

Florida State University Football Media Conference

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Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Coach Mike Norvell

Press Conference



Clemson - 34, Florida State - 28

COACH NORVELL: First off, congratulations to Clemson, hard-fought game. Obviously it's a game that you had a couple of extreme momentum swings that showed up throughout it.

Really proud of our guys for how they fought. Basically you take the two minutes on both sides of halftime, those were kind of devastating and some of the results of what occurred. Had a turnover. Obviously led to a quick touchdown.

The kick return coming out of half, quick touchdown. And then obviously being aggressive, trying to provide a spark. We didn't get the fake punt and led to another short field with that. Just the things that we were executing well, just had a couple of mishaps and big swing in the game.

I thought our guys continued to battle. We had missed opportunities throughout. But they fought until the end. And I fully believed, as we were playing, that we would find a way to get back in, to be able to put ourselves in a position. And our guys did that but unfortunately we didn't make enough plays to be able to finish the job.

You've got to give credit to Clemson. They did a good job. Had 100 percent ball security. We had the one turnover. Had some drives that stalled out on fourth downs. Had some missed opportunities on both sides.

But our guys, they do battle. And they believe in what we're going to be able to do throughout the course of the game. We've just got to clean up some of the mistakes that are showing up that are costing us in those critical moments.

But proud of the way our guys fight. But when you're playing good football teams -- that's what we faced the last three weeks, we faced really good teams -- and it's going to usually come down to a handful of plays. And tonight you can go pick a wide variety of single plays that dictated the outcome of the game.

And the heart of our team showed up, but we've got to make sure that we're more consistent throughout and just capitalizing on those moments.

Q. In the second half, the defense gave you chances to come back, but there was a stretch there where they were really struggling. Was Clemson doing anything offensively that you guys didn't expect, or was it just guys not making plays?

COACH NORVELL: You've got to give credit to them. They tried to implement some things in the game plan. They do a good job with their quarterback in the quarterback run game and creating an extra hat.

1 is a really good football player. He ran hard. I've got a lot of respect for him and the way that he battled throughout the course of the night.

We had a couple of mistakes that showed up on things that just with all the right intentions and things that we've worked, just for whatever reason in the moment, we just weren't able to go out there and either make the play, or we had a miscommunication in what we were doing in the moment and those are things that are correctible, things we need to get fixed. But give credit to them for the job they did. They were efficient in what they did and how they played.

Q. This is three games in a row where the opening drive the second half has resulted in a score. It's been obviously different ways. But how devastating or how difficult can that be momentum-wise and just for you guys to get back into the game when that's happening?

COACH NORVELL: Those times around halftime are critical. We talk about it. It's huge. And to start off with a short field, our kickoff coverage unit has been phenomenal this year.

And you gotta give credit to them. They were able to create a seam. We had a chance there early. When they sparked the big return, that put them in great field position.



They came out and hit the special on the next play and that was a quick score. And so for us we've got to make sure that as we come in, I think you saw as the second half unfolded, our guys did well with adjustments. But coming out of halftime we've got to come out and start fast. And had a special teams mistake that led to a short field and a quick drive for them.

Q. Coming in, you playing without Treshaun Ward and a team that allowed 63 and a half yards per game rushing, what did you guys do to kick start the running game?

COACH NORVELL: I thought our guys did a good job. I liked the game plan coming in, just in what we -- we knew that you had to try to maintain some balance. It's a very talented defensive front. It's one of the best you'll see in the country.

But our guys, they really -- they fought up front. There was some challenges that still presented themselves. But I thought our guys, the backs really worked hard. Jordan was able to make himself a factor in the run game as well. But we were able to create some seams and guys took advantage of that and I thought it was big for the offense.

There's still some times where we had some negative plays that things that were correctible. But our guys worked really hard and ultimately were able to go and execute in the run game at a pretty high level against a really good defensive front.

Q. You touched on your opening statement but obviously three really good teams you faced, three close losses. What in your mind is separating you guys from where those programs are right now?

COACH NORVELL: Just the consistency. Some of the things that you experience-wise. Our guys, and I just told the team -- I know they're hurt. I know their belief and I know their work. Ultimately I respect this team because of the way that they work and the way that they go about it, how much they care and they want it so bad.

But there's time that are showing up throughout the course of the games where we're having a momentary issue that shows up. And it's just the consistency of that play. You see the flashes. You see the sparks. You see all those things that are showing up, big picture.

But just the play-in, play-out consistency, you can't have those critical errors, those big mistakes that show up in games like this.

You go through the last three, I think you play on teams that are very experienced. You look at a defensive front, that's a very experienced group. You look at these teams that -- they're playing at a high level.

We've got one takeaway in the last three games. That's tough to go against, but you've got to give credit to those teams. They're owning the ball. They're doing a good job in the things they can control. And then if we have a mishap, whether it's whatever -- offense, defense, special teams -- for us to overcome that, we got -- we've got new faces, young guys, guys battling injuries.

