



Luke Fickell Post-Game Press Conference Quotes

Oct. 8, 2022

Opening Statement

"I give them a lot of credit. They came in here with a really good game plan, obviously going through some stuff down south (hurricane) and what they've had in the last couple of weeks. I don't think we came out with the fire, the tempo and speed in which we needed, and it showed. It was a battle. Ultimately, it came down to be two really big plays on fourth down, a stop by the defense and a fourth down made by the offense. I know we already failed on the one earlier and then obviously they flipped the football game right there and they went down and scored. Obviously, we went down and made some big plays, but those two stops right there, that's what we'll build off of. There are some things we've got to do better but we've got a bye week. I think it starts with health and you're never going to get completely healthy in a bye week or throughout a season. We've got to make sure we know who we have and how we can continue to grow and move forward. This is a large mountain to climb; these guys understand that. They've been here the last couple years and know what it's like when everybody's swinging at you. When you don't play your best and you don't have your best, it's going to be very difficult. Thank goodness we were at home, thank goodness we have that crowd, and being in that environment kept us going and kept us in this thing until we could seal the deal and make the plays."

On USF's game plan for tonight's game:

"Yeah, that was the team right there that played against Florida earlier in the year. The quarterbacks are carrying the ball 15 to 20 times, to make sure that the game is going to be in his head and on his shoulders. We had an idea that that could be the game plan. They did a great job of executing it and, we've have to do a better job, but it is what it is. You have to find a way to win."

On injury updates:

"No, no, those hurt, obviously. We always have got to be ready for that. We've had a lot of these things this year that we've been very fortunate to not have had that the last two years. We've almost gone unscathed, and a little bit in the last two years and this year. There's been a lot more of those situations whether it's in the Jake Renfro's of the world, but it is what it is. That just shows you what your team is made of. Other guys have to step up. Chris (Scott) went down and obviously was able to come back. Jadon (Thompson) went down and was able to come back in. So, I don't know if the bye week ever comes at a really good time, but right now after a win, it's going to come at a really good time."

On Evan Prater:

"I thought he did a great job. There are things we'll go over but, there was not a doubt in his mind. That's the thing that's so unique about him. I think the only little bit of a doubt I saw in his

eyes was when he had to go under center and take a snap that I don't know if he's truly ever done or maybe done much of. It was unique. We should have taken the timeout before that so we could get some snaps, but what a gamer. He prepares like it too, that's the beauty of it. He's never batted an eye. He's never changed his attitude since Ben (Bryant) was named the starter. When it comes down to it, he's going to win some ballgames for us.”

On the defense's ability to stop the run:

“We didn't do a good job of that. Last week against Tulsa and in the years' past, we've given up a lot of rushing yards, and then we did a good job last week. Then this week we come in and obviously a lot of it, not all of it, but a lot of it is the quarterback run stuff, and they do some things that when you're not real disciplined in what you're doing, they can cause you some problems. There are some things, the glaring ones are the big plays. The other ones are the third down situations where you got a good idea that they're running the football and they're hitting it right up inside, so we've got to go a little bit back to the drawing board and make sure we understand how people were attacking us and find ways to do a better job.”

On giving Charles McClelland the majority of the carries tonight:

“We have been a little bit more by committee, and Cory Kiner couldn't go this week. That threw a lot more on the plate for Charles (McClelland). Charles hasn't been maybe 100% either, but he showed today that he is a gamer. We were a little thinner. Ryan Montgomery being back is a great help for us, and I don't think Myles Montgomery was in there much today, but when you get a hot hand and Charles' kind of feeling the way he is, you keep riding with it.”

On USF being able to limit Ivan Pace Jr.:

“We will have to go and look; these guys are good. After three or four weeks, they get some ideas on how to handle some of the things that maybe he does or we do. I think Ivan (Pace Jr.) was a little bit dinged up from last week. Another guy that could use probably a good week here to try to get himself a little bit healthier and things like that. When you're a guy that you know this his size, I mean, he's not like he's small or anything, but you play as hard as he does, there's going to be some nicks and bruises. They did a good job of not letting him get loose. We got to do a little bit better job and probably move him around more.”

On going for it on fourth down:

“Nope, never was a doubt. We were in a situation where we hadn't played our best. We went for it down there on fourth and one earlier and didn't make it. I told them if we get another shot at this we're going to go. If it had been fourth and three, we probably would have went as well. Obviously, the uniqueness of where you are in the game and what's the situation with the clock as well, but there was no hesitation at all.”

On the quarterback situation:

“This week is going to be a good week for us to figure out where Ben is and his ability but it's a good week for us to continue to find ways where we can grow, both offensively and defensively. That would be one of those big ones that this week would be really good for us, but we also have to figure out the health wise of where we are.”

On Corey Kiner's status:

"I would imagine that he should be fine. I don't think it's anything that's going to be long term. I'm not sure exactly, but I was kind of hoping he'd be able to make it today, but I think the docs overruled me. They can do that. But no, I think he'll be fine. Hopefully. Obviously, after coming off a bye week, I wouldn't think he would have any issues."

On the value of Mason Fletcher:

"Well, I know that's why people are probably asking when you're in fourth and one and you have a guy that's kicked three balls and all three of them have been inside the 12-yard line and one on the one-yard. If he holds the ball any longer, I think I'm going to go out there and tackle him. There's a point of having confidence and there's a point of having a little bit overconfidence, and I don't know if we're getting close to that point. They told me he kicked three times and all three of them are inside the 12. He's really good and he's really confident in what he's doing. I tell you what, the guys downing are really good too. We hadn't had Trey in there a whole lot. When Tyler went down, I said Trey on any of those pooch situations we have to throw you in there and he went in there and made an incredible play down inside the one."

