

Florida State University Football Media Conference

Saturday, November 4, 2017

Jimbo Fisher

Florida State - 27, Syracuse - 24

JIMBO FISHER: Very proud of our guys. Like I said, competed with heart, a lot of heart and soul. Didn't always play smart, didn't always do things we got to do. When you play young guys, that's part of what you're going to grow through. You got to learn to go through it, they got to grow through it. They got to learn, and you got to teach.

But their ability to compete and do things, you know, their heart and soul was in it. Got better. Learned to overcome, scored enough points, hit some big plays in the first half.

Third down, knew going in we weren't very good at all. We didn't do very good. They hit some big third-and-longs, which was very disappointing, some key things. A couple times I thought they had a little interference on one or two there, threw some guys out of the way. Would have helped, but didn't get called.

Our punter did a nice job in the game. Ricky hit a big field goal, was huge, right there in the second half. To do that... Our kids overcome enough, come out and won. Sometimes that's what you need. It jump-starts you. Got one down in the books, got to keep going one at a time.

Questions.

Q. How impressed were you with your freshmen backs?

JIMBO FISHER: Blackman did a good job. Got to protect him a little better. Had some chances to make some plays. Misread some things. Had an opportunity to make a big touchdown throw. His toughness, competitiveness, able to make the big throw on the first drive was impressive.

Cam ran the ball extremely well. Had a nice little screenplay on one. Finished runs, hit the home run. Did the home run the right way, not craziness, but with good, hard runs, then split it and ran. He had an outstanding day. Very proud of him.

Q. Talk about the confidence of winning at home today, how that relates going on the road next.

JIMBO FISHER: Well, it is. You got to get 'em one at a time. You got to learn, to play, to fight through. That's the word, you hit the key word in ball: 'confidence'. All of a sudden, you pull those games out.

I've heard coaches say they won that close game, that close game, all of a sudden your confidence goes, all of a sudden it takes off. When you lose one or two, three like we have, all of a sudden, What's wrong with me? You know what I'm saying? Learning to get through that hump can be huge, believing in yourself. That's a big part of what happens. That's exactly right. Great question.

Q. Could have been a carbon copy of the Louisville game.

JIMBO FISHER: It wasn't.

Q. There were some other issues that kind of continue. What do you think the difference was in turning a game like that into a victory today?

JIMBO FISHER: Just keep trying, keep sawing wood. There wasn't no secret. Guts, make plays when you got to make 'em. They got a chance for the field goal, they missed it. Unfortunate for them. I hate to say that. I love our team. I feel for their kicker. I hate when that happens for a kid, because he's got parents and things, too. He made some good kicks in the day.

But our kids are going to keep fighting. I'm going to keep trusting 'em. What we have to do? Put them in position, keep learning from it, move on.

Q. On the play of Derwin James:

JIMBO FISHER: He had some big third down stops. I wish he could have held onto that one. He made a big interception the first drive. If he could have held onto that one. Getting cut as he did it.

His heart and soul, his ability to compete. People question whether they're going to play hard, what they're going to do. Don't question that. Them kids play hard.

Q. What do you think are the most important things moving forward to try to make a bowl game this season?

JIMBO FISHER: Keep playing hard. Sawing wood. Don't worry about the bowl game. Don't even think about the bowl game. Biggest thing is playing well that week, practicing well. You got that responsibility in the back of your mind, 40 years of winning, 35 bowl games. That's the burden you came here with. Now carry it and play your tail off in practice and the games.

Q. Did you notice early on they were competing at the level you wanted?

JIMBO FISHER: They did every game. Last week they got shocked on the road. They have all year. Didn't doubt it in practice, when we went back to practice this week. All y'all did.

Q. Talk about the run game.

JIMBO FISHER: Akers ran the ball well, finished big runs. I'm going to tell you, we were one block away from about four more runs that gash. One guy misses a block, they're out the gate for some more. That's ball. Got to keep making 'em.

We're not playing efficient enough, not playing smart enough. I mean, a fourth down stop on an interception, throws it back inbounds. I mean...

Does it come from a bad spot? No. It's because he saw somebody there, thought he could catch it. It's from wanting to make a play. But that's what happens when you play youth.

