

Saturday, November 17, 2018

Willie Taggart

Florida State - 22, Boston College - 21

WILLIE TAGGART: An incredible win for our guys. Very proud of our football team. I'm proud of their resilience throughout the season and finding a way to keep this streak alive and finding a way to try to make sure our seniors leave here the right way.

Like I told our guys, we've got a prideful university, and we pride ourselves on winning. It's a resilient group of guys. A lot of guys were here last year, and they had the same thing. When their backs were against the wall, they found a way to win the ballgame. It was good to see that out of our guys.

Today they didn't give up. They found a way to come back and make the plays that we needed to make, and we got the W.

Q. Can you summarize what this win means in terms of beating a ranked opponent, beating an ACC opponent, five wins with one more win to be bowl eligible? Can you summarize what this means?

WILLIE TAGGART: It means a lot to our program. Hopefully it's the defining moment that we all knew could happen. You probably heard me say a lot that we're close, and it's good that our guys kept believing and found a way. And like you say, to beat a ranked opponent was big for us, especially a team that was struggling.

We were on a three-game winning streak, and a lot of teams would have given up and our guys didn't and they found a way. It says a lot about them, our players and our coaches to stand together. We needed it in the worst way, and we've got one more to go against our archrival next week.

Q. It was hardly Deondre [Francois]' best game, especially in the first half you saw the accuracy issues. What's that say about you in that moment on the line, he makes the throw he does to Tamorrion [Terry]?

WILLIE TAGGART: I think we've seen throughout the year he can make some bad throws, but he comes back and makes some big throws for us. All he needed to do was really settle down. In the first half, he just really wasn't himself with some things. I know one of the throws on the interception was his fault, but it wasn't his fault. It was his fault because he threw the ball and he shouldn't have. But he missed some open throws early.

But it was great that he bounced back and made the plays he needed to late in the game. It was pretty -- it was pretty neat. Danny Kanell came and talked to our team this week, and he spoke about sometimes all you need is somebody to step up and make a play and that can change

some things around. And sure enough in that game, we're struggling, struggling, struggling, and then Tamorrion Terry and Deondre make the play for us at a perfect time for us, and that was big for us.

Q. On that play, had you run a similar pass route like that all game? And is it kind of an automatic when it's one-on-one?

WILLIE TAGGART: We ran one early in the game. You saw [Nyqwan] Murray kicked one early in the game. It was the same play there. It all goes about the coverage, what coverage we're in. We know in certain coverage we're going to get one-on-one with [Tamorrion] Terry. We'll take that any time. It was good. We tried to go to him early in the game, didn't get to him. And I was impressed with Terry, wanted to make a play too, and he hung in there, and made it when we needed it the most.

Q. There was no quit in the football team tonight. Can you talk about that, and the momentum headed into rivalry week?

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, again, it just shows you the resilience of our group of guys and how important it is. Every week they come ready to practice, a lot of energy. We have good weeks of practice. It was just good to see them come and translate that to the football field today.

By no means were we perfect, but we found a way to win the ballgame, a much-needed ballgame. We're still playing for something. We're playing our archrival, and we're playing to keep the bowl streak alive. That's really important to all of us. It's important that we come in and have a great week of practice again and show up and show out next week.

Q. Were you surprised that Boston College didn't go for it late in the game?

WILLIE TAGGART: No, I wasn't surprised. Again, they went for it a couple times and didn't make it, so I wasn't surprised, especially at that time. You think about us offensively, we really weren't doing anything, so to try to get us back and stop us, I would have probably done the same thing, so I'm not surprised and I'm glad they didn't.

Q. So the offense got off to a sluggish start, but the defense is probably one of their most complete games of the season. How important was it to keep you guys throughout the game?

WILLIE TAGGART: It's great. Our defense has been doing that throughout the year. We needed it the most in the worst way this game. We knew we were going to have a team that runs the football, runs a lot. All you hear all week long is how physical their football team was, and no one would talk about our team being physical. I'm sure that ticked our guys off a little bit, and they showed some physicality tonight.

To me, that's how we're supposed to play football, especially stopping the run. We knew they were going to run a lot, and get some yards here and there, but I thought our guys did a great job of just holding (AJ Dillon) in check. A year ago he had a big game, and our guys remember that too. It was good to see that they took care of business.

Q. The way the last three weeks have gone, how did you keep this team engaged through everything that's happened?

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, we always talk about it as a football team since day one. There are four fights we've got to fight against every single day, and we've been preaching that since day one, and our guys are buying into it. One is public perception. We have to fight against public perception every single day. Two, division from within, and we can't have that. Three is fatigue. We can't get tired. And four is us versus them, and that's how it goes. Then we watch film and we're honest with each other.

When we don't do it right, we don't point fingers. Everybody's watching to see who makes the mistakes and then we go and try to fix it. I think our guys bought into it, and that's why we're not hanging our head down and why it's not hard for me to get our guys up each and every week and go play. Because they know when we do wrong, we've got to get it right. It's great that they take ownership in that.

