

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Mike Norvell

Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Appreciate you being here.

Just to start off, was a good Homecoming win this Saturday. I know I said in the postgame press conference, but I really appreciate the energy, the crowd, Saturday night. Thought the crowd was outstanding.

Thought our players, I was asked about it afterwards, but just the excitement, the energy that was being brought from our sideline, the way that guys were encouraging, uplifting each other throughout the course of the contest I thought was something that you absolutely felt, you appreciated.

I thought the guys just had a lot of fun. Not every play went exactly how we wanted, but they answered the call throughout.

Going back and watching the film, plenty of little things to be able to clean up on. You continue to grow from that. But I thought our team was dominant in their performance, really played a pretty complete game, but with opportunity for growth. Just proud of the work that the guys have put in.

I mentioned last week in media times availability, just talking about what practice was looking like. That carried over. You want that to show up every week. You want that to be the standard and expectation.

There's so many different dynamics that are going to show up in a game, whatever sometimes holds guys back, we had to get through. We had to be able to have that transition, to show up. We've seen it happen multiple times this year in games we played. There's times that we haven't been able to execute that. I thought our guys did a great job. Really proud of them.

We got a big road contest this week in a place, obviously a big game for this program, it's one that anytime these two programs go against each other. It's going to be fast. It's going to be violent, very competitive.

You're going on the road prime time, 7:30 kick. It's going to be a very hostile atmosphere for us, one that we've got to be able to manage all things that we can control, go out there and play Florida State football.

It's a talented team that we're playing. They've had some tough outcomes, some close games. You turn on the film and you see a team that's absolutely capable, one that we just have to continue to play better on our end.

I've got a lot of high expectations for the way our guys are going to answer the call. To be able to go and get our first road win, that's something important for us, something that we've got to go out there and get done.

Q. What went into the decision to start Sam after he had one carry the whole year? What was that decision? What does he give you that you weren't getting at that position?

MIKE NORVELL: As I mentioned after the game, you see his growth through practice, just the confidence of him as a runner, what he's being asked to do, some of the finer details of what we ask our backs to do, trust reactions.

Obviously Sam, he's still young in his career, but he's absolutely ascending. He's done some good things in games up to this point. Also we felt like he would provide us a great spark. We wanted to give him the opportunity that he's earned.

I think you see that position is one that we've got some talented players, some guys that have had some success, a good amount of success this year. I think Sam took advantage of his opportunity.

Really proud of him. He's somebody that shows up every single day with the right mindset, with the right approach. He's trusting his process. He knows there's still a lot of areas where he can continue to get better. He was ready for that moment. I was just really proud of him.

Q. Any theories on why you haven't been able to play well on the road this season? Anything you can adjust? A matter of keep doing what you're doing?

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MIKE NORVELL: No, you always look to adjust. You hope for the results to translate, whether you're at home or on the road.

We've had our moments. Obviously this year there was times in the Virginia game that we played at a high level, there's times that we didn't. Obviously didn't get the outcome that we wanted.

The trip to Stanford, like I said after that game, that was one, for whatever factors that it was, that showed up. We did not go and execute. We did not go and play or coach to the ability that I know that we have. You sit there and there's been times at home that we didn't play well. We needed to get that fixed.

I thought that you saw a football team in this last game that was able to determine what it was going to be. We didn't control a lot of things on the outside. Really didn't matter. It's about what we were willing to go and put into that game, the energy we were willing to bring, the detail, the execution. Our guys went out and got the job done.

It's really got to be the same mindset. We're not going to be in control of anything that's going to show up at Clemson. The drive is going to be the drive to the stadium, the atmosphere, the crowd, the noise, all parts of that dynamic. We're the ones that get to go play and coach in this game. You prepare your mind for that. You learn the lessons from previous experiences.

There are absolutely some dynamics and some things that we've addressed in our preparation that allowed us to play really well here at home in this last game. I believe, regardless of where you play, there's some things that we know you have to show up. We've got to take that on the road here this week.

I am expecting to see our best game as we come Saturday night.

Q. You mentioned the word 'fun'. Players have talked about the last few weeks it's the most fun they've had. What let them cut loose, especially after the month you had?

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, it sucks losing. You still make the choice to go and compete.

The thing that I know about this team is they really enjoy the element of competition. They enjoy who they do it with. Sometimes you get caught up with other factors. Sometimes the fear of failure, the fear of judgment, those things are real. If you get caught up playing in games

trying not to mess up or not to lose, the worry of how something can be perceived if it doesn't go the right way.

In all reality, say the hell with the scoreboard. Just play. Have fun on this play, this one moment. Whatever the scoreboard says, whether you're up 35 or down 10, whatever that says, go focus on this moment.

You look at practice, and that's what I wanted to see in practice. That's why I felt very confident through the bye week. We got good-on-good work. Offense versus defense. Let's see the speed, let's see the competition, let's see who's going to win and lose on this play. That's what happens in practice. Every play in practice, somebody wins and somebody loses.

