

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Coach Mike Norvell

Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Good morning, everybody. Appreciate you being here. Hope you all enjoyed the weekend. It was good for guys to get a few days away. Thought we had a really good bye week and the work they were able to pour in. We practiced Tuesday, Wednesday, work out on Thursday.

You know, really big focus on ourselves. Continuing to work the details, fundamentals, communication. Even though we have a couple games under our belt, the realization and the awareness of how new this team is. I say that with the new players that you're working in different roles, the true freshman emerging and playing, guys elevating through their own process.

Seeing an offense, defense, special teams that every rep every day is important. Being able to continue to challenge each other. I thought we got great competitive work last week. We tried to make it very difficult. We tried to create and implement crowd noise and different dynamics to see the guys have to adapt and adjust.

But just to see the continuity of this group continue to grow. Yeah, I think they embraced that. They have done a nice job of what they're doing in the meeting rooms, how they're transitioning to the field.

But we have a great journey ahead of us and every day matters. The competition of each day is critical. Truly is focused on us. We've said that even with our past two opponents. Probably a great time for a bye week to be able to live that out and now transition back it game week.

Thought we had a good practice yesterday with guys. You could see the bounce in their legs having an extra day off in there, excitement to be able to go and compete going into this week.

It's going to be a great atmosphere. Sold-out crowd, family weekend. Great weekend here in Tallahassee. We have an opportunity for this team to go take a step and go get better, so I thought it was a good time for us. We got some guys that are working to get themselves back and

available. Still have a couple guys that might be just a little bit of time left in front of them.

But I feel good about where we are from a health standpoint. We'll continue to push forward into this week.

Q. (No microphone.) (Regarding data points.) What have you learned about this group that's been a pleasant surprise to you?

MIKE NORVELL: I think surprise, I had a lot of expectation coming in. There is some unknowns, too. When everything was live and in a game situation and all the emotions and the back and forth, how guys were going respond. I was confident in the fight. I was confident in the competitiveness. I was confident in the ability.

But seeing them be able to be present in the moment and apply a lot of the lessons and the schemes and things we've talked about, to see them present and execute there, I've been pleased with what I've seen.

I know after each game we've come in here and talking about needing to be better, but there has been quality work that's gone into it to put us in this position. The urgency for growth is absolutely there. But that's the thing that I would sit back and say you see a team this really has gelled well together.

I think they see the potential. They know the steps that are a necessity for us to become what we're capable of. They understand the urgency, too. So all those things I've enjoyed watching and kind of being a part of. Just seeing in all three phases of the game. Excited to see that continue to transpire.

Q. During a bye week weekend when you give them a little bit of time, did you encourage guys to come in and watch film or do you want them to take a break?

MIKE NORVELL: There is part of it that -- sometimes rest is work. This is a group that likes to work. They really do embrace that and so there is times you got challenge them that, hey, this time of rest, I mean, take a deep breath.



Went in yesterday and asked how many of them spent time watching at least one other college football game throughout the weekend and every hand goes up. That's good. So guys actually enjoyed watching and seeing other's experiences.

When you do get some down time, we try to be very structured on what we do, what we're watching, the things that we want to continue to progress with; but also we got great work in this past week, and I want them to have a couple days where it was low impact, kind of low-key.

You know, I figured they would watch some football and see some situations and things that we work and talk about, having those things need to be applied through a variety of college games.

So I think that is also important. It's the same for coaches. Was great to be able to get on -- I was on the road Thursday, Friday -- getting to watch a lot of really good recruits and be able to go to different schools and just be out, and then Saturday was a good day for the coaching staff to just be able to watch, reflect, and be able to continue to plan what's necessary for this team as we move forward.

I thought it came at a good time just for this time and where we are; excited for what we'll be able to do from it.

Q. Two-for-one on Mandrell this year. The first one would be when you were evaluating him, recruiting him, what did you see in terms of his upside, his potential? Has he reached some of that maybe earlier than expected?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, watching Mandrell specifically, you have the two brothers, and so trying to compare the similarities but also the differences in the game.

What I loved about Mandrell was his versatility across the defensive front. He's somebody we saw and did believe that he could have a presence on the edge in different packages, but he was going to be a guy that felt very comfortable and was very active when he was on the interior.

I think that's something that showed up, that it hasn't mattered who he's playing against, where he is playing, how far along in the journey he is, I mean, he's got a huge upside when you look at the continued development of what him and Darryl both will be able to do physically as they continue to grow and progress.

But I would say that that's something that you really won't know until somebody gets here, is just how are they going

transition against bigger, stronger, faster. Very active but really very comfortable in high speed, high reaction situations.

That's something that has allowed him to have early success. Obviously the style of play is something that suits this defense really well. You know, but he still has this versatility in all the places where he can align.

Q. You mentioned up on the road Thursday, Friday. I know other members of the staff were as well. What was the reception and what has it been like with a 2-0 start dealing with recruits that maybe you were circling back on?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, no, I think it's been a lot of eyes on Florida State. You feel that, coaches. The responses, the communication from guys that when you have new -- when you have new coordinators, maybe some different elements in scheme, you can talk about what it's going look like, but they want to see it in action, too.