The ability to be there, make it. How about the ability to make that play? Things like that. But the running game, those young guys, playing Stanford Samuels, playing Kaindoh, Cyrus Fagan in the game. All those young guys. Because of injuries, guys banged up, they're getting their opportunities. They're going to be really good players. They got to learn, got to go through it all.

Q. The defense made some really big stops in the second half. Ended up with 95 plays. Is that part of the reason why maybe the defense faltered a little?

JIMBO FISHER: No. Had their plays and opportunities. Too many -- getting off the field on third down. When we get third-and-long, we got to figure out a way to do a better job. Got to pick up a couple more on offense. Shame, we shouldn't have been out there. Third and one, get that snap executed. That snap doesn't come up like that. You got to clean that up.

But they shouldn't even have been out there. Offense, we should have got a first down there, ran the clock out.

Q. Two long runs for Cam, big touchdown pass at the beginning. Was it nice to finally get the offense some chunk plays?

JIMBO FISHER: If you don't have chunk plays, you're not going to be a great offense. You can draw it up any way you want. You can draw up drives. 12, 14 play drives are all great. Don't do a lot of those. The Duke game, we didn't score points, but we had four drives at 14 plays or more. That's hard to do. It's a challenge.

But you got to hit chunk plays. You got to finish in big areas. They did. That's the key. It's like hitting three. If you can shoot twos all day, but you got to have some threes in basketball. Got to hit your home runs. Guys, when they get in space, they got to finish runs, put it in the end zone. Proud of those guys for doing it.

Q. Ricky and Logan made some big plays on special teams for you.

JIMBO FISHER: Yes, huge. Hit good punts. Logan had a really good day, then he missed a couple there at the end. Could have had an unbelievable day. Ricky hit the big field goals. It was good.

Q. On the field goal range of Ricky Aguayo:

JIMBO FISHER: We finish up every day running the 50, 52 somewhere in that range. We feel very consistent with him. It's just like a normal kick, he feels very comfortable.

Q. You gave D.J. another shot after the fumble. He gave you a good punt return. Anybody else you could put in?

JIMBO FISHER: Ain't a lot of people left to put in there. Who else you going to put in there? We've tried them all. We done it all.

There's another example, D.J. wanting to go make a play. That ain't the time to make a play. Youth and ability, all you guys, you understand. This guy, young guy got ability, he's a five star. Yeah, but you got to learn to play. They got to go through trials and tribulations. He's wanting to go make a play. Got the ball coming out second half, give me a fair catch and go.

He is natural as the day is long doing it. He's extremely natural doing it. Probably one of the most natural I've ever been around as far as catching the ball. Just got to learn to make better decisions. That's going to come with experience. How do you get experience? Put him in the game.

Q. How redeeming is this win? You spoke about the doubt your team has after last week.

JIMBO FISHER: It feels good. Got to go do it again. Locker room is happy. That's the whole key. I mean, when guys say, We're not having fun. You don't have fun when you lose. You have fun when you win and have success. To do that, you got to go prepare to have success. You got to practice, watch film, play

hard. You got to go do it. You got to fight, scratch and claw.

That locker room was happy. They were happy. It's great to see it in their face. As their coach, like I say, I have kids, too, that play ball. I know they're happy when they do well. As a coach, you love seeing that look on your players' faces. You love to see the joy in their eyes when they succeeded, had something good happen to them.

Q. With all the pressure their offense puts on defense, do you have to maybe not concede some things, but not get worried about the yardage?

JIMBO FISHER: You do. I think we got a little soft on a couple things there. We got to play more aggressive in certain situations. They did a nice job of containing things. Again, it was mainly the third down stuff. Had them a lot of third and seven, eight, nine, ten. Got to do a better job there, we know that.

You do concede some things. I think we could have tightened some things. But I was very proud of our defense, the way they competed.

Q. To have a guy like Nnadi lead you in tackles against a fast offense...

JIMBO FISHER: We practice what we do. When you play like you do, he's a zero nose, if they double, they're going to free some other guys up. Single blocking. You're not going to single block him, get the push.

Derrick, as I said, played unbelievable football all year. Unbelievable leader and great guy.

