

Florida State University Football Media Conference

Saturday, September 7, 2019

Willie Taggart

WILLIE TAGGART: Like I said before, our football team is still learning how to win and they found a way tonight to get a W. It wasn't pretty, but our guys did find a way to get that W and we're going to celebrate that win for 24 hours, and get back to work and get ready for Virginia next week on the road, conference game.

Q. Seemed like some parts of the game followed a similar script to last week in terms of the offense starting off really hot and then kind of cooling off and the defense similarly. Any theories? Looked like you did different things defensively but similar results. Any theories on why?

WILLIE TAGGART: Yes, I can say when you turn the ball over, bad things happen. When you have 11 penalties, bad things happen, and I felt that was a big, big reason why we were in the situation we were. You know, we had too many penalties, too many selfish penalties, too many pre-snap penalties.

You think about a couple touchdowns called back because of penalty, and they scored on the takeaway. When you do those things, don't care who you're playing; you play like that, you're going to find yourself in ballgames like that or find yourself losing. I'm just glad our guys stayed together and found a way to get that win.

Q. On both of James interceptions, looked like miscommunications with the receiver.

WILLIE TAGGART: The one on the Pick-Six was a miscommunication there with those guys. That's when they got the Pick-Six. The other one was just a good thing play by the defense, and they got a takeaway.

Q. It was looking bleak tonight. What did you say to the team headed into overtime?

WILLIE TAGGART: I told the team to keep playing. We've been talking all week about finding a way to win a ballgame and told them to keep playing. This is an opportunity for us to take a next step with our program that we're trying to build and get back to where we all want it to be. It was another opportunity to do that, and told our guys to seize the moment. Don't be afraid of it. Go take care of business.

Q. You talked last game about getting Cam the ball more. What can you say about his performance? Especially how it seemed like every time you needed that big play it was him that came through with it?

WILLIE TAGGART: It was huge. It was good that Cam was able to run like that, and I think it's just another example of getting some of your best guys the ball, they can do great things for you. Cam, he's a guy that's going to do everything it takes to help this football team win, no matter what.

I think that's what we saw out of his gutsy performance tonight and we've got to keep feeding him. He's a good thing back and gave us some good results behind him.

Q. I don't know if you're aware, but there was an exchange between some of the fans and at least two of your players on the field. What do you say to your team to make sure it doesn't happen again and

keep them moving forward?

WILLIE TAGGART: Just got to stay focused. They got to stay locked into the game. You can't listen to all the things outside of us. Those are things that we can't control. We've got to stay locked into our game and if any one of our players are ticked off with what anybody says, we have to play better and not get caught up with arguing with our fans. They are just frustrated. They want to win just like we all did. We want to win and they want to win. We get it.

This is a storied program, a winning tradition, and we're in our program where those wins haven't been coming like we all want them to be. We're a work-in-progress, and I thought tonight we made another step towards getting this program back to where we want it to be. Are we there? No, by no means, but we did make a step to get back there, but we will get there, we will. This is progress in getting there. Like I say, we'll get there.

Q. Some people will say they lost the game because they missed the extra point, but you did come from behind late in the game. Did you see anything different the way the players reacted when they fell behind, as opposed to a week earlier?

WILLIE TAGGART: Yeah, they didn't get down or point a finger at anything. They stayed locked in and they stayed focused. You heard a lot of guys talking on the sideline about how we're going to win this game. This is a great opportunity for us.

We talked about adversity and how we handled it. All off-season we talked about either it will pull you apart or bring you together, and I felt our guys came together. They made a play; I was really impressed with our offense when we got down and when we needed a drive, for them to put it together there and go down there and score. I thought that was impressive.

Q. They scored on four of their last five possessions. Why do you think your defense struggle so much late in the game?

WILLIE TAGGART: Penalties. I think a few of those possessions where they went down and scored, we had some penalties; I think a couple personal fouls that allowed them to move the stick and go. I think that hurt us more than anything was the penalties there.

At the end, a couple times we were out of our gaps and they were able to get in there a little bit. But for the most part I thought they were doing some good things, but the penalties really got our guys in some bad situations and allowed them to move the ball and continue to drive.

Q. For clarification, late in the fourth quarter, you called a timeout before a punt. Did they make you call a timeout because of an injury?

WILLIE TAGGART: No, they didn't. I called a timeout to make sure that we was ready on the punt team. We felt there was a possibility they could come and try to block it and we wanted to make sure everybody was sound in what they had to do if they did do that, and that was case.

Q. The team's had success early in games. When you talk about learning how to win, is it learning how to have success?

WILLIE TAGGART: I think when I say learning how to win, it's doing the things that it takes to win ballgames. Again, we didn't do that perfectly tonight, the things that it takes. We can't have 11 penalties and try to win ballgames at this level. We can't turn the ball over and try to win.

But fortunately, our guys stuck together and made enough plays for us to find a way to win this

ballgame. I just -- there's a lot of different ways to win, you know, and again, I thought this week our guys didn't get down on themselves. They kept playing and made enough plays to put us in position to win the ballgame.

Before, it wasn't like that. So we're steadily moving in the direction we want to, and again, I'm glad our guys didn't quit. They stuck together and found a way, and again, that's a step in the right direction. We'll continue to get better.

Q. You talked about the penalties and turnovers today. Is there something you can do in practice to change, or do you have to look at maybe some personnel changes, or is it just staying the course? How do you deal with those?

WILLIE TAGGART: Personnel change, for what, penalties?

Q. For people that are committing the penalties.

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, it's not like one guy getting all the penalties. You know, there's multiple guys getting penalties. I don't think you just -- I don't know --

Q. I guess I'm asking, would you change anything in practice, how you proceed going forward to try to correct those?

WILLIE TAGGART: No, because we were pretty good last week with penalties. So I wouldn't say how we practiced is what caused it today. We have to be focused, mentally focused out there. All those pre-snap penalties and those selfish penalties, that has nothing to do with practice. That's just guys got to be locked in. That guy, if he's continuing doing that, then absolutely, we're going to make sure we get the right guy in there, but I don't think that's the case with that.

Like I said, the week before, we only had five penalties. This game, we had 11, and it was too many. That's what we can't have and we've got to be better with.

Q. Juan Williams left the game. What's his status moving forward?

WILLIE TAGGART: Juan left with an ankle sprain there in the first quarter, and I haven't talked to our training staff yet to see exactly how long he'll be out. But I guess it was good to see him at least walking with the boot without crutches.

Q. Extra points are so often just sort of assumed during games. What was your reaction when you saw it miss, and all the time spent on special teams, do you feel like it paid off? A rookie hasn't missed a kick yet this year and ends up being the difference.

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, I think we tried to block it, but I don't think what we tried to do made them miss the field goal. When you miss, it was like, yes, we won the ballgame. Got a W.

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