

Atlantic Coast Conference Football Kickoff

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Miami Hurricanes
Mario Cristobal
Jahfari Harvey
Will Mallory
Tyler Van Dyke

Press Conference



Q. I'm curious, for a new staff, what is the value of having a returning quarterback? What information can you get from him that you might not have access to otherwise?

MARIO CRISTOBAL: Well, good morning. Appreciate your question. Well, when you are a new staff, there comes -- or change comes with it, and change isn't always the easiest thing to get accustomed to. So when you are in a program like Miami, and you get to have these unbelievable young men and you spoke about or asked about the quarterback in particular, being the most important position on the field in terms of operating an offense, it's a tremendous blessing. We made it no secret, we recognized instantly and from far away because, obviously, you watch college football at every chance you get, is that Tyler Van Dyke in that quarterback room is very special.

You have a natural leader that's one of your hardest workers and competing to be recognized as the hardest worker that demands as much of himself as he does of anybody else. That type of mentality and that work ethic he has also displayed in the classroom and the way he approaches community service and everything he does.

It's a tremendous benefit, a huge asset for the university and the program, and certainly makes the adjustment a lot more simple.

Q. Coach, as you came back to your alma mater in the offseason and assessed the program, what did you find lacking, and what did you feel good about?

MARIO CRISTOBAL: I don't know if we find stuff to be

lacking. I think what I found really impressive was that we brought in a regimen that was very demanding, and these players attacked it and approached it with a no-nonsense mentality.

They'll tell you, it demands absolutely every ounce of what they have on a daily basis. Not only did they attack it, they excelled in several aspects of it, and we got better. That's critically important, right? Your season is going to be a direct reflection of your offseason.

It's a great start. We've come a long way, and there's a long way to go. Honestly I'm just very thankful that they allowed us as a coaching staff -- whether I played here or not, it's still change, and there's a generational gap there that we're very blessed and thankful and honored that they allowed us to bring in a regimen that pushes the way it does and that all they did was approach it with a great mindset.

Q. Retirement of the turnover chain, a lot of fans, they're doing their stuff on social media. I'm sure you had a reason.

MARIO CRISTOBAL: The question?

Q. Why we retired the turnover chain?

MARIO CRISTOBAL: I think probably the media has put more thought into this than I have. We just really focus on getting better as a program and have focused on technique, fundamentals, regimentation, academics, strength and conditioning, sports science, community service, and that's what the focus has been on.

It is not a shot or form of disrespect to anybody or anyone. Certainly history is history, and whether it's positive, whether it's inconsequential, whatever it may be, it's still history and part of your program. We're just moving in a direction that right now doesn't involve it. That's really the best way to address it.

Let's put it this way. We've been working so hard and paying attention to so many other things that, in my opinion, are much more critical to winning football games



and having success that it really hasn't been a subject or a topic. We won't be using it. You guys okay with that? We good now? Everybody got the chain stuff? Okay. All right. Thank you.

Q. Coach, given your background with offensive line, I wanted to ask you about your impressions of Zion Nelson. He has been a mainstay for this offensive line for years being to. Your thoughts on where he is at in his development?

MARIO CRISTOBAL: Explosive. Really impressive athlete. Great balance and body control. Heavy-handed, light feet. Great knowledge of the game. Great feel for the game. Understands leverage. You know, can get that second foot in the ground because he digs his heels in the ground and gets his hands inside and unlock those hips and go low to high. He is an impressive guy. He really is.

He has a very strong appetite to get better. He allows himself and wants to be pushed. He is always trying to find extra work, and he is joined by a lot of other guys on that offensive line that have the same mindset.

Between him and the rest of those guys, just really excited about that group and the team in general. He has a super, super bright future.

Q. To take a look at the fact that you are coming into a conference that's going to have this model of divisions for one more season and then switch to the 3-5-5, just what you can say about this season having divisions one more time around and what you think of that 3-5-5 model moving forward?

MARIO CRISTOBAL: It seems like an effective -- potentially effective model. When they run the numbers, it seems like over the years there's not much difference of what would have been a division model versus a non-division model.

It's weird. I've just spent five years at a place where you had to win your division before you advanced. It meant a lot. It meant a lot to programs, so that adjustment and what it means, I'm not sure yet. It seems like the results for the most part end up being the same. I think that will have to run its course and take a couple-year cohort to figure out exactly, all right, how does that really impact what we're trying to do?

Q. Coach, we hear so much about culture, changing. Is culture merely habits? How long does it take to change a culture, and is a new coach arriving, isn't that the sign of the culture changing?

MARIO CRISTOBAL: We're real simple. I think these guys will echo that. We always hammer home how you do anything is how you do everything, and that early is on time. That's got to be the most important factor in being successful and being productive. You've got to show up and showing up early also shows a level of mental intensity that something is important to you.

