

# Florida State University Football Media Conference

Saturday, October 20, 2018

## Willie Taggart

Florida State - 38, Wake Forest - 17

WILLIE TAGGART: Get out there and compete and get better in some of the areas that we needed to and improve in those areas and find a way to win a ball game. We were in the same position a few weeks ago and didn't finish, and our guys came out and finished this ball game today, and that was good. It was good for our football team and good for us as we continue to move forward.

**Q. Coach, can you talk about your slow start on your drives. You had the punt, and then what changed on the offense to finally get the touchdown going?**

WILLIE TAGGART: We started slow, and they did some good things there early. Once we settled down and started to get a little rhythm and got that first first down, things started to roll for us there. Wake Forest, I mean, a lot of teams they play, typically the same things happen. You start slow, but our guys stayed with it and found a way to make plays, and then we started rolling.

**Q. Coach, obviously, after the first quarter, you guys were down 10-0, but from that point onward, you guys only gave up 7 points and less than 170 yards and only 11 first downs. So what really flipped the switch for the defense where they were able to adjust effectively?**

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, I thought we stopped substituting so much. They were going up tempo, and when we did that, it allowed our guys to get set up and be in position to be able to make plays. What was happening, we were substituting, and guys aren't set and ready and where they're supposed to be. That's tough when you're playing an up tempo team, and they run RPO.

So you've got to at least be aligned to be able to execute the job. We didn't do a good job of that early and made -- not necessarily made the adjustment, we just stopped substituting as much as we were, and it helped us.

**Q. Coach, at the point where you guys were down 10-0, they had the fourth down and you got the stop. Brian Burns made that big sack, and you guys went down to score, and it really seemed to flip the switch. How big was that turnaround from the sack that Burns got for you?**

WILLIE TAGGART: That was big. I told Burns after that he started that to be able to get that sack. That's just what our team needed, for somebody to make a play for us. Both offense and defense had a slow start. We needed somebody to make a play, and Burns did and got us going a little bit. For us to come out on offense and execute, I think it all started with Burns' play. Seems like it kind of woke us up. Let's play ball.

**Q. Cam looked like the old Cam a little bit tonight. I think it's been coming. How much of**

**that is him, and how much of that is the offensive line?**

WILLIE TAGGART: It's both. But I think it's a lot more on Cam. Cam had a great week of practice. Hadn't seen Cam practice the way he did this past week in a long time, and we told him last night, it's going to pay off. We saw a couple runs in the Miami game where he was kind of getting back to himself and not rushing things and running physical, and he did that tonight.

But I think it all started in practice. He had the right mindset. He was up there all week, and we said he was going to get better. He started making himself better.

**Q. Coach, Deondre looked comfortable back there tonight. Didn't take a sack. What did you like about the combination up front that you guys put out there?**

WILLIE TAGGART: We got the ball out quick at times. A couple times he got hit. Deondre's a tough kid. I don't think I could have done that, see those guys come running at me and just stand there and make the throw. He got a couple -- he got hit a couple times, but it was after he threw the football. But I thought for the most part we did a pretty good job up front, and he did a good job of executing the plays, whether he was throwing the ball down the field or getting the ball out to his receivers when he needed to.

**Q. Coach, in the last few weeks, something that you've kind of preached is patience as something that's important for the running backs and something that you hadn't seen leading up to this game. On that long run by Cam, is that kind of what you were talking about?**

WILLIE TAGGART: Yeah, we saw it earlier in the year against Virginia Tech too, but he can get those a lot. I think early in the year he was just pressing. Nothing was going well for us, and he wanted to help his football team. He was trying to do more. Now he's kind of settled down and just got back to being Cam and not trying to do too much, just do what he's coached to do and trust his training.

Like I say, the way he practiced last week, we all knew he was going to have a good game. It was totally different, and it paid off.

**Q. Coach, when you went down 10-0, what changes did Coach Barnett make, and just how confident were you with him at that point that he was going to be able to get things under control?**

WILLIE TAGGART: It was just getting adjusted. Sometimes in the game you got to figure out what people are doing and then adjust to it. Like I said a minute ago, I think the biggest part was not trying to substitute while they were going fast. That got us more than anything. When we stopped doing that, we started to play better defensively because we line up and we see exactly what they're doing.

So I don't think it was a lot of, from a schematic standpoint, changes. We played a lot of base defense today and allowed our guys to play -- except for third down. I think a lot of it, the big part of it was just not substituting. You have guys running in, and by the time they got in, they're snapping the ball. Once we stopped that, we played a little better.

**Q. Coach, at both USF and Oregon, the running attack was what really fueled those big**

**offensive numbers. How vital is that here at Florida State to be able to have that rushing attack and to help boost the rest of the offense?**

WILLIE TAGGART: It's very vital. This is Florida State. We keep running backs. We got good running backs, and they need to run the ball. But we say that's what we want our identity to be. We're still working to get to where we want it.