Q. (Indiscernible) Akers was the first one to run up to give him a stiff arm after the takedown.

JIMBO FISHER: I don't know. He need to go back and pick the quarterback up. I appreciate that. Say something, then walk away. You get a 15-yard penalty. Just like Derrick Kelly did in the Louisville game. All of a sudden now you get in a push, then what happens? You get 15.

I love that. Myself, I probably would have done it. I probably would have got up myself and said something. I understand that. But like I tell them, Do as I say, not as I do, okay?

I understand that. At the same time, again, toughness. The guys who play with great toughness and intensity, you go the to play with intelligence. There's a time to do those things, pick your moments. You got to be smart.

But I love the competitiveness. He's right there for his teammate. They're going to fight for each other now.

Q. Next play, takes it to the house.

JIMBO FISHER: Oh, yeah. I mean, he was wanting to play. He's competitive. He was ready to roll.

Q. On the third-and-one, did you see that James was down? Did he tell you he was down?

JIMBO FISHER: He said he was down, on his knee. He picked it up, his knee was on the ground. I saw him I thought pick it up. When we asked him, he said it was.

You got to get down. That ball gets pinched off. As crazy as that sounds, people say, Get a yard. When people get two ones on you, the hardest thing to do in the world is run a sneak because the pressure it

puts on the center. Get both hips in there, you get knocked back. You can step aside. There's an art to it. It's a lot harder than you think. That's kind of what happened on that play.

Q. The one for 13 on third down?

JIMBO FISHER: Awful. Got to go back and work at it. I knew going in, third down. We had done a real good job for a while. Early we struggled, then for about a three-game stretch we were really good, about 50%.

We just got to go back and practice it, make sure we know what we're doing. Some of that was them. Some of that was us. It was a mixture of both.

Q. (Question regarding President Thrasher.)

JIMBO FISHER: John is unbelievably supportive. He loves athletics. He's for us 100%, what we're doing. He's happy, there supporting us. Good or bad, John is always there. He's in the forefront. An honest guy. You can talk to him, get good answers. He's one of the best guys I've ever worked with. He's a straight shooter like I am. We don't have to mix words. He's a happy guy who supports all of his athletics in this school. He's a tremendous guy.

Q. With the big runs, is it Cam being more confident and patient?

JIMBO FISHER: Learning what to do. We're blocking better. We're getting better blocks. Also our receivers did a good job downfield on second and third levels, which allowed him to make some cuts. His patience to know his scheme, what's going on.

Q. When a bowl is now very much a possibility, is that important for you and your staff to keep that incredible streak going at FSU?

JIMBO FISHER: Yeah. It's part of the obligation you got here. Nobody's ever won 40 straight winning seasons, 35 straight bowl games. Yes, I mean, that's very important.

At the same time, you can't let that paralyze you. You got to understand how you got to go play in the game. Like I told them, if that doesn't make you strive to want to practice hard, play hard, the legacy.

I'll tell you what, the respect. The 2009 team that gutted itself back in and made those plays to keep the winning bowl streak alive like we did against Maryland. Throw a pick with three minutes to go. Remember that day, throw a pick with three minutes to go. Defense walks out, they punt the ball to a little guy named Greg Reid, who wasn't supposed to catch it inside the 10, reaches outside the line, brings it back to the 40. Then another freshman quarterback who had three interceptions in the game. E.J. Manuel. Scrambles and runs down to the five, Lonnie Pryor scores, we go on. The pride that team had to keep that alive, same thing this one has. Hopefully they'll do and play through it.

Now, there's a lot of ball. We got a lot of football we got to play, successful big wins we got to have. They're playing for it. Ain't no doubt. It's very important to them. That's the legacy of this school. That's one of the reasons they want to come here, one of the reasons I wanted to coach here. It's big. But you got to go play.

Q. (Question regarding the rescheduled game.)

JIMBO FISHER: Most likely will. We'll have to talk to Stan, we'll see. Make those decisions, let us know.

Q. You seem irritated that people suggested the team quit.

JIMBO FISHER: I am very irritated. You said it.

Q. (No microphone.)

JIMBO FISHER: Wait a minute. You sound like a player now. I ain't the only one that made a mistake. He made a mistake, too.

