

Florida State University Football Media Conference

Saturday, October 26, 2019

Willie Taggart

Florida State - 35, Syracuse - 17

WILLIE TAGGART: Very proud of our football team. Very proud of their focus this week. I thought our guys had unbelievable focus; a lot of distraction and they stayed locked in. And then really excited about the way they came and performed in front of our alums and our fan base. Always good to play in Doak. And our guys play well here and it was good to find a way to get a win and put a complete game together for our guys.

So really, really happy for our coaches and players for finding a way to get it done and put a game together like that. We got to build off of it. And we have a 24-hour rule, so we're going to enjoy this and then it's immediately on to Miami. And we're going to need everybody here again to make Doak Campbell rowdy come next week.

Q. Obviously this is a great game for Cam. What was it like to see that performance?

WILLIE TAGGART: For me it was good to see Cam do what he said he was going to do in this ball game. He spoke into existence the things that he wanted to get accomplished. But it's just great. Cam is Cam. He's running hard, he's trying to put this team on his back and help us. I'm glad he had back-to-back games like that. He's got to continue to build off of it; we got to continue to lead off of him. But he's playing at a high level right now and we need that to continue.

Q. When did you make the decision to start Alex? And what was James's reaction when you told him that Alex was going to get the start tonight?

WILLIE TAGGART: We made the decision this week. And talking to James, and James said he understood, and he'll be ready when we call on him. I thought that he handled it like a pro. Of course, he wasn't happy with it, but he handled it like a pro and said, 'I trust you,' and he's going to be a good teammate, which he always is. He always is and to see him the way he was on the sideline was great.

Q. Seemed like you guys kind of opened up things, some trick plays. The one kind of crazy play ended up with a 54-yard pass to Tamorrion --

WILLIE TAGGART: It wasn't crazy, that was entertaining. (Laughing).

Q. It was entertaining. How close was that to the way it was drawn up? And just did you feel a need to be aggressive going into this game?

WILLIE TAGGART: Did I feel the need?

Q. To be aggressive. You kind of, all the different looks you guys did.

WILLIE TAGGART: Well we said from the beginning of the season that we were going to be aggressive. And there's some games that we haven't been and it was good to go out and be aggressive. Being back home it's important to us and we wanted to. We just feel like our guys execute better when we are aggressive. And on that play, yeah, it worked how we wanted it to. We completed it, it was pretty cool.

Q. With the wildcat formation, you guys went to that quite a bit. What did you see during the week that made you think that would be a good plan and what worked well about it tonight?

WILLIE TAGGART: Just tried to find a different way to get Cam the ball and make them defend 11 guys. Cam and the O-line, everybody did a good job of executing. It was something we had depending upon in our arsenal for a while and it was just a good time to come out and run it.

Q. What does Cam do well when you get him in that position with the direct snap, like, it seemed like he ran the read option with Khalan well and also threw the ball a couple times. What does he bring to that?

WILLIE TAGGART: Cam played quarterback in high school, so he was kind of back home in what he's accustomed to doing. So what he brings to it, he's had experience doing it and he understands how to run it and it just gives us another opportunity to have him and Khalan on the field at the same time as well. So it worked well. Cam did a good job running it. And hopefully we can continue to do it at times and it helps us.

Q. To follow up on something you said, you said Cam did what he said he was going to do. So what did he tell you that he was going to do?

WILLIE TAGGART: He was going to break the record with touchdowns and he was going to run for a lot of yards and he was going to help this football team win. He was going to put this football team on his back. And he did that.

Q. I know you guys gave up a couple of fourth quarter scores there with the defense --

WILLIE TAGGART: Yes, well --

Q. -- it was one of their better games of the season. What did you think of their play overall. The defense?

WILLIE TAGGART: I thought we did, especially early in the game, we did a good job. They like to throw the ball around. And I thought our guys did a good job. I was, we got to them, a couple times we got to them and let them off and that wasn't good. But overall I thought our guys flew around and different guys were taking turns making plays for us. And, again, it was disappointing there late in the game to give up those yards and give up those points because we were playing so well. And that's something that we try to pride ourselves on finishing games and being dominant and when you give those plays up it takes away from that. So something we got to continue to improve on. And, again, just have that mentality, you just don't give them the end zone. We don't care what the score is and what time of the game is in, we can't allow that. And our guys continue to work to get that mentality and get that way.

Q. With the triple pass, it kind of came at a moment where the offense had stalled out and it really ignited something. I mean, the touchdown a couple plays after that. Had that play been in the arsenal awhile and you were waiting for the right moment to break it out? And what told you or Coach Briles that was the right moment to break that play out?

WILLIE TAGGART: Yeah, we had, we had that play -- actually we worked on it this week and it worked in practice. So it worked in practice and again we always talk about as the offense where things aren't going well for us we got to find a way to put the ball in our playmaker's hands and it was just a good call. I thought Coach Briles called a good call at the right time and our guys executed it.

Q. You had a very different look on the offensive line today. What brought that decision about, what was that conversation like between yourself, Coach Briles and Coach Clements to make those changes?

WILLIE TAGGART: Well we just had evaluated our football team and evaluated up front, watched film from last week, those guys who played and then practiced and we felt like that was good for us, that was going to be best for us going into this game. It worked out. It's good. It worked out. It's good to see those young guys go out there and fight and make some plays. And it's good to see Brady come back in there and help us out as well.

Q. We saw Tre' get a little bit more involved in the passing game, make some guys miss and get down field. Do you feel like those kind of plays have been coming for him and was it good to see him break out a little bit?