We have had a lot of confidence throughout this last spring, summer, big expectations within this building of what that would be. When you share that and talk about that with guys that you are projecting to what they can be within this program, it's always good to see that start to continue to unfold and get out and watch games.

See guys that -- some that are committed to us and some we're continuing to evaluate obviously for the future classes. You can feel the excitement about what they've seen from us, and I'm excited about the things I've seen from them.

I think it's -- I like where we are here at this time in the '26 class of the potential of things continuing to move forward. Then also for the future classes, they're getting a great sense of what the schematic looks like, but also just the reminder of what Florida State is all about.

Q. Coach, with the QB2 with Kevin Sperry and Brock Glenn, we saw Sperry relieve for Tommy last week. What's that going to be like, more a flip flop thing or what will be the decision making for the Kent State game?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I'm really pleased with what Kevin has done in preparing himself. Obviously he was ready when his number was called. As I mentioned last week, Brock has been dealing with a few nagging injuries that have kind of kept him from different elements of practice and probably the number of opportunities that he would like to be able to go out there and continue to showcase all areas.

He's feeling better. I think the bye week was good for him. He got some opportunities as well and did a great job with those opportunities.

So feeling really good about that quarterback room. Those guys continue to go and compete every day, continue to push Tommy, see all of them work together, it definitely was exciting for me to see one a true freshman, and with Brock not getting as many reps throughout fall camp still prepared and ready to go execute in the moment. I thought both those guys did a great job with that.

Q. What do you think it could for Ous to get those carries he's been getting to not just see what he does in practice and how to improve, but see it in game action and watch the film?

MIKE NORVELL: I think it's huge. Every rep is going to be big for him. He's just the speed of the game. All things that he's being asked to do. I mean, he has a lot of perfectionist in him where he wants to look a certain way, wants to be right, wants to be on step ten.

Right now he's still working two, three, working himself up. But he's really talented. You know, you kickoff the season verse Alabama and I think his first or second carry he has five guys bouncing off him and pushing everything forward. That's a good confidence booster.

For him, now it's just the steps along the way. It's making sure we're detailed in footwork, eyes are in the right place, continuing to emphasize the tracks, protections. Showcased his ability to catch the ball out of the backfield with the touchdown the other day.

He's going to continue to grow and emerge in all areas. He's in with a great group of guys that complement him and he complements them just within skillset.

Yeah, every rep he gets is a great push for him moving forward. It's the good and the bad, because there have been some mistakes and some things he has to improve upon. He understands that, but his hunger and desire to get that right and to go put it on display is at an elite level.

When you have guys with that type of work ethic and investment, even with having early success, it's a real positive trait.

Q. Knowing that future scheduling is really, really tough to find the right opponent to line everything up, but now the ACC shares financially based on ratings and these future games are very important financially, how do you attack future scheduling as far as finding

the right opponent, finding somebody that lines up a big type of eyeball game for Florida State?

MIKE NORVELL: Well, I mean, that's what we do. We're going to play an aggressive schedule. We want those showcase games. One of our out-of-conference games is one of the best rivalry games in college football.

I mean, you just look at over the last however many years, we're going to kickoff versus a great team or a great brand program. We want it to be extremely competitive. Those are games that obviously are wonderful to the eyes and you see just -- when Florida State is a part of those games, the numbers that those games attract and the competitiveness and the excitement of what those games are, I think it's good for the sport.

But we're going to stay aggressive with it. I know there is always different dynamics of scheduling and conversations of could it do this, could it do that. Ultimately we got to control what we can control in the process of it.

But just also knowing that we want to have those showcase games. I think we've done a great job with those and capitalizing on the opportunities there.

Q. Coach, with Macahi, when you made the switch from running back to receiver, I'm sure you expected a transitional period. What he's done through two weeks, has he lived up to what you expected he could be, what do you want him to work on, and just the confidence that he's playing with right now?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, we have a lot of belief in him. I think there is kind of two parts of it. We never would've moved him if we didn't believe in what it could be. He's somebody that has great ball skills, speed. I think you see that he's strong with the ball in his hands and he can change direction and be able to be a dynamic threat.

You also take the fact that in spring he's also the best 400 runner that's ever done it in the ACC. That's a big statement as a freshmen. There is a time commitment to that. I want him to achieve all that he can, as well as when you're looking at positionally it's a natural fit for him at receiver, but also within this offense all the things we can do, getting the ball in a variety of ways to him.

His growth as a receiver, the vertical threat he can be, you're starting to see in the last couple games. The more plays he is getting without the ball in his hands is something that I'm excited about in his growth and improvement. I do think he has a great future in front of him.



We're going to continue to push him to grow in that confidence. You take out spring practice, really for him, he had some but it was limited. But he's making huge strides throughout this early part of the season.

Q. A multi-layered question. With the coaching landscape, just football changing so quickly, there was two coaches fired this week. How does that change how you guys, if it at all, go about the pre-scouting process, with the players entering the transfer portal two weeks into the season now? Second, I'm sure Tony's name will come up for the UCLA job in terms of reports and whatnot with his ties. How do you talk to someone about career aspirations and expectations and how you can achieve them something like that?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, that's a big two-for-one right there. Yeah, there is a lot of levels and layers. First part of it, yeah, college football is changing. That's over the last three, four years. It is definitely early in the season to see some of those changes.