What's more disrespectful than showing up late? What's more disrespectful than not paying attention to get ready to do your job? Something like that would show a lack of mental intensity.

For us there really are no little things. If it's a thing, it's a thing, and things are important. They're all big things. These guys, they're made of the right stuff. They really are. Our job is to provide a blueprint that demands every ounce of everything they have. As it relates to academics, football, community service. Just doing the right things. It comes with discipline. Discipline, I've yet to see a good football team that didn't have discipline.

There are so many things that are going on that are really, really positive with our program. You know, people have asked about challenges and change this and change that. I don't like to think of it that way. I like to think of it as opportunity.

Miami has been an unbelievable program for a long time. We have an opportunity this year to get better and start elevating things to a certain standard as well. That's the way we look at it. That's the best way to honor the past, and that's the best way to go forward.

All our focus is on us right now and getting ready for camp to have the best season we can.

Q. Commissioner Phillips and other coaches have called for a national standard for NIL. I wondered your experiences with NIL in this first year and what you would like to see moving forward.

MARIO CRISTOBAL: Well, I think that it seems pretty obvious that as a university, as an athletics program that our student-athletes have done really well with NIL. As a coach you're not really allowed to delve in it. You know what I mean? Since it is part of the changes in college football, and it is a constitutional right, we have a positive mindset towards that.

We're also very fortunate to be in arguably the best city in the world and one of the more prominent and growing cities in the entire world as well. That's just constantly ascending.

All that is helpful along with prominent alumni that could be supportive in a role where NIL is a real positive thing. I know our guys have learned a lot and have benefited a lot from it, and I think as we get to know more about it, and I think that's what everybody really desires, is just a little bit more clarity so that from a direction standpoint we can all understand it better to maximize it, but at the same time make sure that the educational aspect is real, that we're providing a better path for a better future. That's what it's about, right? All the other stuff and the noise around it, I don't really get into that. It's still about these guys and their future.

When I was a student-athlete, I would have loved to have had it. We didn't. I know that the experience as a Miami Hurricane was a game-changer for me, and it's a big reason why I'm blessed to have this opportunity to come back and why I jumped right at it.

Now I have to make sure that I do everything for them to have the same type of game-changing experience. NIL is part of that now. It is. And it's a big part of it right now. It's still about keeping the main thing the main thing. You just have got to make sure that that marriage of these different things is one that makes sense and one that is productive.

Q. When you talk about coming back and, like you said, it was something that you wanted to jump on and be a part of, this university again. What feels the same, and what's different? When you step back on campus and you look around, what are those similarities, and what to you is changing at Miami?

MARIO CRISTOBAL: Well, the first thing it still is a difficult choice because when you are a coach, you spend so much time trying to get to year four, five, six, right? That's when your first recruiting class becomes juniors, seniors, right, or move on. That's what we left behind. Well, arguably the best pool of talent that Oregon has seen in a long time. Awesome guys and I'm wishing them the best.

I don't get caught up in nostalgia theater, I don't, because times change and things change. What remains the same is that Greentree Practice Field, that the work done on there for decades, for decades, the best football players in college and professional football blood, sweat, and tears out there every single day.

The camaraderie of the alumni and the current players was something that was always really strong and was a big reason why I wanted to go to Miami. I did. I loved going to practice and watching all these former players come back. They looked like assistant coaches. They would be jumping in there and coaching up guys. Probably upsetting the coaches that they were teaching probably a little bit

better than some of them, but the amount of passion and true brotherhood behind it was something I was really attracted to.

I was attracted to the level have competition on the field. That field looked like game day. Practice looked like an absolute knock-out, drag-out championship game. I loved that. I was attracted to that. We want to attract guys that are attracted to that as well and that understand the balance that comes with being a great student and being a great member of society as well.

In terms of -- I don't need a GPS to get around Miami. It's the only place in the world where I can just know every shortcut street, every crack in every street, where the one-way, stop sign, all that stuff. I don't know. I haven't had much time to focus on anything else except doing what we can to get our players to their maximum potential.

THE MODERATOR: We appreciate your time, Coach. You can switch places with Jahfari, if you'd like. We'll get our redshirt freshman up to the podium for five minutes. Questions for our first student-athlete of the day. I am very interested, Jahfari, what is your attraction to snakes?

JAHFARI HARVEY: I love animals since I was real young. South Florida kid, catching lizards outside with friends. It's something I developed at a young age and still love them to this day.

THE MODERATOR: As a follow-up, is it hard to find roommates?

JAHFARI HARVEY: Oh, no. (Laughing). It wasn't too hard. They were pretty accepting of it. Wasn't too bad.

Q. I asked Coach about culture and how long it takes for things to change for a team. You're an actual player, so does it begin day one? Have you bought in? Has the culture changed, or is that something that's going to take months, years, or maybe after you've gone to take hold?

