



Florida State University Football Media Conference

Tuesday, September 4, 2018

Willie Taggart

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: Tough loss. Not what any of us expected. Practice went really well and thought we would come out and play well. We didn't play a good game at all. It was very sloppy. It's hard to win a football game with five turnovers, and it's hard to win when you're in the red zone four times and you can't get any points out of it.

So I look at a game against a good football team, we've got to play much better. We played a sloppy game and that's on all of us, starting with me. Got to do a better job.

Q. Was there any indication in practices leading up to today that you would see some of the things that happened out there tonight?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: Not all. Hadn't seen this the entire training camp. Again, we had a really good training camp. Had a really good week of practice, and I was expecting for us to have a really good ballgame. I told our guys at the beginning of the week and all week long, most of these games aren't won, they are lost.

A lot of these games are lost in the first game, silly penalties and turnovers, and we did exactly what we preached not to do, turned the ball over and penalties, and then get a punt block. It's hard to beat a good football team when you play sloppy that way.

Q. You mentioned the red zone, was there anything consistently wrong in the red zone?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: We're just not winning one-on-one battles. There's no synergy up front on the O-line. One guy, miss a block. The next guy, miss a block. We never did get anything going. I thought we weren't really good on first down and we really didn't get tempo going and when we did get tempo going, we ended up hurting ourselves again.

Q. Was James Blackman available tonight?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: Yes.

Q. Was there ever a thought to make a change there?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: No, there wasn't.

Q. With the lack of the running game, was that offensive line issues or their defense is really good? A combination of both? What was the reasoning for not really getting the running game going?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: Again, it was one guy here and there making the -- not blocking, not

taking care of his block. It was a one-on-one thing and you have to win those one-on-one battles and we didn't do that, a lot of the time and that got us behind the sticks, behind the chain and that hurt us big time.

Q. In the first half, when Noonie got down there and looked like he might have got in the end zone, you guys went with the play really quickly. Was there any thought of challenging that and reviewing the play before running that next play quickly?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: Well, the ref was telling me they were reviewing it. He said they were reviewing it and they thought he was down.

Q. Did you?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: Not after seeing it, but even then, we go up there, we get a ball started, we get back, we stubbed our toe again. Again, a chance to punch it in there and get some momentum and get it going. We did it to ourselves.

Q. As you said, nobody expected this. What were the reactions you were getting from players during the game at half-time and did anything concern you? How did they handle the adversity?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: We didn't handle the adversity well. We had a lot of adversity tonight. We didn't handle it the way I thought our team will. We had some guys that was encouraging teammates on the sideline and we had some guys frustrated, wanting to make plays and wanting to do a better job, especially on the offensive side of the ball. Again, our guys pouting and upset. They got to go out and make plays. We had opportunities and we didn't do it. It was on us. We drove the ball down there on the red zone and we didn't take care of our business. Again, that was on us.

Q. How do you go about putting this type of game behind you where it was so many mistake, the offensive line issues, just so many things went wrong?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: First, we got to go watch the film and make sure exactly what we see on the film, and go out and work. We got the 24 hour rule. We've got to put this behind us. We've got a short week. We've got to put it behind us and get back to work. I will say the things we messed up on, they are all correctible and we've got to do a good job as coaches getting our guys to correct them and if we can't, we'll put the right guys in there to do it the right way.

Q. There's been so much positivity around the program since you took over. Does this put a damper on it a little?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: I think it does a little bit. Again, whenever you lose, we don't like losing. You lose, of course there's a little damper, but it's not the end of the world. We've got to get back to work and again, get that momentum back on our side, and the only way you do that is go back to work and go win a ballgame and we've got another opportunity on Saturday. We've got to put this behind us; 24-hour rule and move on.

Q. What was the decision on the third down play when you were I think around the 15? Can you just explain the decision on that call?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: Which call was that?

Q. I think it was the diamond formation. It was a fumble.

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: It was a formation we'd been practicing, and we felt good about it. On that play we felt good. Again, we made a mistake. We didn't do what we were supposed to do. Cam was indecisive on whether to keep it or give it, when he probably should have given it to the receiver and

that's what happened.

Again, it's one of those things, again, where we did it to ourselves. We had it where we wanted and we didn't execute. I think a lot of what happened today was lack of execution.

Q. First game for Deondre, more than a year. How do you feel he performed tonight?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: I thought he came off -- I thought he started off good. I thought towards the end, he made a couple bad decisions, and he understands that, too. Got to do a better job of knowing how to check the ball down and not forcing things.

Q. The defense got off to a rough start. How do you feel like they played from that point on?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: I thought the first drive they had down there, like the first drive -- I thought after that, they bounced back. I think they only got three after that, and it was probably off the turnover we had. But I thought our defense did enough to win the ball, except that last touchdown, we missed a tackle. I take that away, I thought we did enough to win the ballgame for us.

Again we, on the offensive side of the ball, just didn't take care of our business. Like I say, down there in the red zone and you can't score, it's tough to win a ballgame against a good football team when you don't score.

Q. You've had your share of holes in your career and you've never been one to get discouraged, but do you understand tonight if fans are discouraged openly about this?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: You're asking if I understand that? Come on, of course I understand that. When you lose, everybody's upset. No one's more upset than I am. I'm upset, too, and I'm upset that we didn't get it done for our fan base and we didn't get it done for each other.

But we're not going to sit around and blame anyone. We got to get back to work and make it happen, and we will.

Q. With the amount of defenders, it seemed like Virginia Tech was stacking the box in the offensive line not able to make their blocks. Do the receivers have to win the one-on-one battles and get open? Does the quarterback have to make quicker decisions? Is it solely the offensive line in those moments?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: It wasn't stacking a lot of guys in the box. They were bringing one guy there -- again, if you don't block your one-on-one, it makes it bad for everyone. I thought there was a lot of one-on-one blocks that weren't happening for us and we need to be better at that. Same thing early on the perimeter with our receivers, you see guys coming off blocks and making plays, and we have to do a better job of blocking.

Q. Looked like Jaiden was having a really good game and then got banged up at the end, do you have any update on his status?

HEAD COACH WILLIE TAGGART: It was a shoulder.

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