Q. You said it.

JIMBO FISHER: I did say it. But you said it, you did (laughter).

They didn't quit. I know what happened, I know why it happened. That is something. That's something you're never going to see us do. You can write that.

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**Florida State vs. Syracuse
Saturday, Nov. 4, 2017
FSU Player Quotes**

Redshirt sophomore defensive back Derwin James:

On how the win make him feel moving forward for the rest of the season considering the doubt of fans after Boston College...

"It's getting our confidence back. Coming into the season we had a lot of confidence. We were the number three team. We knew what we had in the room and always knew what we had in the locker room. Just finally being able to get a team win, it felt great at home."

On how the mood was in the locker room after the game...

"Great. Exciting. There's been a lot of disappointment this year. There have been a couple of embarrassing performances but this one was finally a great team win."

On what this win can do for confidence...

"Just finishing. Coach Fisher stressed it a lot. Don't wait for next year to fix it. Great teams find a way. We're not quitting. We're finishing. We're going to finish."

On if there was a here-we-go-again moment...

"We were just ready to play as a defense. Even if we had to go back out there, we were ready. We had to come out there and make a play for our team."

On how excited you are to play Clemson next week...

"I haven't been there since my freshman year, so I'm very excited. They have a great team. We're ready. We're prepared."

On how important it was for the defense to start off fast...

"It was great getting the first interception of the year. It was a great start but we just have to be better at finishing and holding a lead."

Sophomore defensive back Levonta Taylor:

On the season so far

"We know what we're capable of. Beginning of the season we had our confidence high, but we dealt with injuries, but now we're finding ourselves right now and we can be a very dangerous team."

On making a bowl game

"It is very important. There's pressure, we've made a bowl for (35) straight years. We don't want to be that team that ends it."

On the final defensive possession

"Every Thursday in practice we do the two-minute drill. So, when that comes in (the game), it comes natural. Players are going to make plays. I had a couple of catches against me. We've just got to keep making plays."

On getting the win

"During the game, we just played. And when we looked up at the scoreboard we were just happy."

Senior Defensive Tackle Derrick Nnadi:

On what this victory means to the team:

"I can see this as a turning point for us because we played a great football game despite some things that went wrong. We made some mistakes, but at the end of the day, we all came together, especially our last drive to win the game for our team. I feel like this is a good opportunity to push us in the right direction."

On the mood in the locker room after the game:

"Honestly, it felt like a big party. We felt like we really accomplished something and we see this as a turning point for us. There's no turning back now. We have to keep moving forward."

On the adversity of the season:

"It can be difficult because you are doing everything you can and things just aren't working out right. But we just have to keep moving forward because if you dwell on the past, you're going to be stuck in the past. So the best thing to do is to keep pushing and have positive thoughts and everything should come together."

On the defense not finishing on third downs:

"We are making mistakes. Whether it is the defensive line or the defensive backs or whoever, we all have to come together and do our individual parts to get the job done. In those types of situations, I have to get a better pass rush to help the secondary coverage. It all comes together for us to have an entire successful defense."

Sophomore Kicker Ricky Aguayo:

On the missed Syracuse field goal that secured the Seminole victory:

"I don't wish a miss on another kicker, but that was one kick that I really wanted him to miss. But Cole [Murphy] is a great kicker and athlete. He's going to have a great rest of the year but I'm glad he missed and that we got to get our first home win."

On playing in Clemson:

"I'm excited. I feel like our team is going to go out there with a great attitude coming out after this win and I think that everything is going to fall into place and if we go out and play hard, and give the effort that we gave today, everything should be fine."

On the rest of the schedule:

"This was a big confidence boost. I feel like the whole team came out and gave 100 percent. One thing that Coach Fisher stressed in pregame was to go out and pretend like it was the first game of the season. Don't go out and think about what happened prior to this day, just go out and play like you would on the first game of the season. I feel like that's what we did and we came out with the win."

On other teams' alternating successes and failures:

"That's how college football is. Going into next week, it could play out either way because you saw what Syracuse did to [Clemson], so we are just going to go out there and have the same attitude and demeanor that we had today to try and get that win."