Q. How big of a step forward do you believe getting this win after everything that's happened is?

WILLIE TAGGART: Oh, whenever you get a win after a three-game losing streak, it's a step forward again. It's not just a win. We beat a ranked team who was playing well. They lost to a really good team last week, but a ranked team that's playing well. But it was great for our guys.

They had a lot of seniors on that team that played a lot of football together. And for our guys to do that at home was huge.

Q. On the 4th and 1 late there, they're doing everything they can to get your guys to jump offsides. Given the situation, maybe the game on the line, season on the line, for them to be disciplined and see what's happening, what's that say about your defensive front?

WILLIE TAGGART: That was great. It was good. They called a timeout, because we were able to discuss that in the huddle. We can't get them a free first down by jumping off side. After you saw them run a couple times, you knew they weren't going to snap the ball. So that's something Coach Harlon Barnett, he works on weekly about our guys, sitting there and not jumping off. Same thing on some of our punts. And in a short situation, that was good to see that carry over. Our guys work on that, and they do a great job with it.

Q. You guys recently made the move with Coach Barnett to the box, and Coach Mark Snyder to the field.

WILLIE TAGGART: Wow, I didn't think you were ever going to ask me that.

Q. What has that given you guys, I guess, on both ends?

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, Coach Barnett, the last 18 years he's been in the box. Again, I know for me personally, just listening on the head set I just thought from a communication stand point and him getting his thoughts together, it would probably be better for him to be up there. And Coach Snyder has been with him for a while, and they really have a good understanding of each other, and felt like they can -- on the sideline, he can help the guys from an adjustment

standpoint, but more importantly as a play caller, being up there to see everything, how you see it all week. Just felt like he could call a better game from up there. Also, we can get the plays in a lot faster that way.

Q. I promise I'm not trying to get you in trouble here, man. Have you ever been in a game where they picked up a flag on a holding penalty?

WILLIE TAGGART: I'm going to tell you what, I'm going to be really nice. What would be really nice is if those guys had to sit here and answer you guys' questions.

Q. Agreed.

WILLIE TAGGART: I don't throw them. I don't pick them up. I don't do it. I can't answer for them. But that would be really, really neat if they did that for you all. I think everybody would appreciate that.

Q. Agreed. Also, with Cam [Akers], the last two games he's kind of looked like that guy again. Has he come around and into form? Do you see a different guy these last couple games?

WILLIE TAGGART: I do. I see a young man that's patient now. I think what we're going through in the season, and you think about him and the expectations everyone has for him, and the season starting the way it does, and he's not playing the way they want to, Cam was trying every which way to make a play for our football team, and I think that was hurting him more than it was helping him. Once he started to relax and started to be patient we started to see how he could settle a lot of those blocks up, or he could find a hole to get through.

To be honest with you, I think Deondre [Francois], I got to credit Deondre with a lot of that. He's done a great job these last few weeks of working with the backs and talking to them about slowing down and being patient. And that's been -- ever since he's been working with those guys and they've been thinking about it, they've been playing better in the run game.

Q. Just curious what's your takeaway from the secondary's performance tonight? Two picks earlier in the game, but then Boston College started to have some success passing. Was that something they did offensively or just some missed assignments for you all?

WILLIE TAGGART: I think both. Some they did, but a lot of it was missed assignments. We were so locked into stopping the run, and we come back up and get someone behind us. Again, the disappointing part of it was there in the second half they kept doing it on second down. It's like for us, we've got to acknowledge that and not allow them to continue to do those things.

But I think a lot of it had to do with them running the football, and our guys so eager to get up and stop the run. You've still got to be disciplined with your eye discipline. And they did a couple Jet sweeps to get our guys off their man, and we've got to come free. That goes back to just being disciplined in your technique.

Q. You talked about the defense a little bit and the physicality. I guess, can you explain the resiliency the group shows? They gave up a couple big third downs throughout the game, but got big stops later on. How mentally tough is this group right now?

WILLIE TAGGART: Doing great. I kept hearing Coach Barnett say we've got to make a play. First we have to get off the field. It's nobody's fault but us in those third downs. We've got to make a play. Keep playing. You kept hearing them on the sideline with our guys, and they were always confident. No one said anything negative. It was just the way the sidelines supposed to be.

It was the way the defense -- I thought Dontavious Jackson was a great leader for us today. Just him and being vocal with our guys was really good. His enthusiasm on the field was big. Then in [Brian] Burns and the way he played and made some big plays for us. Just different guys stepped up for us when we needed them to. I thought they all played some good football for us.

Q. Did you have a chance on that last drive before the defense ran out to talk to them? Did you have a chance to say anything to them before they ran out?

WILLIE TAGGART: Yes.

Q. What did you tell them?

WILLIE TAGGART: They don't have any timeouts. Lay on them, make the referee get you off of them. Let the clock run out. Keep it from going out of bounds, and not give up the big play.

Q. What did you see from them in terms of what they were telling each other?

WILLIE TAGGART: Who, our players?

Q. At the defense before they ran out for the final drive?

WILLIE TAGGART: Hey, last drive is on us. It's on us, we can finish this, and they did.

