



Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Willie Taggart

Florida State - 37, Northern Illinois - 19

Q. How much confidence did those first two drives give your offense after what they've been through the first three weeks?

WILLIE TAGGART: It gave them a lot of confidence. You see the enthusiasm those guys had, just moving around there and going our first couple drives. And like I say, it was something that needed to happen so our guys can get confident. I shouldn't say realized, but knowing that they can actually get it done. For them to go out and execute it like they did was impressive. Now we need them to be able to execute like that for four quarters.

Q. In spite of the running game never really getting going, the passing game managed to get going. How much did it help having different guys, Deondre kind of involved in the passing game, and what can be done about the running game?

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, I think the passing game was -- we kept trying to run the ball, and I thought early in the game we ran the ball pretty well, and then we didn't. But Deondre has been doing that all year, just sharing the ball with a lot of different receivers, and it's been good for us. He had time to get the ball out a couple times and executed the plays. He knew he had some talent out there, it's just a matter of us protecting and allowing him to get the ball there. And then he could have had probably a lot more. He's got to continue to get better with some of these reads. He had some mishaps here and there, but for the most part he did a good job for us.

Q. You got a good start both on offense and defense. You hit a little bit of a lull there in the third quarter. What's the key to you guys putting together a full game of playing consistently?

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, I think we've just got to continue to focus on us and the things that we're not doing right and try to correct them each and every week that we go out, try not to make those same mistakes twice. But I think a big part of it is playing a cleaner football game. We can't turn the ball over like we did. We had it on the ground too often, and we threw an interception that shouldn't have happened.

So we've got to take care of the football better and play a cleaner ballgame or you're not going to win playing the way we did today. Our guys understand that we didn't play as clean as we'd like to and we've got to get there. We're still making those mistakes, and we've got to correct them.

Q. The way you started on offense those first two drives, is that what this offense looks like and can look like when things are clicking and staying on schedule?

WILLIE TAGGART: It is. It is when we can execute that way. Again, I go back, you saw us run the football, and when we can run the football successfully, that's when this offense can be what we all know it can be. It was good to start off that way, and we've got to put it together for four quarters.

Q. Two-parter on Terry. How big was that catch? That 78-yard touchdown obviously opened some things up, and I think that's three touchdowns for him and eight receptions. Is there a reason why he's not getting the ball more than he is?

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, yeah, when the quarterback is not getting the ball to the receiver when they're open, that's probably why he didn't get more catches than he has. But it was great for our football team. I was really impressed with our guys just being great teammates throughout the game. There was a lot of guys playing, and some guy wasn't playing and gains in the pass, they'd get upset and complain and get down, and today you didn't see any of that. Guys were supportive of their teammates, and I think that made a big difference for us today. Terry could have been upset he wasn't getting the ball, but he was a great teammate, and when it came for him, he took advantage of it.

Q. Tell me a little bit about Ricky's performance tonight, hitting three field goals over 40 yards and that 50-yarder before halftime where it seemed like a lot of the players were happy for him.

WILLIE TAGGART: It was big, just like our team has been struggling, Ricky was struggling, too. It was great for him to have those opportunities and to take advantage of it. The thing I was excited about, those kicks that he made today were the same ones that he missed early in the year on the left hash, so he came back and made them all today. We told Ricky from the beginning we believed in him and know what he's capable of and he knows what he's capable of. It's just a matter of going out and blocking all the other stuff out and kick the ball, and he did a great job with it, and just like our team got better, he got better today.

Q. Initially in the first part of the game, guys were much more physical on defense. Is that kind of how you want to see them attack ball carriers and send them back yards?

WILLIE TAGGART: Absolutely, you took at what our defense did today, they held them to about six yards rushing, and that's something we'd like to do each and every week. If we can make a team one-dimensional, it gives us an advantage. I thought we gave up too many passing yards there late in the game. We could have did some things a lot better. But to be able to stop their running game, which was something they do a lot of, was really impressive by our defense.

Q. How cool was it to also see Amir get the end zone, and then the reaction of his teammates to that touchdown, and following up is he somebody that be a bigger part of the running game moving forward?

WILLIE TAGGART: We've got a lot of great backs, and it was really neat for Amir to score his first touchdown, and I think all his teammates were excited because he finally got in the end zone. He's been working really hard. Amir, again, another great teammate, never complained about anything, he's just ready for whenever we call on him. He plays his role and does a great job at it, and it was great to see him not only score but run the ball hard. I thought he ran the ball hard when he was in there as well.

Q. Defense got the chance to play from ahead this year. How do you evaluate how they did in those circumstances and where there's still room for improvement?

WILLIE TAGGART: Like I say, (indiscernible) what they did in the run game. Again, you want to stop and

make a team one-dimensional, but once we make them one-dimensional, we want to take advantage of it and we didn't necessarily take advantage of them when they had the throw. Would have really loved for us to get some sacks in there and not give up some of those that we gave up. If there was room for improvement, we can be a lot better in our pass defense.

Q. The offensive line, that was a group that probably a lot of people wouldn't have expected to be out there to start this game early in the season. How did you evaluate their performance? I know there were a couple breakdowns, but it seemed like they gave you an opportunity to run the ball.

