

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Mike Norvell

Press Conference



MIKE NORVELL: Good morning, everybody. Appreciate you being here.

Coming off of Friday night, I know I talked to you in post-game, but obviously it was a disappointing outcome. Just a game where we get our opportunities, did not play as clean of a game that is necessary to go win on the road with minus 4 in the turnover margin, missed opportunity on a fourth down conversion offensively.

Even when we moved the ball, which there were times we moved the ball really well throughout that game, just was not able to capitalize with points on multiple drives, which a couple missed field goals. Obviously the interception there going in, and just at times just struggled in operation.

That was something that's disappointing to see. In a game like that, you're going to feel the back and forth, but you've got to take control of the momentum when you have it, and you've got to be able to go finish drives.

Coming out in the third quarter, I thought it was a bad sequence and set for us. We came out with a three and out, we had a penalty, put us behind. Then gave up a 13, 15-play drive that allowed points there to start the second half. We've got to be better in those situations.

Ultimately our guys, I thought they battled. I thought they definitely pushed and competed. We had some unfortunate situations that showed up there in the fourth quarter, but I thought, even just for the defense and their mindset and approach, putting us in some challenging places, they were definitely battling. Unfortunately, it wasn't good enough for us. We give up a late touchdown and just were not able to do what was necessary to go win that game.

For us, you come back, like I said after the game, you have to own the issues and mistakes and missed opportunities. You've got to own it, and you've got to fix it. I believe in the capabilities of what this team can do, and ultimately we've just got to go do it.

Obviously this week is a huge week. Big game for us, trying to push to go get your sixth win obviously in a rivalry game. You're going on the road. Everything that's surrounding this game, I mean, it's huge. That's going to be every bit of our focus.

As we came into work yesterday, I thought the guys understand that. They've got the right attitude, the right approach. I know they're continuing to invest and working to get better and pushing each other, challenging each other, picking each other up in times when it's needed.

I am grateful for this team and what they are investing into each other, but at the end of the day, we've still got to go get the job done. That's our focus for this week and definitely excited for the opportunity that we have in front of us.

Q. As you mentioned, you guys still have a lot to play for this season, but with the news yesterday and the topic of examining the program and evaluating changes that might need to be down the road, was that part of your guys' conversations in terms of agreeing on some of the same issues, or have you guys even gotten to that point of figuring out what you're going to do?

MIKE NORVELL: No. Obviously I'm grateful for the administration and their belief in myself and what's ahead for us. As I've mentioned throughout this year, I've got an elite level of confidence in what we're -- where we're going and what we're going to be able to accomplish. At the end of the day, you're always evaluating -- you're evaluating when it's good. You're evaluating when you see disappointing and experience disappointing results, and that's what we've done.

There's a lot of things that we'll continue to take a broader scope, you look at as we get into the off-season, after we get through this year, but I'm always -- I'm evaluating throughout the course of the year week to week obviously in every part of our program just to be able to push it and to be able to take the proper steps for us to be the best that we can be.



Like I said, we've had conversations, but this week all of our focus is on going to Gainesville and doing everything we can to go get our sixth win for the season.

Q. Have you guys talked about, do you have plans to contribute to the Vision of Excellence campaign like you did this season for next year?

MIKE NORVELL: No.

Q. If you guys stay at five wins for the regular season, would you be interested in going to a bowl game if that's an option for you guys as a five-win team?

MIKE NORVELL: Our focus is on doing everything in our power to go get our sixth win.

Q. I assume this is hard to evaluate, but how much of the changes discussed in the release yesterday could go to the front office, and what role will you have in, I guess, front office type of personnel hirings moving forward?

MIKE NORVELL: You look at any time that you work through a season -- like I said, good, bad, indifferent -- you want to evaluate all aspects of it. We're going to continue to do that and do everything in our power to make sure Florida State is positioned to achieve elite level success. We'll get to that as the time comes and continue to push the program forward.

Q. Staying on the topic of front office, what has changed in the six years you've been here with regards to what is needed from that side of the aisle for you?

MIKE NORVELL: Just big picture, the world has changed in college athletics. It's not even close to what it was -- transfer portal, NIL, rev share, all the dynamics that come with that. So when you look at what you have and the structure and the setup, the different dynamics of player acquisition, evaluation, availability, all of it, it's expanded beyond anything you would have thought of six years ago.

You look at -- that's part of all things you evaluate. Are we structured, positioned to be the best that we can be in this new age and this new world? Things that you look at, things that you evaluate, and we'll continue to push towards that as the season is over and as we transition into what's ahead.

Q. A couple weeks ago you told us that elite level confidence, you will win championships here. I know that yesterday in the statement you talked about setting back to the championship standard. As you're measuring that and evaluating whether it's players,

staff, personnel or just the program as a whole, what is it that you look for, and what do you think that you need to bring in to kind of achieve that?