WILLIE TAGGART: We knew Tre' was talented. It's just good to get him the ball and good to see him making those plays because he's a special talent and he can help this football team more than what we had him doing in these last couple games. I think he's starting to get into his own. And I know Coach Briles feels comfortable and understanding that he can be an asset, too. And he's finding different ways each week to get the ball to him to help us. I thought today it was really good just showing his athletic ability. I thought the kid is very athletic and he's very talented. So I think you'll see, continue to see Tre' making plays for us.

Q. You guys obviously got the fast start and hit a lull. But how did you feel like Alex played overall? Did he run the offense the way you guys were hoping?

WILLIE TAGGART: Yeah, I thought he did a good job. Best part of it is we didn't turn the ball over. He executed our offense and got us down the field. I thought he was a really good general out there and making sure guys were where they were supposed to be and doing what they're supposed to do. I don't think he threw for any touchdown, I'm not sure. But I thought he ran the offense and we executed it and put some points on the board.

Q. I know you appreciate him, but do you think the rest of the nation appreciates how good Cam Akers is?

WILLIE TAGGART: I really don't care what they think. I think he's awesome. I think he's the best running back in the country, and the kid is, he's special. When you see the way he runs the football, he's a tremendous talent, he's doing a darn good job for us and looking forward to watching the rest of this season to see how he ends up.

Q. Hamsah had 17 tackles. What was he doing to be around the ball so much and how have you seen him progress this season?

WILLIE TAGGART: I think he was upset that he got kicked out of the game the first quarter last week and he had to make up for some of the tackles he left out there from last week. So he was fired up about being back in this game and playing. I thought Coach Barnett did a good job of, from a game plan standpoint in getting him in those positions to make plays when he's around the football. And that was good because the kid is special when he's around the football, he needs to be around the football. And I thought coach did a good job of putting him in position to be able to make those plays.

Q. We saw Deonte after the injury return to the sideline, not return to the game. Do you have an early diagnosis on him?

WILLIE TAGGART: I'll let you know on Monday. I don't know. He came back walking, so that was good. He was smiling. So that was good.

Q. I know every game every win is big but how big was it tonight responding after the week you guys just had? And you mentioned distractions earlier, just everything surrounding the program just to come out today and get a win before Miami next week?

WILLIE TAGGART: It was good. Like I say, being back in Doak was good to stop a losing streak, it was good to go out and play well in front of our alums that was back here in town. We had a National Championship team here. It was good for our guys to go out and perform that way and play with pride and find a way to win. It was a much needed win and we got to continue to play that way.

Q. You came out scoring in the second half. What did you tell your guys in the locker room to keep them going?

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, we just talked about we have been here before. We have been up in games and we have gotten the ball in the second half and a lot of these games and we hadn't done anything with it coming out of halftime. And it was a perfect opportunity for us to go out and change those old ways. It was really important that we come out and score and show that those things are different. Our guys took pride in it, they went down and did exactly that and that was good to see.

Q. Last year's loss to Miami obviously was very heartbreaking for the team. I know you guys have a 24-hour rule but how do you expect the team to respond knowing that there's this big game this week? Do you expect them to just be extra motivated in practice or no?

WILLIE TAGGART: Who is asking this question? All right. There you go. I'm looking. Who is asking this question? One more time.

Q. Last year's lost to Miami was very heartbreaking for that team and obviously you guys have a 24-hour rule, celebrating the win tonight, but how do you expect the team to respond and look forward to this game with Miami?

WILLIE TAGGART: Well I don't think I have to get our guys up for this game. They're going to be fired up. They're going to be ready to go. I think it's just important that our guys understand the kind of week they had last week and the work they put in and we're going to need that same kind of focus but even more this week to be able to go out and execute and play well and take care of business in Doak Campbell. So it's important that we continue to get better, understand how we are supposed to get better, understand how we're supposed to practice and how we're supposed to go to class and how we're supposed to carry ourselves and hold each other accountable throughout the week to be at our best come Saturday when we play the Hurricanes.

Q. I know you and Peter go way back. Did you get to spend any time with any of the '99 guys at all this weekend and how was it having those guys back?

WILLIE TAGGART: It was good to have them back. It was good to have them in the locker room. And it was really good to see them talking to some of our players and not just talking to them, it was good to see how our players were locked in and listening to what they had to say. They wasn't twiddling their thumbs or looking around, they were eye-to-eye and listening to our former players talk about Florida State and how it was and how it should be and how those guys can continue to carry on the legacy and build it back up to where it used to be. It was good to have them around. It was good for them to come around and our players see them. It's not often they get to see those guys and it's great. Some of these guys weren't even born back then. But it's great, they hear all these stories, they hear all about the past and that's good. But it's better when they get to see these guys and be around them and talk to them about their experience and what they're doing. But it was also good to have the guys there to tell those guys that they're with them. It's not often that our players have been told that and to have those guys

tell them that, I think it means a lot to them.

Q. You guys are -- winning games at home, how important of a step is that in terms of building what you want to build?

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, it's always important that you take care of home. That's something we talk about all off season. That we got to take care of Doak. No matter what, we got to come here and do whatever it takes to win ball games. But I do believe our fans play a big part of us playing the way that we do. With them being there and for them to be rowdy like they are and the passion they have, I mean they have the passion just like players out there and it makes a difference, it makes a huge difference and our guys feed off of that. And we're going to need it next Saturday, we're going to need it even more. Again, for us to get to where we want to be as a football program again it's going to take all of us. It's going to take this football team, the coaches, the administration, our fan base, it's going to take us all to get back to where we want. But to me, that's how Florida State got here before, we got to get it together. So we need it, we're going to need you all there, Saturday and we'll need everyone to turn up.

FastScripts Transcript by ASAP Sports

Rev #1 by #176 at 2019-10-26 23:41:00 GMT