

# Florida State University Football Media Conference

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## Willie Taggart

**WILLIE TAGGART:** Disappointing game. Disappointing season. I think everybody in that locker room is hurting. And again, it's unacceptable here at Florida State. I said it before, we got a program that prides itself on winning and we didn't get it done. Like I say, very disappointed in just the way we performed today and throughout the year. We didn't get it done. But we can grow from it and we will grow from it and I was brought here to get this program back right and that's what we'll do is get it back right.

**Q. With the bowl streak and now the season over with, where do you go from here with the program and the football team?**

**WILLIE TAGGART:** We go back to work. We got recruiting, it's contact period is coming up and we got to get out recruiting starting tomorrow and make sure we're getting some really good football players in here to help us turn the program back around.

**Q. I'm sure it was tough in the locker room. How, basically, how tough was it? You've been in some tough situations before with players, a lot of seasons coming to an end, what was it like in there?**

**WILLIE TAGGART:** It was really tough because of what was at stake and nobody in that locker room wanted to be a part of that team that breaks the bowl streak. And so it was really tough and a lot of tears and guys were hurting. We wanted to get it done and we didn't. So it's frustrating, disappointing, and again guys are hurting.

**Q. What can you say to the effect of guys like Nyqwan Murray Jacques Patrick, Alec Eberle, their last game for many of them. What did you say to them, what can you say about their efforts this season?**

**WILLIE TAGGART:** I told them I love them. I told them I love them, I appreciate them. They didn't ask for this change but they bought into what we asked them to do and those guys, they fought all year to try to help us get the program back right. And I appreciate every single one of them for that because I wasn't the coach that brought them here, but they loved this place and they bought into it. And again I'm disappointed we didn't finish it the way we wanted to for those guys.

**Q. In the second half the game it was still close and you guys had a penalty after a play that extended a drive and in week 12, how frustrating is that, from a guy that's played well this season?**

**WILLIE TAGGART:** It's very frustrating. It's kind of like throughout the year where we had our struggles. We do things that cause you to lose ball games like that. It's third down, we were ready to get them off the field and then we, we're not tough enough to walk away and that's what we got to be, that's what good football teams do and we didn't do that. Again, you look at some of the games that we lost and the way we lost is we weren't disciplined, we didn't do the things we needed to. We wasn't tough enough to walk away when someone pushes or shoves us and that's something we got to learn to do.

**Q. How far do you guys, do you feel you guys have to go to get to where you want this program to be?**

**WILLIE TAGGART:** Personally I don't think it's as far as it may look. I think part of it is where we're at in our program and our program has never been in this situation before, so it's something we all are going through. I've been through something like this, no one here really has, so that part of it is frustrating.

We have some pieces in place but I think we all see our areas of where we need help and then we got to fix those things.

**Q. You obviously with this game, you finished 0-3 against the rivals, 0-2 against the in-state rivals. Just how important is it to fight and take back this state after losing this year?**

WILLIE TAGGART: Oh, it's very important. Everything we do needs to be towards winning the state back and winning those games. We have a prideful program and that's what we are all here for is to live up to those expectations that we have here. And it's important that, starting with me, starting tonight, I evaluate everything from me, our staff, what we're doing, how we're doing it and making sure we get it back to the way we all want it around here. And we will.

**Q. Penalties have kind of been a theme at times this season. There weren't too many today, they weren't for too many yards today, but how untimely were they, the illegal shift wiping out Cam's touchdown and a couple false starts in key third downs?**

WILLIE TAGGART: Those are the penalties that I talked about before, is those are selfish penalties. When you false start, that's selfish. That's something that you got to do as an individual to make sure that doesn't happen. And those things have killed us throughout the season. We got to make sure that we look at, within ourselves as coaches and what we're asking them to do by making sure that we have the players that can do it and get it done consistently enough. But it's frustrating because they do come at the wrong time and we end up beating ourselves or we're playing behind the sticks and can't get anything going. So again, it's disappointing, we got to correct it.

**Q. How excited are you to have a full recruiting cycle? You were hired with just a couple of months to go until national signing day, picked up that class very well. How excited are you now to have a full cycle to go through?**

WILLIE TAGGART: Well I think it's really important. Again, being here for a year and understanding Florida State and everything that goes into it and what kind of kids we want in this program, it's very important. When I first got here you didn't know anything. You just have to go out and find some guys. But I know a lot about our program now and so it makes it not necessarily easy, but you understand what you need and go out and try to find those pieces that you need. We have to find those pieces that we need. But again, make sure that we're not just recruiting stars, but we're recruiting good football players, good students, good people that come here that's highly motivated and that really want to be winners. We got to make sure that we're doing that and you do that by going in and going to their homes and finding out everything you can about them and not just off of film.

**Q. Offensive line obviously was a challenge all season. How much can you revamp an offensive line, that particular position, in one season?**

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, I think a lot of it has to do with recruiting, I think a lot of it has to do with development. I think there's some guys that played probably that weren't necessarily ready yet and this experience is going to help them going forward. And some guys are going to have to wait another year in the weight room that's going to make them bigger, stronger, faster. And then like I said, recruiting, you got to go out and recruit the pieces you need to help you get to where you need to go. And so that's going to be a part of, a big part of what we're doing.

