

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Coach Mike Norvell

Press Conference



Florida State 42, Wake Forest 7

MIKE NORVELL: Just to start off, so very proud of our players. Grateful just for their work, for their performance tonight. Grateful for our fans, wonderful homecoming crowd. We felt a lot of energy tonight. Seminole Heritage celebration, just a wonderful partnership we have with the Seminole tribe of Florida.

You just look up in the stands, and just seeing an excited fun celebratory Florida State crowd, I know it's been a rough month leading up to this game, and obviously have had to face some disappointments, but like I said, our players, they've been putting in the work. They've really poured into each other, poured into the staff. Our staff is continuing to pour into them.

Just to see that show up tonight and to have a dominant performance, one that all three phases had an opportunity to make great impact, I just loved the joy that they had.

I know we've talked throughout this year and used the term complementary football. That's what it looks like. When you have each other's backs, regardless of what happened on the previous play, seeing guys that just continue to focus on doing their job, in the moment, the one play, and they answered the call.

All in all, it was just a great night. Like I said, I'm proud of the guys and what they were able to do, and hopefully we'll just continue to push so that this next week we can go take another step and continue to elevate our game in the way that we play.

Q. You talked about players pouring into coaches, coaches pouring into playoffs, we just talked to Tommy, Earl, Ja'Bril, Duce, and they all talked about how much you did for them not just this month but throughout this season. When you have that team and that relationship with these guys and you're able to do what you did today after the last month, what does it mean for you personally?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, pouring into people, it's because you love them, you believe in them, and that doesn't -- just because you love somebody and you work for them and you just try to make all the investment, it doesn't mean you're always going to get exactly what you want, but are you willing to be consistent with it, or is it just whenever you have the positive results you're going to be positive or negative results you're going to be negative.

I am grateful for the opportunity to coach these players. I know what we ask them to do. I know what we ask them to do on the field; I know what we ask them to do off the field, in the classroom, the challenge that they must embrace being a part of this program.

When you come up short in games, when your record is not what you want it to be, the identity is going to be put on display. I don't just say it because it sounds good; they're my heart. They're family to me, and they said yes to being a part of this program, and we said yes to them.

I think it's a team that is very capable, and just to see them continue to try to grow and to be better and to go and showcase what they're able to do, even with a lot of challenges and probably a lot of things on the outside that make it difficult in today's age of college athletics. I think you see that across all of college football.

That doesn't change how I feel about them, and it definitely is never going to change what I'm going to pour into them to help them go and allow their identity to be put on display like it was tonight.

Q. You touched on it, and Tommy said that they hear things that are out there and they see things. It's probably never been tougher in college football than it is right now. How do you think they've been able to block some of that out, and did you see signs of that over the last couple weeks that okay, they're still right there?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I know I say it, but you see it in the work. You see it in the meeting rooms. When you come up short, it's going to be sad. It's going to hurt. You're going to have those emotions. But it's still about



guiding individuals yourself through those emotions. To be able to make it a positive, to make it something that you can respond to and show that that's not going to detail you from ultimately where you want to go.

For this team, I saw it in the work. I saw it in how they competed with each other. I saw it -- I'll mention that we did a lot of good-on-good work, just the competitive spirit, the drive, guys that were pushing to try to take their game even to another level.

Even in the swings of practice where it was maybe good for the offense or good for the defense, the energy, the investment into that next play was what gave me a lot of confidence in what would show up here this week.

But you've still got to go do it. There's plenty of detractors that can keep you from it and there's all the distractions in the world if you're willing to listen to them.

Obviously as a player, coach, anybody in today's age, you can't bury your head in the sand. It's going to be brought to you or you're going to have people that are going to all have an opinion of things.

But what you do with it and what you do with your moment and how much you're willing to pour into those that you get to do it with, that's what makes it special.

Like I said, I saw it in the work, and I saw it in how they approach the meeting room. I saw it in the gratitude they had when they moved into that facility. We've got a great team, and like I said, even after a disappointing outcome, I love coaching this team. They put on display what I expected them to do.

Q. You mentioned during the bye week that guys did some self-scouting. What did you learn about the group in that? What did you apply, and what did it produce tonight for you?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, when you go back and you look at a course of a season where you're -- essentially you're seven games into it as you're going through and you see how there's not just one area or one focus or one thing that was keeping us -- there were different things that showed up at inopportune times. Some things we could control, some things we couldn't control.

You try to get a sense of guys that you're seeing that progression throughout the season. Sam Singleton is one that comes to mind. Even the way that he's gone through practice, just the confidence that's growing in him for what he's being asked to do, how he's being asked to do it. He got to start tonight, and he made the most of it.

We've got a very talented group of backs, and I think you saw guys that all made plays at different times, and they're going to continue to make plays.

But it's still about trying to put guys in the best position. There's always plays that you'd like to have back. There's things that you make adjustments to throughout the course of the season, so when you get to do those self-scout opportunities -- we try to do that week to week, but really just taking a deep breath during the bye and seeing it, man, we are close.

Even though the results did not play out the way that we wanted them to, there was a lot of belief that man, if we would kind of take a deep breath and control what we can control, I thought that we would have a great outcome in the game, and obviously they did that.