JAHFARI HARVEY: Since the first day the new staff came, I feel like everybody bought in really well. We have a group of hard workers over at the U. It felt different walking around there. It felt like culture just changed automatically. Everybody goes in there ready to work every day. Same energy every day. Just getting ready to grind.

Q. On that D-line, obviously Coach has been active in the transfer portal to bring in some depth there. What can you say about the newcomers coming into Miami and what that transfer portal could do for that line?

JAHFARI HARVEY: We've got a lot of talent from the transfer portal. A lot of guys coming in. We have some vets, some younger guys. I feel like everybody that came will make an instant impact on the D-line. Those boys came in. Those boys bought in the first day and came in ready to work, ready to play, ready to go win some games.

Q. You guys were third in the league last year in sacks and second in tackles for loss. Yet that only led to the now retired turnover chain coming out 11 times. You guys were almost dead last in turnover margin. Can this defense force more turnovers this year?

JAHFARI HARVEY: Oh, yeah, most definitely. With the coaching we've got here on the defensive line especially, we've got some great coaches. A lot of guys got NFL experience. A lot of guys came in, I feel like we'll improve very much in sacks, tackles for losses, especially turnovers. I feel like everybody bought in, so coming fall camp working hard and we'll have a great defense this year.

THE MODERATOR: Again here from the podium, what have you been doing this offseason to improve your pass rush for this season?

JAHFARI HARVEY: With the new coaching, we go in there extra every day. After practice, after you've had a long practice over there in the spring, down in Miami it gets hot outside. So I feel like running extra when you are tired, working on that get-off after practice so you know late in the fourth quarter your legs still feel fresher than everybody else.

THE MODERATOR: Fill in the blank for us: The defense will be successful this year if... fill in the blank. The defense will be successful this year if --

JAHFARI HARVEY: The defense will be successful, but I feel like relentless effort. Relentless effort. Hard work will take care of itself.

THE MODERATOR: I'll follow up with my last one. I ask this gently going back to the snakes that you are fond of. If you could describe the characteristic of a snake compared to the way that you play on the field, what commonalities between the snake and the way you play.

JAHFARI HARVEY: A snake is always ready to strike. That would probably be the biggest similarity.

THE MODERATOR: I think that works for us. If you'll trade places with Will, we'll get our tight end up for a few minutes. Thank you, Jahfari.

We've got about five minutes with our fifth-year senior tight end. Questions for Will.

Q. You guys were 2-3, and Tyler was put into the line-up at the North Carolina game. You guys nearly won that game, and you did win five of the next seven with him at quarterback. What does he bring to this offense?

WILL MALLORY: I think when you guys see Tyler and, obviously, he has that natural confidence. Like Coach said, he has that natural leadership. He is a guy that you want to play for, that guys rally around. We're fortunate we have him on our team because I wouldn't want to be playing against him, that's for sure.

But Tyler just is a guy that's a leader. He is our guy. It's easy to follow him. It's easy to want to play for him just because of how he is as a person and how he is as a competitor.

Q. Will, you are one of the best tight ends in the ACC. Arguably one of the best tight ends in the nation, and you chose to come back to Miami. What played into you returning back to the program?

WILL MALLORY: I think there was a lot left that I wanted to prove to myself. There's a lot left that I think I want to go down and be remembered as a Miami Hurricane. This place is special to me. It would be hard to leave, and I just wasn't ready to leave yet. I'm fortunate that I get to come back with a special coaching staff, special players, guys like Tyler, new offense that I'm really excited to play in.

We've got a good tight end group too that I was excited to come back and lead that. I was really fortunate to be here for one last ride. Just excited to make the most of it.

Q. You just said being a part of a team that has this coaching staff. When you have the opportunity to move on and move forward and not have to go through a coaching change, some people would take that road. Why did you want to be a part of this Miami team with this staff?

WILL MALLORY: You know, when things were changing, we were kind of all scrambling. We didn't know what was going to happen. Coach Cristobal came in. We were fortunate to get him. Then week by week you kind of just saw the additions that he was making. It just gets you that much more excited.

I wouldn't want to play for anyone else for my last year. Really fortunate to have him, have all the other support

staff there because it's something special. He is a guy that you want to play for, that you want to work for, that you want to win for. Couldn't be more lucky, more blessed to be able to play for a man like him.

THE MODERATOR: From the podium, Will, is it more rewarding for you to break a run for Tyler Van Dyke or catch a pressure pass from your quarterback? Which would you rather do?

WILL MALLORY: Can you say that again? I couldn't --

THE MODERATOR: What's more rewarding for you, breaking a big run for your quarterback, being on the lead block, or catching a pressure pass from him?