MIKE NORVELL: Obviously we've got to be more consistent. We've shown flashes of being able to play at an elite level, but we've not been consistent enough or we haven't played in a sense of complementary football, especially there on the road, something that we've got to continue to improve upon. We've got a young team. We've got some young players, we've got some guys that do have experience, but ultimately it's still about the application of that.

I don't think we're far off. I mean, there has been some things that have happened this year -- we've earned the results of games, but we've also had some very unique dynamics that have contributed to that and to some of the negative outcomes that we've had.

I believe that we are close. You lose six games, and it sucks. Like I said, we have absolutely not been close to the expectation of what I have for this team, for what I have and for what I know is the overall expectation of Florida State football in general. But I do believe in where we're going. I do believe in some of the progress that we've been able to see, but it's not consistent enough.

Even in games, where there's -- it's not like there's games where we haven't showed up. We've been able to gain yards. We've been able to hold teams to less. You go through all that, but it still ultimately comes down to making the plays in those critical situations, in those clutch moments that are going to push you to having success in a game.

Like I said, we've done that against really good teams this year, and we've done it to where multiple score wins over really, really good teams, but we've also put ourselves in position to have some production in a game but not do the things that are necessary to go win the game.

That's where, big picture evaluation, all of us, we have to own that as coaches, as players, and making sure that the proper steps and the proper application, and sometimes just going to make the play when you are in that moment, I think is huge. I've seen the characteristics. I understand, like when I watch this team and I watch how they play, that gives me a great deal of excitement for what's ahead because I know that they are battling every single day throughout the situation.

I pointed out to the team yesterday one of the moments Friday night that we had, just had the second punt that was a situation where we turned the ball over. As I'm walking

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over to the field where the defense are huddled, Darrell Jackson is running by me, encouraging, excited, trying to pump up his guys just to go make a stop, just to go get the ball back in that situation. Not hanging his head, not sitting there woe is us, look at what's happened to us. It was an aggressive, encouraging response to the situation.

I showed that to the team yesterday, and I told them, man, I hate the result of what that game was, but I'm proud of coaching this team. I'm proud to be around young men, leaders, people that believe so much that even in the worst of circumstances, there's a belief, and there's a buy-in, and they want to go do all they go to go make a difference.

When we give up a fourth down, a touchdown there at the end that young players have great learning experience. Talking to them today, just an opportunity for him to just get a little bit better in that situation. There was still all belief, even through what was a disastrous fourth quarter with a couple of special teams plays for us. There's still an unbelievable sense of what we could do and how we can finish.

Didn't get the job done, but when you have that belief, when you have that encouragement, when you have that just the mindset within a team, it gives me confidence for what's ahead, and we're going to build upon that. Ultimately, you got to go get the job done, but these players, they're putting everything they have into it.

Q. I imagine that announcement, I imagine it will help with recruiting, but in terms of the current players, do you think it will have any impact on them just knowing there's some clarity and stability to the program?

MIKE NORVELL: Yes, absolutely. Like I said, I love coaching these guys, and all I can go off is the actions that they have, but this team plays hard for us. We've got great relationships. We've got a lot of young players that I believe have tremendous upsides in front of them, and for them to have a sense of the stability, to say that there's pressure around it of what's it going to be, what's it going to look like, I mean, yes, it's life.

People, they're not naive to everything of the worries of what could be or what might happen, but like I told them, the concerns of all things that are out there, just go be it this week, go do it this week, have fun playing this game, have fun preparing, and let your best go show up.

I believe that, if we do that, then I'm definitely confident in what this team will accomplish and what they can accomplish now and for all things here in front of us.

Q. We all found out yesterday afternoon that you

would be returning. When did you find out, and what was that conversation like?

MIKE NORVELL: There's constant conversations with myself, the administration. There's a great presence around our program and understanding of what we're doing. To know that the decision has been made, the release is going out, that's something that I'm grateful for. I'm grateful for all the process leading up to that.

Also, my focus and concern has been trying to help pour into these players for us to go be better. I've seen positive response. We weren't good enough Friday night in what needed to be done, but that's my focus, and it's going to be my continued focus. I'm grateful for the announcement yesterday, excited about it, moving forward with clarity for recruits, for our players, for our staff, for everything that's there.

And we still have a job to do. It's about the job. It's about going to get the job done this week to being the best we've been throughout this season, and then we move to the next phase of it. I know what I want that to be. Going to get a sixth win, that's the focus, and then you get to carry it to the next part of it.

I was grateful when I did get the call that the release was going out and that it was just the decision of timing, but I've been confident that, if I could keep my head down and just continue to work, even though it wasn't the result we wanted there Friday night, that the opportunity would be there.

I'm not going to let them down, and I mean that in the sense of like I believe in what it's going to be, and I know what we have to continue to do, and we're going to get it done.