Q. When you end a losing streak like this -- a win is a win, one point or 35 points. But what do you think it does say about this team that it was one of your most dominant wins since you've been here when you look at the overall stats? What does that say about the potential of this team and the way they responded to the bye week and the loss at Stanford?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I think it speaks to their character, their identity, how much they believe in each other and how they were willing to work. That's a Wake Forest team that -- I know I mentioned it at Monday's press conference; that is a team that's played really well. They really played to win against Georgia Tech; obviously they beat SMU, which I think SMU had a good win today, too, so that was a team that was very capable. But we went out there and we played Florida State football.

It was our players. I thought our coaching staff did an outstanding job of putting them in a great position to play fast, to be able to adapt and adjust throughout it, but yeah, I do think it makes a great statement for just the character and the belief that those guys have in what they can do and who they're doing it with.

Q. When you say it's a joy to be able to watch those guys have fun just given what the last month was, what this could have been, for it to be fun, what did that mean to you to see them enjoy themselves?

MIKE NORVELL: Because it tells me that it really comes down to they truly care about who they're playing with, who they're getting to play for, the coaches. We were flying around with all that we had this week just trying to show appreciation.

Right before the pregame meal, that's all I really said to them is just I'm grateful for you. I'm grateful for the work that you put in. I'm believing in what that performance is going to equal. But regardless, I appreciate you and I appreciate who you are.

I think that when there is that relationship between player and player, between offense and defense, coach to player, coach to coach, that's what makes this game and this journey so worth it. It was fun watching them compete, and then obviously just seeing them go out there and play the way they did, just proud of them.

Q. You spoke briefly about Sam Singleton, but just following up on how he has not only performed but having to wait his turn and having to be in that mixture of these running backs, what does that really tell you about him waiting his turn and about his character?

MIKE NORVELL: Well, obviously every player wants it all yesterday. Everybody wants the immediate, the fast, the feel-good, all those things. But Sam, what I've really appreciated about his journey is man, he understands exactly where he is. He understands the things that he needed to continue to grow and be better at, and every single day -- he's been here for a few years, and I cannot think of a day where he hasn't showed up and just poured it in. These last few weeks, and you can go back and you can look at spring, there's a flash; he would have his moments. Fall camp, there would be a flash.

But now it's really starting to take hold. There was no hesitation tonight. He was confident. He trusted his eyes. He trusted his feet. I thought Coach Malzahn and obviously the offensive staff put together a great plan of being able to create some space against a good Wake Forest defense, and the players took over from there, and Sam was a guy that definitely took advantage of it.

He knows there's still a lot of areas that he's got to grow and get better, but it's also a lesson to a lot of guys that are on our football team. It's just you stay the course and continue to control you and those areas of where you can get better, and great things can happen. It was a great game for him, but I think it's just the beginning for what's ahead.

Q. Duce had five catches, but I think three of them set up touchdowns and then he had the one touchdown himself. You've got some great receivers, but that performance and just what he's meant to this team, can you measure it?

MIKE NORVELL: Just another guy that's really coming into all that he can be. He's a dominant player. Gus and I

were talking before the game, man, we've got to give him opportunities. Wake Forest, they've got a couple really good DBs, and I think No. 3 is a guy that -- he'll play at the next level, and he's a real one. But still, give our playmakers opportunities to go do that.

Duce answered the call. Another guy that shows up, good day, bad day, whatever it is, you're going to get all of him. He pours into this team, and you can -- just like we were talking about with Sam, you see the confidence of being able to be a go-to guy regardless of the situation that we find ourselves in.

He showed up and is just continuing to get better.

Q. You talked about the three phases of the game and the intensity they played with. Then you have what many consider the fourth phase of the game which is the sideline. In spite of everything that's happened over this last month or so, there was an incredible amount of energy radiating from that sideline that manifested itself on the field and in the stands. What do you attribute that to despite the adversity?

MIKE NORVELL: I'm going to tell you, I appreciate that question. That's the question of the night right there. That was the thing that I was probably going through it all, and the players talked about it. Even when we were breaking the rock, we had a couple players that -- Edwin Joseph gave a shout-out to the sideline because they felt that.

It's one of the things that we've had games a couple times this season where it was a bad play, something didn't go the way we wanted it to, and there would be almost a momentary silence. It's just what we've got. You're on that sideline, you're together, you work together, you buy into the talents and abilities of each other, and it was an absolute point of focus that regardless -- there were some guys that didn't even play a snap tonight but that made a huge impact.

I talked to them on Friday after our practice, and everybody had a job to do. Sometimes you want your job to be a different title, sometimes you want your job to be a different role where you get more and you get to play and you get to do this, but tonight, everybody had a job and a task that they were responsible for. I think every member of our program answered the call and did their job tonight, and that energy was incredible.

I thought the players on the field, really they were fueled by it, and that's why you saw some great complementary football that showed up. It has to be real because that's where you've got to dig deep and bring to the joy of once again who you get to do it with and what you get to



represent, and I thought our fans were great with that, too, and you really felt the energy of the homecoming crowd and obviously all that that meant tonight.

Q. Only four penalties tonight coming off 13 against Stanford. What can you say about the penalty discipline tonight and how important that's going to be going forward?

MIKE NORVELL: That's critical, and we know coming off a couple games where we did not live up to the standard of what we expect, and there's still a couple tonight that, hmm, it was what it was. But I thought the guys, you felt their -- they had great intent in the discipline that was necessary.

At the end of the day, I thought it played a huge part of tonight's game, and it's absolutely going to be a top priority for us to make sure that we're owning the football, which we came out, I think we were plus one in the turnover margin. We were able to be the most disciplined team and the fewest penalties tonight. Those are going to be great avenues for success if we can continue that.

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