

Florida State University Football Media Conference

Saturday, August 31, 2019

Willie Taggart

Boise State - 36, Florida State - 31

WILLIE TAGGART: First I'd like to thank everybody that came together and made this game happen here in Tallahassee. There was a lot of work put in. Appreciate everybody that put in the hard work, allowed us to have our game.

Tough loss. Let one get away as a team. I think everybody played a part in the mistakes we made in that ballgame. But I will say one game will not define this football team. We lost to a good football team. Credit Boise for their grit.

Our guys will bounce back. Our guys will get back to work and I believe we'll have a good football team this year.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Obviously the offense wasn't able to get anything going in the second half. What was working in the first half that didn't translate through halftime?

WILLIE TAGGART: Execution. We executed really well in the first half. In the second half we didn't do as well. One guy here or there that maybe should have stopped on a route kept going. We should have threw the ball out at times, and we didn't.

Those mistakes, little mistakes, little detail things... Especially when you're in a pressure situation, when the other team has momentum, someone has to step up and make a play for us. Instead of making plays, we made some mistakes in the second half.

It was just lack of execution. Credit Boise, but our guys have to do a better job of executing.

Q. You said you were confident that this team will bounce back. What have you seen up to this point that gives you confidence that will happen?

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, just the way they've been practicing, the way they've been playing, the way these guys have come together. You don't see some of the things we saw last year from a mentality standpoint; understanding how to overcome things. Guys are still trying to stick with it.

Again, we laid an egg in the second half. One of the things that we need to get better was finishing. We didn't do that today. We got to get back and look at what we did wrong and correct those things.

Our football team got to learn how to finish. Our football team's got to learn how to win again. I think that's important, too. It's been a while since we won, won big. Our guys got to understand and learn how to do the little things that it's going to take us to win in the second half.

We kind of reverted back a little bit with some of the mistakes. We played a pretty clean ballgame the first half, made a difference. Second half we didn't. Got to learn how to finish.

Q. After all the negativity last year, you knew there was going to be some outside noise. How do you block that stuff out?

WILLIE TAGGART: We just got to stay within our cocoon, not listen to the outside noise. I always tell our guys, 'When you don't play well, you know it's out there. Don't go looking for it.' If we want it to be anything different, we got to go all out and make it happen on the football field.

One thing I told our guys is I don't see anybody getting distraught out of anything anybody says. We don't play well, that's what's going to happen. Our guys understand that. We won't change anything, they got to do it.

Q. They finished with 621 yards of offense. What do you attribute that to?

WILLIE TAGGART: A lot of missed tackling. A couple blown assignments in the secondary, especially third down, not getting off the field on third down. We gave up some third-and-longs quite a bit.

Second down, third down, got to get off the field and not give up too many good plays. We weren't able to get off the field.

Q. You had a lot of early success on first down, 1 for 12 on third down. Why do you think you couldn't execute and extend drives?

WILLIE TAGGART: Like I said earlier, it goes back to executing and mistakes. We made a lot of mistakes in the second half. I just thought our offense, I feel like we started to panic a little bit. Things didn't go well the first drive, the second drive, our guys started pressing a little bit rather than just relaxing and trusting the schemes and things that we're doing.

Do your job. It goes back to that, doing your job. There were times when we didn't do our jobs. We had some throws that we didn't execute on.

But we got to do a better job. We did a good job in the first half. Second half we didn't.

Q. You guys got up 18 points a couple times in the first half. Did you sense anything from the team losing focus at that point? Do you think that was not the issue?

WILLIE TAGGART: I don't think that was the issue. Halftime, I told our guys that team is not going to quit, that's for sure. We had to come out and play. We knew they were going to continue to fight.

Again, at the halftime I thought our guys came out and played well. We got the ball offensively, we didn't do anything. Then they got the ball, the momentum changed. We never did grab that momentum back. Had the opportunity to with a fumble, we tried to pick up. Should have recovered it, give our guys a chance.

Again, the little things that it takes to win. Our guys got to play better when those things happen.

Q. Seemed like a lot of guys were going down with cramps. What do you attribute that to? Do you kind of change any conditioning during practice going forward?

WILLIE TAGGART: I wouldn't necessarily say change practice and all. I think we as coaches got to be smart with our substitutions, how we substitute so we can keep guys fresh.

Again, first game. I think guys will continue to get in better football game shape, be ready to roll. I don't think it was any of that. I think we can do a better job of substituting, when we do it, how we do it, in order to keep guys fresh.

Q. I remember last year Virginia Tech you talking about this is just the start, we'll turn this around. Here we are again, opening game. In some ways a tougher loss. How do you come back from this?

WILLIE TAGGART: We go to work. We go to work. We don't sit around and pout, blame anyone else. We go to work. 24-hour rule.

But it's so important we learn from our mistakes. It's so important we watch this film, that we all understand what we did wrong and correct those things.

You come back by believing each other. You come back by executing. You come back by doing all the little things right. But also build on some of the positive things that we did, too. That's another way of coming back. There's some positive things in this game that we can build off of. We're going to have to.