Q. With the punt returns, obviously it was unfortunate how that played into the game the other day. It seems like outside of a couple years it's been a recurring issue, maybe not to that extent, but it hasn't been a source of consistency. I'm not sure if you'd agree with that, but if so, what kind of evaluation goes into is it a personnel thing? Is it a technique? Coaching?

MIKE NORVELL: Squirrel's been -- and I'll just say, because he had the muffed punt at the end of it, but he's been a good player for us back there this year. And being able to go, I'm pleased with it, and even after the muff punting at the end, he came back out in the next opportunity and was able to field it with people on him, but every one of them matter.

He's had some big play capabilities. He's been able to

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track and go get the ball, even on short kicks, but the first punt, there's not a whole lot -- our guys did what we teach them to do. We point it out, we're calling it out, guys are reacting to it, it comes down and hits him in the head, bounces 25 yards back to the punter, who makes a great recovery of a ball that's on the ground -- I'll continue to work on being better in that situation. I don't have much for that one.

We've seen some good, and we've seen some bad in our punt return game over the years collectively, and we've had a really good year, we had the Specialist Player of the Year at that position, and then we've had years that coming off this last year was not good enough. This year we've had multiple 20-plus yard returns. We've been able to be better here in the back half of the season, but Friday night still happened. That was a critical moment, critical play.

I was proud of Squirrel coming off of that and still coming out and fielding the next ball clean, but I've got belief in who he is and what he'll be able to do. But we're always looking at each phase of what we do special teams-wise, offensively, defensively, of how we can enhance it, how we can be better. We've seen it applied at a high level, and we've also seen times where it's cost us and obviously cost us there the other night.

Q. A couple questions here. It involves Florida. Thoughts about having to face DJ Lagway? Is there something you've seen differently compared to how he performed his freshman year to this year? Also, facing a Florida team that doesn't really have that much team -- more like a team that doesn't really have that much to lose, does that make the game even tougher knowing how the season has gone for them?

MIKE NORVELL: I think DJ is an extremely talented player. There's challenges that show up. I know he had the injury in the off-season, and people just want to turn on the film, press play, and it always go exactly how you want it to, but there's real life that happens. When you miss an off-season, you have difficult situations, some of the pressures that jump onto expectations and what you think it will be and what it should look like. All that contributes.

But I mean, you see the arm talent. You see the size, the ability to extend plays. He's a dangerous player to have to go against, and he can make every throw. But at the end of the day, we've got to try to disrupt him, try to make him uncomfortable. We know the talent's there.

When it comes to their team, it's a very talented team. This is a roster that they've got good talent. They've got ability. They've got playmakers on both sides, but for whatever reason, there's been times, things that we've seen where it

just hasn't played complementary to each other. There's been some games that have gotten away from them, but there's definitely a talented team that we know we're going to give it all that they have, and they're going to get every bit of who we -- what we have.

It's going to be a hard fought matchup, and I'm looking forward to it Saturday afternoon.

Q. I wanted to ask you about a trio of players. Kam Davis didn't make the trip to my knowledge. Kevin Wynn is playing redshirt. And Jayvan Boggs, just a scary situation at the end. How is he?

MIKE NORVELL: The first two, those are a couple guys that we're looking to keep at the four games. With Kevin he does have the availability to play one more, so he could be available to play in this game.

With Kevin Wynn, he missed the early part of the season due to injury, and it kind of got to that where if it's only going to be a handful of plays, I think we've seen some good emergence in the guys on that defensive front, but didn't want him to just play that fifth or sixth game without it being a good workload. He's still been practicing, pushing, doing everything he needs.

Kam Davis is a guy that's another guy that I've seen some real improvement from throughout this season. I think he dealt with injury for the better part of it, and it just -- kind of the same situation with Kevin. Didn't want him to just get thrown in there not to maximize what I think the workload could be. But he's done a good job for us. Excited about what's ahead for him.

With Boggs, that was a scary situation there after the game. He played an extensive amount. That was a tension-filled moment. When you see a guy go down, and just to be able to be there, our medical team, the NC State medical group, they were all -- did a wonderful job of being there on point.

Thankfully, it was nothing that extended really beyond, and Jayvan was able to get himself there to the locker room. All of his status and vitals were in good shape. He traveled back with the team and was ready to go here yesterday as we've continued to monitor him. So just definitely grateful for that.

Q. Curious with Tommy Castellanos in particular, I don't know if you call it a waiver or an appeal or whatnot, have you heard back on his status for next season? If not, what are your thoughts about a development plan of maybe pushing him, if he were to come back next year, what you think you might be able



to get out of him?

MIKE NORVELL: Those are obviously all things in process, and we'll see how it goes. Our focus is on this week, going on to play the best game that we can play. I know that Tommy, I mean, he invests a lot, and his potential and future growth in this game, I do believe he's got a high ceiling.