**Q. On that recruiting note, with the situation being how it is and coming off a losing season that could scare off some recruits, is finding guys who don't get deterred by that kind of thing and kind of buy into the program kind of an important thing for you?**

WILLIE TAGGART: Yeah, I don't think, I know from the outside you might think that because of the way

the season is that things won't happen right. And like I say, I've done this before and we have had really good recruiting classes after a bad year. But I think a lot of recruiting guys that want to be here and recruiting the right guys, and I think we have a lot of guys that want to be here and there's a lot of other guys that want to be here. We got to make sure that it's the right guy. And again we're at Florida State. A lot of kid that want to play here, we got to make sure we get the right kids and not just any kid that wants to be here. So we're going to work, we're going to work, and we're going to find the right guys to come in and help us.

**Q. Most of your losses this year, they haven't been close. It seems like when you guys get down you -- it just continues to pile on. Why do you think that is?**

WILLIE TAGGART: A lot of it is mental. That's part of changing the culture and getting to that point. I said it at the beginning of the year, the thing I was concerned about with our football team is how we deal with adversity. I've seen that from afar that we didn't handle that well. That's a big part of our problem is when things don't go our way then we didn't respond the right way. We had times where we did this year and good things happened to us. But there were other times where we didn't and it was just like the wheels fell off. So a big part of it is, again, our mentality and how we deal with things when it gets tough.

**Q. 28 points given up in the second half. Was that more defensive deficiencies being out of place, not in the right spot, or was it of Feleipe Franks doing something better in the second half than he was in the first?**

WILLIE TAGGART: I think it was a little bit of everything. I think it was a little bit of coaching. I think it was a little bit of tackling; guys being where they're supposed to be. I think it was just everybody made mistakes. Coaches, players, we all made mistakes in this ball game and that's what happens when you're playing against a good football team, you can't make those mistakes. So I think it was a little bit of both.

**Q. After the game you kind of discouraged Florida players from planting their flag on the field. Do you kind of wish that more of your players were involved in that?**

WILLIE TAGGART: No, I don't. I think when players get involved in that that's when you have the riots and all that, because they don't necessarily handle it the right way. You know, I just tell the guys we're not going to do that today here. Especially right there in the middle of our field on our logo. You go to sideline and plant it, but don't do it right there, that's disrespectful, especially right while we were standing right there. So, but, no, I didn't necessarily want our players to do that or anything, just again I think it's another teaching moment for everybody.

**Q. You mentioned about evaluating everything including your staff. The season now over are you looking to make potentially any changes on that and if so when do you think that might happen?**

WILLIE TAGGART: No, I got, like I said, I'm starting tonight, I'm going to evaluate everything within our program and make sure that we have everything going the right direction. I think that's so important when you're trying to change around a program is making sure all the pieces are in place. Again having a year here and understanding things a lot better you can make a better evaluation with some of those things. So I'm going to do that, I'm going to meet with all of our guys next week, all of our players and evaluate them and then we're going to make the best decision. Timetable, I can't tell you a timetable when we're going to make anything right now, but we will do what's best for Florida State football.

**Q. Coming in your players talked about not wanting to be that team to break the streak. Mentally how do you guys regroup and move forward from that?**

WILLIE TAGGART: Work. We got to go to work. There's nothing we can do about anything that happened

now, other than work and see to it that we don't feel that way again. And do that by changing some things up. We can't keep doing the same thing and think we're going to get different results behind it. But again it goes back to me evaluating our entire football team, our entire program and putting the right people in place to get it done.

**Q. Why was it important just to try to discourage those Florida players from planting that flag and is that something you tuck away for future reference?**

WILLIE TAGGART: Again, this is our school. This is Florida State. Again, you don't do that. So I'm sure we go there they don't want that done either. So again it's important and I want our players to know how important it is to be here at Florida State and how important it is to have pride for our university and what we do and it's so important that we all feel that way, not just myself.

**Q. I know at the start of the season fans had really excited had high expectations, I know you did yourself as well. Just with the way the season ended, a lot of fans disappointed, kind of scratching their heads kind of going, what's going on, where do we go from here. What's your message to them?**

WILLIE TAGGART: Tell them to have faith. Again that's why I was brought here is to build this program back to where it belongs and I understand their disappointment and I tell all our fans they should be disappointed. This is Florida State University and I tell them all don't ever lose our expectation and what we want, I want them to have that, they should have that, that's how we're going to get back to where we want to be. And it's my job and our coaches and players to live up to those expectations. So I apologize for the season being the way it is, but we're going to get there. And it's not a panic situation, it's a work situation. We're going to work to get there and we're not going to make any excuses about it and we're going to go get it done.

**Q. When you guys came out in the second half it seemed like Florida amped up the energy and you guys, your guys didn't. Did you feel that way and just why do you think that is?**

WILLIE TAGGART: Well I think they amped up the energy when they went down and scored. I wouldn't say it's that way when we just came out of the tunnel, I think when they went down that first drive and scored they gained a lot of momentum. And that's what happens when you get momentum, it gets going -- and again that was critical, we had game momentum before the half and then they came out of halftime and got it back and that's something we didn't want to happen and it did. So I think that's, that had a lot to do with it.

**Q. You have at least one junior that's probably going to have a decision to make, maybe more, but how do you handle that process with those guys?** WILLIE TAGGART: Like I said, I'm going to meet with all our players next week and we'll sit down and talk about evaluating, their evaluation, my evaluation of them, and they let me know what's on their minds. And then when it comes to that, it's doing what's right for the individual and making sure that he makes the best decision for himself. So again, I'm sure with those guys we'll sit down and talk and I think it's key that they make really educated decisions so they get all the information they can before they make a decision. And again, being here last year we had some guys leave early and that's the one thing about it, I think all of our guys can learn from other guys that's been here. And so it's important that we help them learn and help them understand what's going on and help them make an educated decision for themselves.

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