WILLIE TAGGART: I've got to say we got better up front. For us to go out and execute like we did and score the points that we did, it all starts up front, and those guys did enough for us to do that. Are we where we need to be? By no means are we there, but our guys made improvement in it, and they took pride in it in practice last week to get better and not make any excuses for where we're at, and it paid off for them. We just need those guys to get better, and hopefully here soon we can get some guys back, but those guys need to keep improving and get better to be really good football players.

Q. How important was it to win the time of possession battle? How important was that to keeping some sort of consistency on defense throughout the game?

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, I mean, I guess it was good to have the ball. That means we were converting on some 1st downs when we did, and it means our defense was getting off the field. It's always great to have great time of possession when you score more than the other team. It was good because our defense didn't have to play as much as they have been in the past. To have time of possession, it means our offense was doing something.

Q. You had one penalty and one turnover in the first half, and in the second half you had eight penalties and three turnovers, seemed like the team was a lot less disciplined in the second half. What happened?

WILLIE TAGGART: Like you say, we were a lot less disciplined than what we were in the first half. We talked about it all week playing winning football, and we had been killing ourselves with penalties. We talked about it at half. We only had one at the half, and then you come out and you get a couple, line up offsidess on defense. Again, that's selfish. That's just -- you've got to (indiscernible).

Again, we've got to play cleaner. We can't do that to ourselves. All those things are correctable, and our guys got to understand that. If we're going to be the team we need to be, we've got to cut that down, and against a good football team, it'll kill us.

Q. You could have taken a knee there at the end instead of running it out. How important was it today for this team to punctuate this win?

WILLIE TAGGART: For us we're just running our offense. I think it's more important that our offense continue to try to get better. I wouldn't say that was running it up. What did we score, 30 something to 7? I think we scored 7 last week, nobody talked about running it up against us. I think it's important for our team to get better, and we know we have to do that as an offense and every opportunity we have to get better, that's what we're going to do.

Q. You talked about practice this week; was there something that was done differently on coaching offense?

WILLIE TAGGART: I just think our players decided that enough was enough and that they were going to hold each other accountable to practicing better and to be better in meetings, and it paid off. I mean, you guys seen this week guys getting upset when guys dropped the ball, and we didn't see that before.

Guys would say, no, Coach, let's not move on to the next play, let's get this corrected.

That's why we talk about them having ownership in this, and they decided to do that. It wasn't a coach up there saying anything, they said enough is enough. It paid off for them. I really think that meeting they had made a difference on the sideline with our guys being great teammates and not being selfish and playing their roles. And again, that was important for our guys more than anything because that was something that helped us back a little bit earlier in the year, as well. They're learning. They're learning to get better. They're learning how to win, and we've got to continue to get better and understand that. Again, those mistakes we made today, we can't do that against a good football team.

Q. And you said the improved practice was because of the team meeting?

WILLIE TAGGART: I think it was because they decided they wanted to practice better. They wanted to come out with the sense of urgency that we need and practice every single day and not hang their head down because things wasn't going well. Just they came together and they did that themselves, and the next day at practice it was different. For me it was back where guys were initially before our first game of the year, and that's something that needed to happen.

Q. Looking at the stats, you had five fumbles, you lost three of them. Obviously that's something you said that can't happen against good teams. What can you do this week to address that in terms of the ball security and emphasize that?

WILLIE TAGGART: A lot of it is just trusting your instinct. I think a lot of those balls that were on the ground was -- a couple of them were just reads where the quarterback got a read whether to hand the ball off or keep it, and he can't be indecisive when that happens. Another one was a strip, from a strip sack. That can't happen. I think decision making and trusting your instinct when it comes to those plays where we have multiple decisions as a quarterback to keep the ball off the ground.

And then from a running back standpoint, you've got to hold on to the ball. As simple as that. Each guy got to take pride in taking care of all our dreams, goals, and aspirations. That's a one-two thing and a pride thing, and our guys got to be a lot better when it comes to that.

Q. You've had a lot of high snaps not only in this game but throughout the season. Can you explain a little bit about the percentage that maybe the defensive line as well as an offensive error?

WILLIE TAGGART: I don't remember that -- we had that one today that went over his head. I don't remember a lot of them that caused us a lot of issues. But that was bad, and that was critical. We were down in the red zone and we were moving the football, and snap it over the quarterback's head, and again, those little things that kill you when you're playing against a good football team. And our guys, we've got to learn to play a clean game consistently, and we haven't been doing that. Again, we were better today, but we're still not where we want to be to be an elite football team.

Q. (Indiscernible) How special do you think he can be, and how nice is it to see one of those freshmen receivers out there making plays?

WILLIE TAGGART: He's going to be a really good football player for us. He's still learning, as well, and we all saw today -- you all saw what he's capable of doing. I think each and every week that goes by, he's only going to get better and get comfortable with what he's doing, and as he does that, I think you'll see him playing a lot more for us. Again, he's a talented football player. He's a young one.

That's getting better, and I think he'll be a kid that we all get excited about when his time and his career is over with, he's going to be one of the better ones that played here.

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