On Ty Van Fossen career-high 16-tackle performance:

"One of the ones that's huge to me is the same play that happened in the in the Alabama game. It was a short yardage situation; they ran a jet sweep on him. Alabama game, we're a little late and they got a crown the edge. Same exact play shows up and what a play he makes. Those are the things where Ty is so special. We go as our seniors go and it was awesome to see him in there and play the game the way he did. He ended up with 16 tackles. It's just a tribute again to the guys that keep battling and keep working. When their opportunities in time comes, it's really needed."

On players stepping up:

"In a lot of those situations, just like today, if they were throwing the ball, they were throwing the ball in one spot. The Ja'Quan Sheppard's, the Taj Ward's or the Sammy Anderson's of the world that are on a guy that they don't even target at all during the game. You don't hear their name, but boy, they are valuable to what we're doing. Those guys did a really good job. They had to fit some of the runs' stuff because they gave us some different things that we hadn't seen since maybe Memphis three or four years ago. We were able to adjust and by the second half do a really good job on them."

On his plans for next Saturday:

"I'll be at a high school football game probably. There'll be some type of football. Hopefully we can all relax a little bit, rest a little bit. Try not to turn that TV on and sweat over all these games and then obviously get back to work at it. Bye weeks are good at times, but I think more than anything, it's just an opportunity for players and coaches to clear their heads a little bit and recognize where we are and where we have to go."

On addressing the team at halftime:

"Always is. Sometimes it's different but now the biggest thing was that I just want to challenge him. I didn't feel like we were playing with the energy and the passion that we needed. I don't want to take anything away from South Florida, but when we focus on us, we're pretty good. We

get a little out of character and maybe focus on the wrong things. I don't know that it shows up well. It was a challenge and I'm not saying we came out and shut them down or anything. We did what we had to do and that's a sign of maturity.”

On being worried about having the bye week this week before two away games:

“I worry when people turn on the film and see a 1-4 team. All of a sudden you come off of a game where you had 11 sacks defensively, and it's all of a sudden you start maybe reading some things and thinking some different things, but that's me. Those are the things that I worry about. I don't know if that's what it is, I don't think we played at our best. I don't think we played with the passion, the energy that we needed to. We found a way and so it's really good to be able to kind of see that win when you maybe don't play at your best and I'll be able to go back and make a big point of it.”

QB Evan Prater Post-Game Press Conference Quotes

On getting his moment to enter the game

"It's go-time. Seeing Ben (Bryant) come out of the game there, you know it sucks, but you know you have to step up when your number gets called. Day in and day out, I've been going to practice and preparing to stay ready for those moments. It finally came today, and I was just ready for when my number was called."

On his big rush via a red-zone opportunity earlier in the game

"Coach Gino and Coach Fickell are always thinking of creative things to do with our offense. I think that's just one of the wrinkles that showed up this week. Going forward, we'll see where it goes."

On Charles McClelland's big game and clutch fourth-down conversion to seal the game

"I was just pumped seeing Chuck in there doing his thing. It sealed the game right there. I was looking at it as let's end it right now. Coach Fickell had faith in what we were doing, both how the offensive line was doing and how Chuck was running the ball. I think he thought it was all he needed to see to get that one yard."

On the circumstances that put him in the game early in the fourth quarter, as well as the deficit

"It's just an opportunity to showcase what you can do. The coaches told me ever since camp that these moments would show up, and they said this was one of those moments today. I just try to come in with a positive attitude that even if I'm not a starter, I can be in a position to help us win games today. Just having that mentality every day in practice helps."

RB Charles McClelland Post-Game Press Conference Quotes

McClelland on what was different for him today:

“Personally, staying on my aim points and staying on my reads. The o-line was putting in work, so it was easy running for me.”

McClelland on his mindset entering the game without Corey Kiner:

“Just to go out there and do what I do, regardless if Corey (Kiner) plays. We got more running backs. He’s a great player, but we also got great players behind me. So, if something were to happen to me, we got others who can step up. Just have to bring something every day because if you don’t, you’ll get passed up.”

McClelland on the student section:

“The student section was live, I love the student section. The fans were great too, I just love seeing them, love seeing a packed stadium.”

McClelland on how they handle things when a teammate goes down:

“Having a next man up mentality, we got guys who can play. If someone goes down we have trust that the next man will come in and do what they do.”

LB Ty Van Fossen Post-Game Press Conference Quotes

On coming into this game wanting to be more involve:

“I don’t think I’d say that. I’m just playing my role and doing what I’ve been trying to do all season. Just be there when I need to be there, and today I made a few more tackles so that was nice.”

On having never lost a game in Nippert Stadium:

“Ever since I’ve gotten here in 2018, I’ve never lost here and that’s something I plan on leaving here and still saying. I take extreme pride in that.”

On challenges that South Florida’s run game gave:

“It’s something you don’t see every week and having someone that is mobile like that and can run makes it a lot harder on defense. They pick up an extra blocker, so we have to change the math and make plays.”

OL Dylan O’Quinn Post-Game Press Conference Quotes

On being down on the scoreboard in the first and fourth quarters:

"One thing about us, is we never panic. We are just going to be us. Defense is going to get stops when they need to, and our offense is going to put up points when we need to."

On Changing the run style once Evan Prater was in the game:

"No, not at all. We had the same gameplan; Coach (Mike) Cummings always says we're painters, we don't care what color we get. We'll put it on the wall however you want it".

On winning 30 straight games in Nippert Stadium:

“I take a lot of pride coming into Nippert undefeated, we always put a big emphasis on winning when we play at Nippert”.