You don't have the crowd, the scoreboard, you don't have all the other elements that are showing up. You're still going to have the same results. It's going to be a win or a loss on that play.

Even seeing just the way that they were responding through that, good play, bad play. The element of competition, guys picking each other up, challenging each other, encouraging that response throughout the week. That's what we had to carry to game day.

Like I said, that's why kind of back to the other question, doesn't matter if it's home or away, we've got to bring that. If that shows up, doesn't matter if they're cheering or booing, doesn't matter what the atmosphere is, I mean, it's about us.

That's the joy of competition, the joy of going out there and putting everything that you have on the field, getting to do it with people that you care about. It's a lot of fun.

Q. Every player that we talked to after the game, they were really vocal in their support of you. I know you're secure with where these guys are, vice versa. To hear it publicly, to go out and play and have fun, what did that mean?

MIKE NORVELL: I show up every day to try to pour into players to go be their best. That is my driving force in life, is to help the people around, to be able to impact, just make it better. Whether it's somebody working in a different department within the program.

Whether it's the extra point ladies club there at the front desk, I want this to be a place that we uplift each other, encourage each other. Whether it's a player that's a freshman working on a scout team, or Tommy as our starting quarterback.

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When you show up every day, you're trying to pour in. You see the growth, the steps, the smile, the excitement, the celebrations. That means everything to me.

I'm grateful for our players. They have a wonderful platform to express themselves, to say what they feel. I don't need that. They show it to me. I don't need a player to tell they care about me. I look at how we interact, how we work together.

I'm absolutely grateful for the opportunity I have to coach them. I'm grateful for the opportunity I have to represent this program. I'm going to pour everything I have into it on a daily basis because they deserve it, this program deserves. All that have come before it, they deserve it. If we're not willing to do that together, that's where the problem would lie.

There's a lot of respect, a lot of gratitude. I think our players are grateful for the coaches they get to work with. They're grateful for the players they get to play with, as well. I 100% know that our coaches are grateful for each and every young man that we have within this program, the opportunity to help them go take steps to all that they can be.

Q. Tony White said yesterday that the defense played calmly. Do you feel that same kind of impression of them performing?

MIKE NORVELL: I felt that played in control. Calm, control. There was confidence in all the things that we were doing. I thought Tony did a great job having balance in the times we pressured, the times we played base, the times we showed different looks.

Our guys, they were in control of the things that we were asking them to do, even on some of the bad plays. In every defense, you don't get to take away everything. You have to understand where some of the vulnerabilities are. If somebody hits you in one of those vulnerable areas, regardless of the defensive call, you go make the tackle and you play the next play. I think we saw that really well throughout.

You talk complementary football, offense and defense. That also is complementary football within a side of ball. There are times where somebody does put together some plays. Those guys, they're on scholarship, too. Those coaches are good coaches.

As long as you're forcing them to attack the areas which you know might be a little bit of a weakness, you're making a tackle, getting them down, playing the next play, have an opportunity to create a takeaway on the next one, to make

the play on the next one. I thought our guys played confident in that.

You get to build on that. We absolutely have seen this defensively this year, there's times where guys are trying to take away everything. I'm playing this leverage, but I can't let him beat me there. Then all of a sudden you guess, take an early step, early transition, it opens up to where some of the big mistakes have shown up.

I think as Tony, our defensive staff, they're continuing to pour into these guys. Like I said, that confidence is growing in all things that they're being asked to do. Then you just got to go out there and have fun playing the game.

I thought everybody on the defensive side, coaches and players, really did a nice job. Like I said, there's still a lot of areas to grow and get better at that. That calm, confidence, it definitely showed up.

Q. Tony White yesterday said the message last week was believe in yourself, the university, the coaches. Do you think the emphasis on that really helped them play more confidently? It's not a new message, but...

MIKE NORVELL: I mean, the word 'believe' is great. You trust your training. You trust all things of who you are, what you do, who you get to do it with, you trust the process of it.

Nobody likes going through a losing streak. I hate it. It's sickening to me whenever you find those moments where you're trying so hard, you're a play there, some of the disappointments. There's times where, even through a disappointing result, you cannot be blinded by the process of growth, of capability.

That's where I've seen our team, like I said, I thought I was really proud of 'em for what showed up in practice. You felt 'em almost take a deep breath, getting back to competing, having fun, growing through some disappointing outcomes 'cause it allows you to go out and take maybe a little bit bigger step on that next one.

It is the belief in the process and the work that you're doing. Obviously the ability that you have, who you get to do it with. I thought our guys I don't want to say embraced but just applied that concept.

It's not something new. It's not something revolutionary. Sometimes when you get so caught up in the short-term result... This is a capable football team. This is a team that has high potential. We're capable of it on both ends. We showed that.



Even times we played bad, we still put ourselves in position to have a chance to win every game that we've been in this year. We haven't done that at a good enough level. Our record is what our record is. We've earned that. But what you do with it and where you go from it, we are in control of that.