To be honest it's not shocking just with all the dynamics, where our signing day is, just some of the different aspects of what teams and programs, what they choose to do.

Yeah, it's immediate. Once there has been a staff change, you don't know what's going to happen. If something does happen, you want to have a pretty good awareness of if this player decides to go in the portal, is that something we would be interested in looking at potentially or not.

So you would start that very early once those changes are made. Some of the kids want go in the portal. That's fine. Just be prepared for any things that could. Guidance, direction. We have a pretty good sense of this team and what it's going to look like this next year, but there is still going to be guys that play themselves into new opportunities; some guys definitely play themselves into early opportunities in the National Football League.

You kind of have to have this thought of the high school aspect, the transfer component, and just make sure you're prepared and done a thorough job and evaluation as it goes with that.

When it comes to staff advancement and guys with potential opportunities, you know, as well as when those opportunities are -- then become decisions they need to make, I'm here to support them. I've never been a head coach that tries to talk down any other things that are out there for guys.

I want them to do the absolute best job they can in the time we've got together. They've got a responsibility to the

place and a responsibility to the players, but still have a responsibility to themselves. I want coaches that desire for all. Same thing that I want for our players.

So part of -- with guys coming here, I want to be a part of their growth. I want to be a part of their improvement, enjoyment of what this profession is and how we get to do it.

I'm here to support all of our staff in that, and when you do a good job, there is always going to be -- your name will be out there, rumors of what's this, what's that.

At the end of the day it's still about what you ultimately desire and want to do and making sure you find the best fit if it is to do something different. We've had a lot of coaches throughout the years that they've had great opportunities when it comes to the place or sometimes even the finances of things that are out there, but it was the best fit to be with us and to continue on in their growth.

Sometimes the things that were said no to early open up to greater opportunities in the future. So it's always an ever-flow was that for a coach, for a player.

Same thing we talk to guys about in recruiting. We are all looking for the best fit. As they go through the process, journey, when you find that best fit and you know where your heart leads you, what is that opportunity for you to continue to grow and be the best you can you'll make great decisions.

I want to push all our coaches to aspire for growth, and hope they all get opportunities in the future that they then get to choose.

Q. Two totally unrelated questions.

MIKE NORVELL: Awesome.

Q. Kent State had looked like a pretty competitive game this past weekend. What have you seen from them?

MIKE NORVELL: I thought this last week, they've had a little bit -- obviously challenging offseason. Interim head coach is doing a remarkable job. They started off getting a close win to start the season. Went on the road to a top 20, top 15 program with Texas Tech. This last week playing against a really good Buffalo squad. Pete Lembo, the head coach there, worked with us at Memphis. Got a lot of respect for Pete and a number of guys on the staff that we know.

Defensive coordinator worked here. So when you see



them and the way they approach that game and the improvement they made coming off the Texas Tech to the Buffalo game, creating takeaways, explosive plays, you see them utilizing personnel in a variety of ways it's a team that's getting better.

Came up a little bit short in the game there in the game against Buffalo but you saw a very competitive matchup and a team that's taking positive steps.

Q. Ethan, any updates there?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, actually went by and saw him this morning, and there has been progress. Yesterday opened his eyes and it was something that was emotional for everybody, to be honest with you. Still a long part of the progress in his process moving forward, but it was -- it puts all things in perspective, the appreciation of a blink.

He's fighting. His family is there and so very supportive. There is still some major steps along the way that we're all going to be believing for and supporting and continuing in our prayers, but just grateful for him and his family.

Ultimately, as we go through life, I mean, it's so very precious. I think even in our world right now there is -- it is a very challenging time. I think we see just so many things around that we a responsibility. We're called on this earth to love one another. Yeah, there will be plenty of differences that we all have, but to be able to -- and it's a challenge to me and challenge to everybody that I think is out there, to be the example.

You know, we're all going to be faults and differences and all those things. But to truly just love one another and be able to work and to be a part of the good that's out there, you know, because it's -- there is too many things that are happening that -- there is just the value of life and just the appreciation of what we get to do here on this earth is special.

To be able to be there and see Ethan, a young man that for all things, like literally was just in the wrong place at the wrong time, mistaken situation, but now he's fighting for it every single day.

To be able to see the work of the medical team and just the -- I came in on Sunday and happened yesterday, and walked in that team meeting and I had probably one of the biggest smiles on my face, you know, just to tell them that he had taken a positive step and to see their reaction and their love for though young man that's been here for a short period of time but is a part of their family.

You know, had Earl here for the last game. What he

means and what their family means to us. It's just -- I think we all have a responsibility to help push and make this world better. For whatever beliefs, thoughts, experiences that you have to go through, I mean, to be able to lead with love and to be kind and empathetic to others I think is a big challenge for all of us but something we all need to be willing to rise up and be the example for.

Appreciate you asking about Ethan. We're going to continue to be praying for him and praying for great days ahead.

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