Q. To see a guy like Keyshawn [Helton] go in, a year ago he was an unranked recruit, and now he's leading FSU in catches in the game, when did you know he was ready for the role he stepped into this year, and what's it been like seeing a guy like that step out in year one?

WILLIE TAGGART: It's been great. I remember watching film on Keyshawn, and it's funny, because we're at an opposing high school, and the high school coach said you need to go over and see this kid. 'I'm telling you, Coach, he's the real deal'. He showed me film on him, and I was really impressed with him. And sure enough, I left there to go see him, you know.

But I think that said a lot, like you said, he wasn't recruited highly, but that's why we've got to do a great job of recruiting and getting in there and seeing every kid and what they're all about. When you met him, you knew he was a winner. You knew he was the kind of guy you wanted in your football program.

He was probably smallest, but he's got one of the biggest hearts. That kid will tell you from day one that Florida State is his dream school, and he was going to do everything he can to help get this program back right. We saw it in training camp what he was capable of doing. Him and a

couple other guys. And I think because of the struggle that we've had offensively, we didn't really get a chance to see some of these guys as early as we did. But as it went on, they got a better understanding of the offense, and they're making plays.

We anticipated them being better towards the end of the season. We just thought they'd get more plays and we thought we'd play better early.

Q. Wanted to ask you about the last drive when [Tamorrion] Terry scored, you had run two times before that. Were you guys kind of setting that up? Was that something that you saw this might play? And also on top of that, just your dedication to the run. There were times where it hasn't done that well. You stuck with it in this game, and how much did that pay off for you?

WILLIE TAGGART: It was huge. We said it in this game. We said it last week, but we said it in this game too, we've got to continue to run the football. That helped set up other things for us. And that's pretty much what our offense was based on is play action and clean things up. But when you don't continue to run the football, it's hard to do play action. I wouldn't necessarily say we set something up on that play. We ran the ball, and we just went back to a play that worked for us early in the game.

We knew it was second down. They weren't playing as much man coverage. They were playing a little more zone for us, and when we saw them lined up, it was like, man, this is the exact defense we wanted, and they both made – Dre (Deondre Francois) made a great play, and Tamorrion did a great job of running after the catch.

Q. You talked about trying to drown out perception to your team before the game. How different is perception from reality of what's going on with this team right now?

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, perception, everybody's outside. They're not in this building. They're not at practice. They don't see anything, you know. All they can judge off is Saturday. It's on us to change that. I always told our guys, if we want people to say good things about us, we've got to play better. If we don't play well, then they deserve to say those things about us. We don't need to put our head down and get mad at anyone who is doing their jobs.

But understand, again, with perception it doesn't change what you're trying to do. We have a goal, we have a vision of where we want to take this program, and perception is not going to take us there. It's going to be us focusing on our vision, focusing on our goals and working to get there.

But perception is reality too a little bit. So that doesn't mean we can't get to where we're going just because the perception is we're not a good football team. We've got to do the little things to make up some things against a good football team and we did tonight.

Q. This is obviously a huge win for your program. What did you tell the team after the game?

WILLIE TAGGART: I love them. Great win, and I love you guys.

Q. The job your guys did on AJ Dillon, even when he got it, it didn't come easy it seemed like maybe there was a little attitude or intensity there. Did you see that, did you feel that?

WILLIE TAGGART: Yeah, I did. That was the first time I saw a defense fly around to the ball. It wasn't just one guy, it was two, three, four guys flying to the ball. To me, that's Florida State football. You just run and see multiple guys hit. I haven't seen our guys play like that.

They played with a lot of passion, you know, again, that's what we want all the time from our guys. But, it was, again, they focused on that all week, and said we've got to stop the run. I'm sure a lot of them saw some film from last year what they did to us. That was demoralizing and we couldn't allow that to happen again.

Q. You and Coach Barnett talked this week about how resilient the team has been even though they've been losing. I guess, how happy are you for them to have something good happen to them on a Saturday?

WILLIE TAGGART: I'm very happy. I told our guys before the game it wasn't much for me to say. I've said it all year. I just want them to go do what we do in practice. I get frustrated because we have a great week of practice, and we don't show it on Saturday. It's like enough is enough. I've said everything. Now we've got to go out and do it, and our guys did it.

Q. Traditionally we've seen your defense blitz a lot on 3rd and long, today we saw a lot of more seven and eight man drops in zone coverage. Can you tell us what you were looking for?

WILLIE TAGGART: Yeah, we were trying to get guys back to see the ball so they can play the ball, and hopefully we can get some more turnovers. Again, you can't keep doing the same thing and think we're going to get different results. That time we tried something a little different, especially when we knew they had to throw the ball. It was disappointing on those third and longs, we allowed them to do it.

But it was just a changeup of what we have been doing. I think you've seen early we blitzed and played man coverage, and you get pass interference. But we try to help ourselves so we don't get pass interference.

FastScripts Transcript by ASAP Sports

Rev #1 by #170 at 2018-11-18 01:22:00 GMT