On turning the season around:

"I believe that this season can be stressful. [Jimbo Fisher] said that special teams can change in the middle of the season. I feel like our team has the capability to do that and Coach Fisher has always had our backs. We're thankful to the fans that didn't quit on us because we haven't quit on ourselves."

On the performance of the special teams unit:

"Logan [Tyler] was exceptional today. Special teams in games like these play a big part. I think we won the field position battle and Tyler played a big part down inside the 15 a couple of times and he had an exceptional game overall."



Florida State vs. Syracuse
Saturday, Nov. 4, 2017
Syracuse Head Coach Dino Babers

Opening Statement

"It was a really, really good game. You could tell that both teams were extremely competitive; both teams were ready for this game. To play a game like that and not win is unfortunate, but I am really proud about the way the guys played, and we are eager to get back into the loud house (Carrier Dome) to see if we can get back on the winning track."

What did you say to kicker Cole Murphy after the game?

"The post game speech was – Cole was in it. If you talk about what he's done the entire year, and if I'm not mistaken, he's missed four kicks this entire year. And it's not like he's kicked a little bit, he's kicked a lot. If someone asked me if I was going to take that before the season started – heck yeah, I'm going to take it. Now, the thing that you can't take is that you don't know where those four misses are going to be. I told him that we play the game to win. We had an opportunity to try to kick a field goal right before the half...We decided not to, and we didn't get it. We left a lot of meat on the bone, offensively and defensively. In our family we never talk about one guy losing a game or one guy winning a game, anyway. I'm really happy. He's got four misses and whole bunch of hits. I'm good with Cole. I think he's done a great job."

On the decision to go for the onsidess kick?

"There's no right. There's no wrong. There's only two thoughts to think about it. Your one thought is you kick it deep and you hold them for three plays and you have them punt it back to you somewhere in the minus-35, the minus-40 and you start your drive from there. They had a tailback that averaged almost 10 yards per carry. They are bigger than us. They are stronger than us. Our defense been playing well but the one thing I didn't want us to do is to kick that ball back to them and not have an opportunity to kick for the winning field goal. That's what I kind of saw. It was a close call but that's what I kind of saw if we just kicked it deep. I said, 'Wait a minute. Let's see if we can get this onside kick.' We know the percentages are low, even if we don't get the onside kick. If we stop them in three plays we are still going to have the opportunity to kick for a tie and if we kick for a tie and we get them into overtime, then let's rock and roll. It worked out to the latter. We stopped them. They kicked back to us. We got the ball, we had an opportunity to kick for a tying field goal. You can re-do it Sunday's if you want. I thought we looked at all of the options and it worked out okay."

Can you explain your decision to go for the TD at the end of the first half?

"Absolutely. We want to score touchdowns. First of all, it a hard angle. When the ball is that close it's a hard angle on the placekicker. You go down 21-17 they (Florida State) are going to feel mighty good about that. You go in 21-21 it's a different game. If we were tied at the halftime the odds are greatly going into our favor that we are

going to win the game in the second half based off of the things we have done on the second half as a football team. We went for the touchdown. We went for the win."

What were you told about the non-fumble call at the end of the game?

"They told me that on the replay there was an instance where he (James Blackman) had possession of the ball and his knee was down is what they told me."

On slowing down Florida State's Cam Akers in the second half.

"I think good backs you've got to tackle them. The tackling was a lot better in the second half than the first half. We you see backs break runs, very seldom is it everybody got blocked, and they did it all by themselves. That's not how backs are. It's normally – he had the one big run where Peanut Butter (Parris Bennett) missed the tackle. It's more about guys not making tackles with really, really good back. That's what they do – they make really good tacklers miss, and they get big plays. We did a better job of tackling in the second half."

How did you seniors step up after the game?

"Everybody handled it extremely well. I didn't see (Cole) on the football field because I was trying to find the head coach of the other team. I caught (Cole) before we got off the football field and as I say, the post game speech was a little bit around him and I thought all the seniors did a nice job of rallying. We win and lose as a family. And that's the only way we are going to do it."

Can you give an update on Eric Dungey?

"I'm not going to talk about the injury, but he did a fantastic job of coming back and battling. Obviously he wasn't 100 percent but he was out there giving us his arm, giving us his leadership and giving us his decision-making skills, and he did a fantastic job."