

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Coach Mike Norvell

Press Conference



Florida State 77, East Texas A&M 3

MIKE NORVELL: First off, really proud of our players. The work they put in this week -- it's been an emotional week for us, and I'll just start off, I'm grateful. I thank God every day for the opportunity I get to be around these young men. The work they pour in, the relationships that they're building, the investment to just try to be the best version of who they are on and off the field.

It was a tough week. Coming off a big win, obviously our hearts are with Ethan and the fight that he's going through.

It's a lot of emotions for our team. But I thought our guys throughout this week and everything that we experienced, I thought they really truly came with a purpose and a passion to go get better. That was the focus. I wanted to see their response. I wanted to put on film -- to go compete as a team that's passionate to get better.

I thought they did that. A lot of explosive plays. A lot of players, I think we were close to 90 players that got a chance to play today, and I was challenging them throughout, it didn't matter the player that went in, the standard, the expectation, the responsibility of this program we all have. I thought they did a really nice job.

It was a dominant performance, and offensively, defensively, I thought the coaching staffs both sides of the ball, special teams, I thought everybody did a wonderful job in preparing because I wanted to see this team go take a positive step, and they definitely did that.

Just a great day and great performance overall. I want to give a shout-out to our student section. They sold out today. We had a great crowd, great energy, early kickoff, but they came, and you felt them early in the contest.

I'll tell you, Marching Chiefs again, so very impactful, and you just continue to fuel off that great energy that this fan base brings. Just grateful for all of our Florida State family that was here today, and it was a great atmosphere. Once again, it's good to take another positive step and to be

sitting here 2-0.

Q. You touched on the emotions of the week. You guys have the sweatbands on. We saw Earl Little bring the jersey out, and Earl Pritchard was here and Tommy told us he broke the rock after the game. Talk about how they responded and played for Ethan.

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah. I'll try. Ethan is on my -- I recruited him for years, got a chance to watch him grow and just when he committed to Florida State, the way that he plays the game, it's a passion, energy. He loves it. Absolutely loves it.

To know that right now that's taken away from him in a senseless act and something that just -- you don't always know why. You don't always know why you have to go through things in life. You don't understand the reasoning. But I do believe that God has his hand over Ethan and this football team and just all the relationships.

But just to have Earl here today, he's a wonderful man, and being with him, I know it's so very hard, and I know it's so hard for anybody to have to go through.

But he told me earlier this week, he said, I know where my boy wants to be, so I'm going to go stand in his place for him.

To see the team and just the embrace for that, like, it's special.

Q. The maturity of this team from this whole week to come out and play this way, play this dialed in, play this focused, I'm sure you're proud of it, but what does it say about this group and what they're becoming?

MIKE NORVELL: It's like I told them, everybody can desire an identity. Any team right now, they talk about wanting to win championships. They're talking about wanting to be the best. They're talking about these great players that they say they want to become. People will -- they'll hear you when you talk, but they'll listen by your actions.

I thought this team with their actions showed a little bit



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more in depth what they're capable of because they didn't let up.

Next week we've got a bye week, and I can promise you we're going to go to work. I can promise you we're going to push, we're going to challenge. Every day we've got to continue to elevate because we know there's great challenges ahead.

Last week I didn't get enamored by the opponent we played. I focused on our team and the great individuals I get to coach and the expectations and the belief in what I think they can do, and this team is embracing that now.

Tomorrow is a new day, and what we're willing to do with tomorrow will put us in a position to take another step higher or you give somebody else an opportunity, but I believe in what this team will do.

Q. You spoke on running ballpark 90 players out there today. How beneficial was that for those guys who don't usually get that much experience?

MIKE NORVELL: It's really good. Anytime you can play that many players, and for guys that -- there's no substitute for experience. You see things and the way that it operates, the way that it unfolds, there's some good plays and there are some bad plays. You got to see some guys that really rose to the occasion, and we're going to be able to encourage and build off of that, and then there's some critical corrections that we're going to have to make to help guys understand that it might not have looked like you want it to, but if you're willing to pour in and go get better, then we'll be one step closer. So it was good to be able to have that on-field experience, and like I said, I thought Gus, Tony, JP. I thought they did a wonderful job in the planning. You see the assistant coaches, I thought they coached throughout the game challenging these guys to go be what they can and understanding every play we're representing something special at this university.