WILL MALLORY: There's a Virginia touchdown that we had that I got to -- I kind of blocked for him, and that was pretty rewarding. It was fun to watch him run. People don't think he is as fast as he is, but he shows that he has wheels. That was a lot of fun to see him get into the end zone. That's more rewarding to watch your guys get in the end zone and celebrate with them because that's what it's all about. You know, be there with your team.

THE MODERATOR: You have 34 games under your belt, what have you learned about yourself through your own football evolution?

WILL MALLORY: I played a lot of football, and I think each year I've improved. I learned a lot about myself. Especially last year. There's a lot to improve on. It takes a lot of hard work, a lot of focus, and that's what it takes to improve to better yourself, better yourself as a player, better yourself for your team. You just have to put the work in, trust the process that the coaches put forth, and it's been good. Like I said, I've learned a lot about myself, learned a lot about myself as a player and just excited to improve on that this year.

THE MODERATOR: One last question for you: There are some records you could break this year. Do you think about such things?

WILL MALLORY: Yeah, when it's mentioned, it's cool to hear. As a kid growing up around Jeremy Shockey, Jimmy Graham, I never thought one day I would be playing here, nonetheless have the opportunity to break some records. I don't focus on that. We do what we do. Work hard, things will take care of themselves. Team success, that could come, and that would be awesome, but I'm more focused on the team and getting to work for this season and more focused on winning. If I break some records while that happens, that's awesome, but more just focused on the team overall.

THE MODERATOR: Will, thank you. You can trade places with Tyler, and we'll spend the remaining third minutes from with our third-year sophomore quarterback.

Q. What is your responsibility as a returning quarterback to help a new coaching staff kind of get established with the program?

TYLER VAN DYKE: For me I would just say leading the team, making sure everyone is doing what they've got to do. Leadership is a big thing, especially for my position. It's all about impacting guys and making sure they've got to do what they've got to do. It's all about leadership.

Q. How fun is it for you going to be working with new coordinator Josh Gattis, and as a quarterback, how difficult is it to understand a new system?

TYLER VAN DYKE: I love Coach Gattis. He is bringing a lot of things that we never had last year. Coming from a lot of the RPOs around last year, we're doing a lot more play action, full-field lead pass concepts. I'm really excited for it.

He likes to utilize the talent we have, the running backs and the tight ends to the best ability. I'm really excited for that and can't wait for it.

Q. You ended last season, the last four games of the regular season, with over 300 yards passing and three touchdowns in each of those games in a season where you didn't expect to necessarily be out there as early as you were. What can you say about what was clicking at the end of last year, and how do you build on that?

TYLER VAN DYKE: Before the season I always prepare like I was a starter. I'm always watching extra film and doing what I have to do in case the opportunity came. I think the biggest thing is confidence. You can't play football or especially quarterback without confidence. That was the biggest thing for me, and I had my team. They had my back. We just rallied behind the entire team.

Q. When you got on the field last season, I think a lot of people were wondering why you hadn't been on the field before. Did something click for you once you into games? Were you playing at that level in practices as well, or once you got the opportunity, did your play raise to another level?

TYLER VAN DYKE: I would say I improved a lot last year over the year. Like I said before, it's all about confidence and understanding your capabilities and the team had my back. I thought I was practicing well, but I feel like when I

got on that field and got that confidence from my teammates and my coaches, that was the biggest thing for me that changed throughout the season.

Q. The great Miami teams in the past had great run-pass balance. Last year you guys were 12th in rushing. Do you feel like you can run the ball better this year, or does it matter?

TYLER VAN DYKE: We'll definitely run the ball better this year. Coach Cristobal did a great job of getting a couple of offensive linemen here and really emphasizing toughness and physicality.

At the end of last season we really had one or two guys that could run the ball. Now he brought in another guy, a freshman. We got Don Chaney back. Everyone knows Rooster. I'm excited what the run game is going to be like. Coach Gattis brought in a lot of gap schemes, you know, all that stuff. I'm really excited to really balance the run-pass game out.

Q. You are a redshirt sophomore with obvious high draft potential. It's obviously hard not to look for it and anticipate what you have for not only this season, but your future. How much thought have you put into your future just beyond this season?

TYLER VAN DYKE: Honestly, I really don't think about all that. I'm just trying to focus on the team and winning because without player success, you have to have team success.

As you can see last year, we were 7-5 and only had one guy drafted. You have to have the team success to have player success.

THE MODERATOR: Your last question comes from the podium. Off the field what will you do to help your coach establish his program?

TYLER VAN DYKE: I would just say being a leader. Getting those guys to rally and everyone become a leader. He always emphasizes discipline and doing the right things off the field. How you do anything is how you do everything, like he said.

Whether that's showing up for class or showing up on time for community service, you've got to do all the details right, and then everything will come.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Tyler. Miami, thank you. Good luck this season.

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