

Atlantic Coast Conference Football Kickoff

Thursday, July 22, 2021

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Florida State Seminoles Coach Mike Norvell

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll introduce head coach Mike Norvell. We will have coach offer an opening statement.

MIKE NORVELL: Good morning, everyone. Just wanted to start off, our thoughts and prayers are with Coach Bowden, Miss Ann. The news came out yesterday about the condition with Coach Bowden. I just want to reference his words. As he's at home, as he's resting, he talked about being at peace. I think that even speaks to the legacy of who he is and what he's all about. That's what life is about. To be able to go through a journey, be in a challenging place, a challenging moment, be able to be at peace.

Because of the impact that he's made, because of the man that he is, the coach that forever changed a university and a place, but just a tremendous example. I'm so grateful for the opportunity and the relationship I've had and have been able to form with Coach Bowden, just for who he is, the impact he's made.

To Coach Bowden, we love you. We thank you. As he's resting at home, just know we're thinking about you, the impact you've made, that you continue to make by who you are. Wanted to open up with that from all of the Seminole family to Coach Bowden, Miss Ann and the entire family. We're thinking about you and love you.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. Your first year at Florida State, a pandemic year. What can you say about navigating through that first year and what you can take from it, at the same time trying to establish some culture there for yourself.

MIKE NORVELL: Absolutely. I think 'unique' is an understatement to the year we just experienced. I'm grateful for this year. People can easily point to the challenges of what we experienced and the things we had to go through.

I'm grateful to be able to have been a part of it with this team, with the guys I get to coach. As we come in, there's been a lot of change at Florida State over the last few years. To be able to be with my players, with our coaches, it provided an opportunity through each challenge to be an example of how you respond.

That was something that we talked about throughout the course of this last year, something we still talk about today, is how you respond to all those situations. There are moments in this last year we saw great highs. We had a big win, a top five win. Then there were moments of great lows. There were things we had to adapt, adjust. We were able to do it together. I believe that really helped set the foundation and build the trust throughout our team of who we are, what we're aspiring to do, where we're aspiring to go.

I'm grateful for the challenges that we got to experience, and I'm grateful for the relations that have been built through those challenges and what that really sets up to do moving forward.

We're extremely excited about the year that's ahead, excited about the personnel we have, the guys we get to coach, the opportunity that's in front of us to help get Florida State back to where it deserves to be.

Q. Talk about the two quarterbacks in Milton and Travis. What do they bring to the table for the offense?

MIKE NORVELL: Two incredible players, also incredible young men. Who they are on the field, I mean, they're play-makers. I think you've seen that throughout the course of their careers. Jordan this past season did some remarkable things through some extreme challenges, dealing with injuries, missed time, continuing to grow and respond throughout that year.

With McKenzie and his story. Somebody that I have great familiarity with, having to compete against him, now getting a chance to coach him day in and day out.

They're two young men that they bring it every day. The appreciation for the opportunity, the appreciation for what it



takes in the process to grow and develop.

But then also an appreciation for who they get to do it with. There's a lot of guys that go through college football with a sole focus on themselves. Those two young men, they care about who they get to be with and who they get to represent on their journey.

They're a joy to coach every single day. To see them compete with each other, the quarterback position is unique, and those guys are both battling, bringing out the best of themselves and bringing out the best of each other in how they grow and how they develop and what they do on the field, off the field, in the weight room, on the practice field.

Tremendous leaders for our program.

Q. Florida State had barely one sack a game last year. Talk about the impact of Jermaine Johnson on your pass-rush, getting the heat on the quarterback?

MIKE NORVELL: That was something that was a big focus for our staff as we were going into this year. We know we need to have that impact there on our defensive front. Jermaine is a young man that has shown the ability to do that at a very high level during the course of his collegiate career. An opportunity to come to Florida State, be a guy that can truly help be the face of the defense.

The embrace that he's had, much like we just talked about with the quarterbacks, it's easy to point to the opportunity that he's looking for, but a thing that's been most impressive to me is from day one he's poured into the guys on the defensive front, talking about the expectation, about the challenge, talking about the investment in being able to make an impact in everything they do from the practice field to the weight room.

That has to be a strength for us. When you look through the years of our program, the great history that we have, that has always been a staple. It needs to return to that. I think Jermaine is a guy, the sky's the limit for what he can accomplish. People look through his career, there at his last institution, you saw the pass-rush ability, you saw the impact that he can make.

The thing I've been most pleased with is his commitment in the run game, how hard he's practiced, the physicality he's shown. He's truly looking to be the complete player and helping bring guys around him that are going to help elevate that, like Keir Thomas, like Fabien Lovett, the guys on the defensive front that have great talent and have an opportunity to get us back to where we need to be.

Q. Going into your second year, how important is it to get full spring practice, summer camp, fall camp? How important is that for your team and yourself?

MIKE NORVELL: It's been great to kind of get into that rhythm, the daily expectation of what's to come. This summer was really just a joy to be a part of, to see our guys going through that eight-week program, getting that time with Coach Storms, our director of strength and conditioning.

The work they're putting in together, it's something that's necessary because each of those experiences, the opportunity to invest the work, that's how you build a continuity, how you build relationships.

We have a handful of transfers and freshmen that have come in and joined this program, they're building their way, being able to invest and go through the challenges of the workouts, go through the spring practice, really put on display their identity and the impact they're going to be able to make within our program.

I'm grateful for the spring and all that we were able to accomplish. Leading that into summer, really excited about fall camp that's ahead.

Q. To go back to McKenzie, going up against him in the American, what can you say about what really fit in that conversation you had to bring him into Florida State, why it worked for you, why you feel like it's going to work for him?

MIKE NORVELL: McKenzie is the ultimate competitor. We had some of the greatest games in college football history going against each other. Just seeing the way he would respond. Getting to see the impact he made, not only on the field with his physical ability, but also making guys around him better.

The person that he is is what truly makes him special, kind of how he helped change a culture there at a place, the success that followed that. When McKenzie and I got a chance to connect and talk about this opportunity, that's what I promised him. I promised him an opportunity to come and compete. That's what he was looking for, that's what we were looking for, is somebody that could come in, the leadership that he provides, the way that he embraces that process. I think it makes everybody around him better.

Last year we were the youngest football team in all of college football. To be able to bring in guys like McKenzie, like Jermaine, that have come in and played a tremendous amount of football and have had that success, but also the way that they embrace the process of growth and

preparation. I think it's really provided a great example for our young guys and what they can expect, what they can do in that locker room when coaches aren't around.

We're all excited about that opportunity. I definitely believe McKenzie is going to make the most of it each and every day.

Q. Just want to get your thoughts on the opportunities via NIL and some of the things you've emphasized to the players, their approach to these opportunities.

MIKE NORVELL: I'm grateful these guys have an opportunity now to benefit off their name, image and likeness. We've tried to be very proactive at Florida State with our Apex program. We were on the forefront of that, pushing that program, helping provide the education for our student-athletes. I'm grateful for the state of Florida and the proactive approach that we've had as a state in being able to push this and really change the entire dynamic of college sports.

For these guys, they are now their own business. Building that brand, understanding what they want that to represent beyond just the collegiate opportunity that they have, being able to manage and make the decisions of where they want to invest that time, what they're looking to do that might benefit in the short-term but also the things they're still continuing to invest for what they want to do in the long-term as college football players, as student-athletes, as the men they're growing and developing to be.

For us, it's all about the educational aspect of it. I'm excited about the opportunities that have been provided for our guys, some of the things they're already getting to benefit from here in a short period of time.

I think it's exceptional for them, it's exciting for what the future holds.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you.

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