His work ethic and the determination which he brings gives me a lot of confidence for what he can be. Whether he does get another year, or if not, I know he's going to work to maximize the opportunity he has playing this game. Definitely appreciate his work ethic.

Q. When you look back at this season, you could make an argument that out of the six losses, four of them came down to one or two or three plays. If they go a different way, you win those games. By the same token, those games came down to one, two, or three plays. At the end of the day when it's all stripped away, is it just about getting better players where it doesn't come down to one or two or three plays? I know that's always a coach's goal, but is the roster talented enough to go compete at a championship level?

MIKE NORVELL: I believe that we have the talent to do that. I do believe that talented players -- and how do you say that? How do you evaluate that? I mean, you look at the potential of plays, and then they're capable of really elite, and then we also are giving other teams opportunities. You've got to show up, and you've got to be consistent and play. You've got to make sure that you play off of and well together as a team.

But I think that this roster, where it is, it's going to continue to grow and get better. When you look at the skill positions, obviously we know some areas we're going to have to continue to push in enhancing the roster, and we have some positions that are probably not as good as what we need it to be. We're going to continue to see the guys that are there elevate and grow. Some guys are freshmen that are playing those positions, and it gets me so excited about what's ahead.

But right now we've got to see that continued growth, but I absolutely believe that the talent on this team is good. I think it is -- we're very, very close, and you can look through the season and not a game that we came out of where I said, oh, my God, we're so overmatched in that game. We played some talented teams, but I think we've done a good job of being able to identify guys that could come in and could play at an elite level. We've just not done a good enough job of consistently and

complementary football showing up week in and week out.

When you come down and you look back and you see four games that -- pick a play in any of those games, it's a different result, but the results don't count, like you still have to make it. I could sit there, and you look at a bunch of those games, well, if they would have seen it this way or gone that way or if the ball would have bounced differently. But we are who we are.

Our record is what it is, but I do believe in the people that we have that are out there playing, and I believe in their capability. Now, do we all have to grow and get better? Yes. Do we have to evaluate all things? Yes, for sure, because the results are the results. But when it comes to the talent on this team, I think we've got really, really good talent.

I know some guys may not be -- might not have garnered as much recognition when they came to Florida State, but we've got some guys that are playing as true freshmen right now that for whatever they were or perceived, I mean, they're showing that they're going to be some of the best players in college football here in the next few years.

You see the emergence of guys like Micahi Danzy, that yeah, we're excited for a guy that can run fast, but you're seeing a real football player that's emerging, and he's not the finished product. He's still got so much areas to grow.

The Desir brothers, obviously those two guys are -- I mean, they're producing and you're seeing the confidence of them continuing to grow, but we've got -- we played a lot of true freshmen. We're playing a lot of young players on our roster, but I believe in the talent of it, and we're going to continue to get better.

Q. You talked about the play where the ball hits KJ. Obviously just a ridiculous set of circumstances, and you guys have had some tough breaks. Then you also in that game had to call a timeout because of personnel and too many men on the field and things like that. How frustrating is it to happen at this point in the season, and how do you address it to get all that stuff ready?

MIKE NORVELL: I think, if you look at the course of the year, we had two times where we had to call a timeout because of either a personnel or a communication issue offensively. They were both in that game. The 12 men on the field, like that was down to the goal line, player didn't see the signal, we're yelling, and it's all -- but it's not something we've lived in.

For that to show up late in the year, it goes back to

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whatever is around, whatever is going on, the circumstance of it, the -- that's where you've got to take a deep breath, stick with the true fundamentals of communication, getting your eyes where they need to be, and then going and executing whatever it is that's being asked of you. There are frustrations in that, but this is not a team that has lived in it.

I told the guys, we talk about focus penalties or penalties, things that we can control, what you mentioned, focus penalties, timeouts like that, those are focus issues where it might be a coach, it might be a player, we're all in it together. And the games that we've won, we've averaged one focus penalty per game. Games that we've lost, it's been four. We had essentially four players, one on coaches there the other day.

So you're sitting there like you paint the picture of what -- now, those are all things that controllable factors, and it's -- for wherever you allow yourself to go in those moments, whether it's just trying so hard that you lock up, you freeze, you get excited, you move a little early, or there's just a with all the right intentions, don't get started the right way. Those are things that we can control, and we have to be better at controlling that. It's where the emotional growth and the emotional maturity that gets to show up sometimes with young players.

I think we can build upon that, but it is absolutely frustrating that it shows up in week 11 on the road in a critical moment. We have to get that fixed, and if it -- going into this week, it's a huge priority, focus, as it has been. The thing that I know is I know our team's capable because I've seen us go and play clean football. I've seen us go, even with the pressures of having to win and doing this and doing that, I've seen us be able to execute and play at a high level. This week we've just got to go do it.

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