It's not going to matter unless we correct the mistakes that cause you to lose ballgames. This football team will fight back. This football team will come back. This football team will be a good football team this year.

Q. Seemed like a lot of tough emotions from the team coming off the field. How do you describe that locker room mood? What do you say in the aftermath of a game like that?

WILLIE TAGGART: Well, of course there's going to be some emotion. There better be. Shows you that guys care. The thing is we got to channel those emotions to getting better as a team.

Told our guys the same thing I told you all: We let one get by, but one game won't define us. I saw a difference with our guys in the locker room. I saw our guys talking to each other, encouraging each other. There wasn't anybody blaming someone else. How can we get better? We start there. No one is in there blaming anyone but themselves.

What I say to our guys, 24-hour rule, get back, watch this film, learn from it. Coaches, we got to watch it and do a damn good job of deleting things we don't do well and then getting better at the things we do well.

Q. You mentioned there was a lot of different breakdowns offensively. How would you evaluate James' performance? Was he coming off the field seeing what you thought he should be seeing?

WILLIE TAGGART: A couple times he missed a couple reads where he could have thrown the ball out to guys we would like to get the ball to. I thought overall James played well.

Again, we probably can get rid of the ball a little quicker. Then we got to make sure we continue to find ways to get James in rhythm when things aren't going well. I thought a couple times in the second half we tried to throw the ball down the field too much and didn't really get back in rhythm.

Q. You did mention that the guys did some things well out there. What were some of those things they can build on moving forward?

WILLIE TAGGART: If you go back to the first half, just from an execution standpoint, our guys executed. James did a good job throwing the ball down the field. O-line did a good job of blocking. We didn't have

a lot of pre-snap penalties, not a lot of penalties in the first half at all. I think we had one on offense and one on defense, which is an improvement for our football team.

But our guys showed we can throw the ball down the field. We can run. The thing we got to do, again, be better on third down. I thought offensively that's one thing that hurt us, was third down. We didn't convert. You have to if you're going to win ballgames. You got to win the fourth quarter, convert on third down. We didn't do it. They did.

Can't turn the ball over when you have a good drive. Had a good drive going, turned the ball over. Those are little things that will get you beat. Those are little things we got to do to become a winning football team.

Q. I'm guessing today didn't go as you expected. What was probably the most surprising thing that came out of this game to you?

WILLIE TAGGART: Just how we didn't finish. The lack of tackling. Then a couple of blown coverages. That was disappointing because we had a lot of coverages in there. Just a lack of focus. If there's any doubt, you need to have some focus on third down. We wasn't locked in a couple times. Gave up some big pass plays there. Extended drives where our guys could have got off the field and we didn't.

Q. What was the reasoning for keeping those two timeouts on the final drive?

WILLIE TAGGART: On the final drive?

Q. Yes.

WILLIE TAGGART: Probably going to need it. I think that final drive was two minutes left in the game with two timeouts.

Q. It was fourth-and-15. Why didn't you take a timeout to gather yourselves?

WILLIE TAGGART: We didn't have to. We had a play called that we wanted. Unfortunately we lined up wrong. Got too many guys in the backfield. Receivers should have stepped up on the line. We had a play called we wanted to call. We felt good about it. That's what we went with.

Q. Another home game next week. What do you say to the fans to sort of keep them onboard, stick with us?

WILLIE TAGGART: I guess you say that, stick with us. Stick with us. We're going to get out of this, I can promise you that. Again, we can't sit around and just talk about it. We got to do it on the football field.

One game will not define us. Our guys are going to bounce back. We're going to make them proud of this football team.

Q. A lot of defensive rotation. The game almost necessitated it. Do you think that might have contributed to the defense's problem, having too many inexperienced guys getting playing time?

WILLIE TAGGART: No, I don't think that was the case. One thing we had to do was play a lot of guys. You can see just the temperature and the amount of plays we played, guys have to play.

Again, it comes down to execution on defense. If you supposed to be in the gap, you need to be in the gap. If you got to make the tackle, you got to make tackles. You can't have a lot of missed tackles. We had a lot of missed tackles today.

It's hard to stop the offense if you can't tackle.

Q. Had you seen those missed tackles in practice? Was it something maybe you hadn't seen until today?

WILLIE TAGGART: Really didn't see it until today. Every single day we work on tackling. We stress that with our guys, especially these first ballgames.

We know a lot of these ballgames are not won, a lot of them are lost; a lot of them because of missed tackles or turnovers. Those things we focus on. Training camp, we talked to our guys coming to this game, what it's going to take to win.

Again, I didn't think our guys would do that. We were right there. We had the guy. Didn't run our feet and gang tackle.

Q. Coming into this one you talked a lot about getting pressure on a freshman quarterback; get him uncomfortable. You were doing that in the first half. Second half did you see any dropoff?

WILLIE TAGGART: No, when we did pressure, we got him backed up. I thought especially in the second half we pressured on first and second down, got it behind the sticks a couple times.

Played too soft on third down. Should have been a little more aggressive on third down. I thought there were times he got hit, got rid of the ball sometimes before we got there. I thought when we did put pressure on him, it helped us defensively, helped get behind the sticks.

Thanks.

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