I believe in the capabilities, I believe in the talent, I believe in the future of all that we have. If we can just apply all of that today and grow and get better, got a lot of confidence in how we'll perform.

Q. Who is the backup quarterback with Kevin playing in the Stanford game, then Brock getting the reps?

MIKE NORVELL: I think we've got a couple guys that are very capable. Obviously Brock went in there in the last game. Get a chance to look at all different dynamics when it comes to game situation, how we want to utilize those guys.

I felt very confident in both those guys if they have to go, if either of them have to play. Right now Kevin has played in I think it's three games that he's had opportunity of. As game situations present themselves, we're going to evaluate all things of where we want to go, what we want to do.

I've got a lot of confidence in both those guys and what they can do.

Q. Does the redshirt rule still apply?

MIKE NORVELL: It's four games, four regular-season games.

Q. Yesterday Coach Malzahn couldn't talk to us because I think he has family medical issues. Is that going to affect him at all preparation-wise this week?

MIKE NORVELL: No. Obviously our thoughts are with him and the situation within his family. I mean, it should not affect overall. He'll be ready to go for practice in the morning. Obviously working through that situation. But all things preparation-wise, I feel confident what that will be.

Q. I don't even know how to phrase this question. This team is much better than last year's team. I don't think there's any debate about it. The record is the record. The losses did stack up. The growth that you've seen from last year to this year, how could you explain that and quantify it when the record still isn't what you want?

MIKE NORVELL: Yeah, I mean, obviously you want to win

every single game. That is the expectation. That is what you work for. You pour everything in to go do.

We've had four games where we haven't played good enough to achieve victory in those four games. There's a lot of factors, a lot of different reasons why that showed up.

I do believe it's improved. It's a talented football team. I think both sides of the ball are very capable to play at an elite level. I think we've shown to be able to play with some of the best and beat the best, some of the best in college football this year. We've also shown the capability of the other.

The thing that I'm grateful for when it comes to this team, regardless of the games, I mean, you've watched them continue to fight, you've watched them continue to push, to try to overcome whatever situation they found themselves in.

We have to make sure we're consistent enough and that we respond well enough throughout the course of the game of whatever circumstance we find ourselves in to overcome, to make that one more play, get that one more stop, to be able to do what's necessary to win it.

That's what has made the last month extremely difficult, because it's not just one pinpoint issue. We had a stretch there we turn the ball over too much, had some challenging games, challenging outcomes. We had a couple games where we were not as disciplined as what we needed to be. We had a couple games where we had some challenging matchups from what we were facing. Still had opportunities to win it. So all of it combines.

But, I mean, I do believe we're a much better football team than what we were a year ago. I also believe that we're definitely capable to play at a very high level. I think we've shown that. Obviously we got to do everything in our power to prepare to go do it again Saturday.

Q. Clemson is a team that's obviously had some ups and downs this season. When they are firing on all cylinders, what are you seeing on film that's allowed them to have success?

MIKE NORVELL: It's a talented team, no question about it. It's a team that returned I think 80% of production from a year ago. I mean, ACC champion last year. This is a team that has all capabilities.

You've seen times offensively this last game, I mean, played at a very high level. You could really see them kind of coming into their own offensively, playing with a lot of confidence defensively. Kind of uncharacteristic in a few of



these matchups where they've given up some big plays. Really you've had to work through different dynamics.

I have a lot of respect for coaches that they have. I mean, you see it in the schemes. You see it in the abilities of the players. I also know that college football is hard right now. It doesn't matter if you've got a roster full of guys that have been there, return, or a group of newcomers. It's hard across the country in the consistency.

Whenever bad things happen or disappointing things happen, you're working through it all. I know Coach Swinney, you look throughout the course of his career, what he's done there, he's going to have them ready to play come Saturday night. We're going to get their absolute best shot. They're going to get ours.

You have two programs, last two ACC champions are in this game. Ultimately we got to go play at a high level. This is going to be a lot of energy, a lot of excitement for opportunity to compete. It's going to be a lot of talented individuals on that field.

Q. When we talked to Coach White yesterday, he said the defense played well, but it wasn't a very clean game. Was there improvement? How close are you seeing the defense getting...

MIKE NORVELL: I definitely think there was improvement. In all reality, it would have been a shutout, but there were still some opportunities that were out there that we needed to be better at, where we've got to be I would say cleaner. Just some of our spacing, in a few of our matchups and things, of how we pass off. Had a couple of issues up front where there was opportunity. When I say 'up front', not always talking about D-line, linebacker, but it all kind of plays together, where the quarterback got out and was able to scramble and extend a couple plays.

There's areas where we can be cleaner. Just make sure we have all 11 operating as one. Make sure that our spacing, the leverages, alignments are right. I feel like if we do that, it will continue to help us ascend.

That's where I do have excitement for this week, what we have in practice, because you come off of a good win. Wake was a good opponent. There's a lot of area for growth for us.

I think our guys see that. They understand that. Just got to go get better.

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