate their own opinions on guys and positions and how could somebody fit into things that they really like to do, and then are there things that we might need to adjust schematically to fit the skills of the guys that we have in place to allow them to go and showcase the playmaking ability they have. I think that's a fair balance.

But I want coaches to be able to get their own perspective of it, and obviously we went through every person and you can issue opinions and -- the players also get to grow, too. We've seen in the past guys take tremendous leaps within their career as they've grown and developed and invested into their craft but also making sure that you're putting them in the best position to be successful.

I think it's been going really well, but it's been a little bit of a mix of both, and that's a great thing for our players. There is a great deal of energy when it comes to our players of being able to put their best foot forward, to be able to showcase who they are now that might be different than what they've been because this is the new and improved version.

I've really been pleased with how that's gone, and allowing these coaches to get to know the guys that they're getting to lead.

Q. You brought in four offensive linemen out of the transfer portal. Obviously that group was a thorn in the side last year for your offensive success. What have you taken away from that group through two months watching them get to know each other, work together, and prepare for spring?

MIKE NORVELL: I think you can see the size -- all those guys have great experience. I think they've all been two plus year starters at their previous institution. But I think the personalities have been incredible. For the -- I really like the young group of offensive linemen that we've had, some guys that have been here that have gotten some early experience, a couple guys in Manasse, Lucas and Jonathan Daniels that I think have great, great futures in front of them, but seeing just that group come together and you take returning players, whether it's TJ Ferguson, Richie, Jake Rizy, those guys that are a little bit older in their time here, they've really all gelled really well.

I think Herb has done a great job in encouraging those relationships to be built because that position is unlike any

other. There's got to be a coordinated approach in all things that they do, the communication. Those guys, the four guys that came in, they're strong. They're powerful. They've got great experience that they can reflect on. But it's still new for them.

Their willingness to pour in, their willingness to get involved -- I think when you look at -- this is something that's off the field, but when you look at the amount of time that they're spending in the community together, whether it's a giving of their time to serve the community or different events or just to be active representing Florida State, that speaks to me because they're not here just to put on a jersey number. They're here to pour into this team and this university that they get to represent.

There's a selflessness that comes with that, but there's also just a sense of urgency of the day. Those guys, they have one year. They've got one opportunity in front of them to go leave their mark, and I see them trying to take those proactive steps to maximizing this opportunity.

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