Again, like I said earlier, we're making improvements and getting better at it, but that is critical to what we want to do and being explosive how we want to. We're getting there. We're not there yet, but we're slowly but surely, like I told our guys. Climbing is easier than hanging on. We're climbing.

**Q. With some of the receivers, it seems like some guys will have better games and worse games. A guy who's pretty consistently near the top game in and game out is Noonie. What does he do so well, and how big is it to have that stable senior in a pretty young group of wideouts?**

WILLIE TAGGART: He just wants the football. He likes to have the ball every day. We like him as a receiver, but he's a heck of a football player, and he's a tough guy and has really strong hands. You know, he's one of those guys, when the ball is in his area, you know he's going to catch the ball. He's a guy you can count on, especially in tough situations.

I think he's what everybody thought he was before the season. I know I heard a lot about what Noonie could be, and he's starting to show all of us what he can do.

**Q. Going off of Cam's big game and the week of practice coming off of it. To have the production he ends up having, is that like a light at the end of the tunnel to show what he's capable of and what that hard work can eventually lead to?**

WILLIE TAGGART: Oh, absolutely. Hopefully, not just Cam, but hopefully our entire football team sees what he did this past week and the result that he got behind it, and hopefully they take it to it and other guys want to come up and learn more football and practice as hard as he did so they can get the same result that he got behind it.

I'm hoping it happens for our entire football team because we preach it all the time about not being compliant, but being committed, and we're only allowed 20 hours a week with our guys, and that's not enough time. So these guys that want to be All-American and All-Conference and all, they've got to put in some extra work to get better on their own.

**Q. Two quick questions, Willie. First off, on the -- when they were sub -- when you guys were trying to sub, did they surprise you with how fast -- I know they're a fast offense. Did they surprise you?**

WILLIE TAGGART: No.

**Q. Was it your suggestion to Coach Barnett?**

WILLIE TAGGART: Absolutely. I'm frustrated.

**Q. And I think on the Noonie touchdown, when he was wide open down the sideline, you called a time-out right before that. Did you have a feeling that play, he would be that open?**

WILLIE TAGGART: We were hoping he was going to be open like that. That was the plan with the play. It was a play these guys had ran before. I think they ran it in Orange Bowl a couple years ago, and Noonie called it and came to me with it about two weeks ago, and we ran it, and it worked again.

**Q. The other big sequence on defense was Stanford getting the interception after the fumble. One, how impressive of a play was that for him to track down the ball in the air like that, and, two, how important was it given what had happened a little bit before?**

WILLIE TAGGART: It was huge because, again, it turned the ball over, and they got the momentum back on their side of the field, and we lost it. I hate when we lose momentum. So it was good that we got it back really quick. For that ball just to kind of drop in his hand on stride, I mean, that don't happen often, now he. The football gods were with us.

But it was great to see him make a play and for us to get that takeaway.

**Q. You touched on it in the beginning that you've seen a lot of progress and made some progress tonight. Just kind of elaborate on what you've seen that you've really liked kind of from the start of the season until now going forward.**

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, offensively, we put up the most points we've put up all year. That's a step in the right direction. Third quarter, we have been bad coming out of halftime. We talked about that. We stressed it a lot during the break, during the bye week, and we came out and played better in the third quarter there. So just little things like that that we constantly preach. We had, what, one takeaway, a turnover today. That's better than we've done in the past.

So all those little things that we know that helps you win football games, our guys are doing better, and it's helping us.

**Q. Just quickly, after the fourth and out, the turnover on downs and the sack with Brian Burns, was there anything particular that the offense thought they could exploit on the defense, or was that just a product of the offense getting its groove?**

WILLIE TAGGART: I think it's more of our offense getting a groove. Our guys are executing the plays. Wake Forest didn't do anything different than what we saw on film. They played their defense, and from the beginning they played their defense, and we just didn't do a good job of executing.

Like I said, once we got that -- we got going there, then things started to happen for us. I think the one series where we had about three or four catches on that one drive and went down there really got our guys going.

**Q. You got some young guys in, Xavier Peters played some, and Tre'Shaun got to play again. Looked like earlier he had a miscue maybe, but then he comes back and has the big play. Is that just you have to deal with that with young players?**

WILLIE TAGGART: You're going to have to with some of those guys. The spotlight does strange things to some people, and those young guys are going to make some of those mistakes, but Tre'Shaun is one of those guys, he'll make a little mistake like that and then make a huge play like he did on that one catch. That was a heck of a move on there. It was pretty nice. He kind of

hit the spin button and then the L1 button and got in the end zone. That was pretty neat.

Thank you all. Be safe going home.

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