Q. Duce has a big first quarter, first big game. Gavin has a huge game. Do you guys know who's going to have the big game going into a game, or does it evolve --

MIKE NORVELL: Well, you never exactly know where those opportunities are going to show up, but it's like you challenge players, you never know exactly when, but when it does, you have to be ready.

I thought Duce was remarkable. He showcased what we get to see in practice, his speed, length, play making ability. That was an incredible touchdown catch, great ball by Tommy to keep it on the outside where it was Duce or

nobody. That was a thing of beauty. Obviously the long 80-yard touchdown, that was just speed, and Tommy put the ball out there for Duce to go get it, and he did.

I really like what I'm seeing from them. I like what -- obviously with Roydell down, Gavin got a little bit bigger workload, and I think he had three touchdowns today, very productive with his opportunity. Offensive line was dominant today, and they needed to be.

But you look defensively, it's really the same thing. You never know as you have a team that's going to try to attack a variety of different ways, but it was good to see us create a couple takeaways. You had the two interceptions. You felt the guys flying around, had some big hits. It was a good game, complementary football.

Q. It occurs to me just looking at the stat line and the way the game went, your best players, your top players, your captains made big plays early and set the tone. I would imagine that's exactly what you're looking for in terms of guys setting the tone from a maturity standpoint?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, and obviously I challenged them this morning, it's an early kick, I want to see you start fast. The great thing is we practice in the mornings, so you get up, you get ready to roll, but the mentality, the intensity, being able to rise up and -- that first drive offensively, we had to overcome -- we missed out on a couple of 3rd down opportunities, took some 4th down conversions, but being able to finish in the end zone was big, and then as you progressively got stop, big play, big play offensively, and you felt this team fighting for each possession, and was able to jump out early, which obviously allowed a lot of people to be able to play and contribute.

Q. Kevin Sperry, what did you think of his performance, and the block that Boggs had -- not just the block he had, the way his teammates appreciated it over on the sidelines and came over to him more than they came over to Sawchuk to congratulate him on the block, what does that mean to you as a coach?

MIKE NORVELL: That's what it's about. I thought both those guys -- I was glad to see Jayvan got the touchdown later, the first of what I believe will be many in his Florida State career. But I thought him and Kevin, I was really proud of Kevin. Brock got in there, got a chance to do some things. Brock has been -- he's been battling just some injury things throughout, but really pleased with the preparation that all those guys have really poured into it.

I think Kevin showed what I've said. He gets on the field, you don't feel like he's a freshman. On the touchdown to



Ous, we knew it would be a free runner with the blitz, and just calm, collected, put the right ball out there for the touchdown.

The block by Jayvan was really impressive there on the 4th down. He's got his route, and he preliminarily was open, but the first read got it to the back and he went and did what he needed to do for his teammates.

Everybody wants the ball at receiver or skill positions, but when the ball doesn't come to you and you're still willing to make those effort unselfish plays, it's big. I think you saw the appreciation from his teammates when you're willing to give for the benefit of others. That represents Florida State football.

Q. With so many different pieces, I think we've seen now over the last couple years of college football, as these rosters change so much, it's difficult to know what the chemistry, culture, all that is going to be like. What do you think has been the key to this group, the way they've all rallied around each other? Where do you think that came from?

MIKE NORVELL: Well, I think it's a lot of the DNA of who they are. They came in eyes wide open, and that's players that came back. That's high school players that came in, transfers that joined our program.

There's no exception. Like if you're not -- if you don't have that desire -- I mean, everybody has got desire, but if you're not willing to put into action the work, the investment, the sacrifice to go win and to represent Florida State and to be a part of this team and this program, then it wasn't going to work.

I think we were able to find an incredible group of young men, and we have had a great group of young men that were here part of the program that wanted to be the difference because, be real, every player that was on our team had opportunities to go other places. That's the new age of college football. But the ones that knew the expectation, wanted to be a part of the difference, wanted to be guys that led as we pushed forward, they've done a remarkable job.

I think the newcomers, they are who I thought they would be, and they've bought in to Florida State, and we're going to continue to challenge them for every bit of who they are.

We've seen this before. It's not like the first time that we've had this. But we were able to go and get the right guys, and they've done a wonderful job pouring into this program and their teammates.

Q. Do you have any updates on Squirrel White and James Williams with those long-term injuries?

MIKE NORVELL: I don't have that type of information right now, but I don't believe so, but obviously we'll see.

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