That's all part of the game. But it's just the ultimate consistency for 60 minutes of going and playing the way we're capable and I do believe we're so very close.

And the thing that I'm proud of is I'm proud that you see a football team and whatever the circumstances have been over the last three, they just fight. They fight for improvement. They fight to get better. They fight to compete until the end.

But ultimately we've got to finish and we've got to make those plays to go win those games. And there's no such thing as a moral victory or any of that crap. It's not -- but I do respect their hearts. I respect what they do. And I am the work that's going into it. But we've got apply those lessons 60 minutes, whenever we get on the field.

Some of those same issues showed up, whether it was a communication issue or an alignment, just with all the right intentions. Like these guys -- but just have to be better when it comes to that.

Q. To run for over 200 yards against that defense and put up 460 yards of offense, is that more encouraging or is that more frustrating that you guys didn't take advantage of the opportunity?

COACH NORVELL: It's frustrating. I believe in this team. I believe in the players I coach. They're a talented group. And it's frustrating that you see the ability and then not to finish it.

And we got down to inside the 5-yard line, weren't able to score. Had a turnover that was costly. We had two times that we're pushing on the positive side of the field that we don't convert on fourth downs. It's definitely disappointing.

But I appreciate the work our players are putting in, but we've got to put together a full 60 minutes because I know what they can accomplish.

Q. Jordan obviously didn't hit all his throws but that



throw late to Kentron was a big-time throw, the way he battled. Could you talk more about that?

COACH NORVELL: He showed his heart. And it's tough. You're playing against -- the challenge for our offensive line against that defensive front for a quarterback, for the rhythm, for the timing, all those things, and he had to work tonight.

And there were some throws he would love to have back, some moments, obviously. But I just kept telling him on the sideline, you just continue to go out there and play. Just continue to be you and you'll take what they're giving you. If opportunities present themselves for you to create something, then go create it.

And I thought that showed up there late. It was unbelievable play. Great catch by Kentron. You see guys that are, even in what are challenging situations that are rising up. And it's just unfortunate with some of the things that we were able to do that we weren't able to come out with a victory here tonight.

Q. Obviously you just mentioned tough three game stretch, but the season's still in front of you. What's the message to the players right now for the rest of the season with a bye week to rest and recovery and get ready for the rest of the season?

COACH NORVELL: It's continue to believe. Continue to work. The experiences that we have, I mean, they're all ours. And ultimately you go one of two ways with it. Either you learn from the lessons, you apply them, you continue to push and allow that experience to grow and then make the necessary corrections, so it doesn't cost you again, that it's not something that comes back.

And it's everybody involved. It's not just players. It's coaches. All of us. We're all in this together as we're growing.

And this was a challenging stretch. And for us to come up short on the last three games, it's sickening to me. I truly believe in each one of them that we would put ourselves in a position to win those games.

I know our guys battled, but just you sit in that locker room and, like I said, it hurts. It hurts because I watched the way these guys work. I watched the way the staff works. I watch the consistent investment. We just have to continue to get better in the application of all of those things for that 60-minute period, when we're out there.

And when a bad play happens or something shows up that might have been unexpected or anything that can try to

throw you off through the course of the game, that's where we have to continue to get better.

That's where you can take those experiences and you can apply them and you grow from them. That's what we need to do.

We need this bye week because we need to heal up. We've got a lot of guys. I thought Fabien tried here towards the back part of the week. He's done so much in his rehab to be able to put himself in a position. But unfortunately after yesterday he just wasn't able to go but I'm hopeful we'll have him back after this bye week.

Treshaun, the same thing. You go through our entire team. We've had a lot of guys that have had to battle. We had a couple of them that got banged up a little bit tonight and some guys that have fought through.

Like I say, I've got a lot of respect for the hearts and toughness of this team. But we need this bye week and we're going to take advantage of the opportunity to get better because that's what we have to do.

Q. The fake punt, were you going into that drive thinking if there was a fourth-and-somewhat-reasonable you may make that decision? I know that thing can be a spark. I guess the play call, looked like a few Clemson players were onto it, were pointing out, thinking it might happen right before the snap.

COACH NORVELL: We came up about a yard short. I thought our guys -- you go into it and in that moment. I mean, there was a big swing for those four minutes that we had just seen. And the worst thing that could have happened was a three-and-out and just get the ball back to them.

We were trying to provide a little bit of a spark, and ultimately the defense had to go out there and had to respond. And they were put on the short field and I believe held them to a field goal in that drive at that.

And even with that, there was an opportunity to respond to another short field. And they did that. And they held them to the field goal. Obviously Clemson was able to get points on the board. But just trying to create that play and they did a good job of stopping it, but... it is what it was.

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