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5500 CAMPANILE DRIVE, SAN DIEGO, CA 92182 | (619) 594-5547

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San Diego State Football Press Conference Quotes Tuesday, Oct. 2, 2018

Head Coach Rocky Long

Opening statement:

"Obviously we're starting into conference play this week, got a game on the road against Boise State. We consider conference games more important than our non-conference schedule, so we're excited about getting into conference play and see where we stand right away. Got eight straight weeks of conference games, so hopefully we can start out playing well at the beginning."

On how good the Mountain West Conference is this year:

"I don't know how good the league is this year. We're just starting to play each other right now. I think there are a couple of surprise teams. Obviously, Boise is one of the better teams in the league; they always are and they're a really, really good football team this year. Now, I think Hawai'i surprised people and I think Utah State has surprised people with how well they're playing right now."

On how tough it is to face Boise State on the road:

"I think it's the same as playing anywhere. Any time we play on the road it's hard. The toughest part is that they're very good."

On what it will take to beat Boise State:

"Both teams are going to try to do what they do. They're really, really explosive on offense. They have a great quarterback, some outstanding receivers, but they have really good running backs that run the ball hard. They're averaging over 40 points a game, they're averaging over 500 yards in total offense. I mean, they're an explosive football team, so the best way to have a chance to win is to keep them off the field. That means on offense, we have to control the ball and get some first downs and those sorts of things. But that's easier said than done because they're pretty good on defense, too."

On facing Boise State quarterback Brett Rypien and the Bronco offense as a whole:

"I think he's playing much better this year than he did last year. They do put another quarterback in there, but very, very seldom. He's playing the whole time and he's the most experienced quarterback in our league. He's playing at a very high level. He reads coverages as well, he's very accurate with the football and he's got the receivers that'll go get the ball. But if you put too many guys in coverage, then they can pound you with their running backs. Their running backs are very physical runners. They don't necessarily try to make you miss, they kind of look you up and they like contact. They're a very physical football team, too."

On the success of the Boise State football program:

"They've been very successful for a long time. That's a sign of many good things. They've got nice facilities, it's a great town, they've had outstanding coaching staffs and they have an outstanding coaching staff right now. They recruit good players, too. That's a formula for everybody to have a good program."

On the draw of Boise State vs. SDSU in terms of recruiting:

"I think when you recruit it's all a matter of personalities matching and what a kid is looking for. I mean, a lot of people ask us why the San Diego kids don't stay home. Well, I'll give you a personal experience. When I was a kid—and I wasn't highly recruited—don't get me wrong, but I was recruited and I wanted to get away from home. I didn't want mom and dad right next door when I was in high school getting ready to go to college. Well, there are a lot of kids in San Diego like that, too."

On the ability of Boise State to maintain a lofty status after moving from Division I-AA:

"I'm not surprised because I've been told a lot of times on how they did it... They didn't move up until they were ready to move up. They didn't move up until they had everything in place to compete at a high level. They've continued to upgrade facilities and put money into their program and build new facilities and everything. They've kept up in order to stay (relevant). There's no guesswork involved. I mean, they've done everything right to be a real good program. For a non-Power 5 institution, they have very good resources and very good facilities, all those things you recruit to. Then they have the tradition of being really good, so that helps them continue that way, too."

On whether he thinks Boise State and SDSU are the two best Group of 5 schools right now:

"I don't think we are. I think Boise State can make a claim to be in that this year. They're playing really, really well. If they didn't make a couple of errors in the kicking game, they'd be undefeated and ranked probably in the top 20 for sure. They've just inched back into the top 25 and I think they're one of the teams that people are considering to be the non-Power 5 guys to go to the (FBS playoffs). I think they are; I don't think we're anywhere close to that right now."

On what makes Boise State's Brett Rypien such a good quarterback:

"I think he's smart; he's very accurate with the football. But I think he reads coverages better than most of the quarterbacks we play against. He's the best quarterback we've played against to this point. I don't know what's down the road because I don't look down the road. I just look at this week."

On the team getting focused back on football after a bye week:

"I don't think there's any problem with that. I think they like to play football and I'm sure they enjoyed their time off. But I'm sure they're ready to play."

On playing in the afternoon this Saturday:

"I think that's a concern for us playing that early since we don't do it that often. But they don't it very often, either. I don't think that's an advantage to either team. I think that's the way it should be. I wish we played every game at 1:30 on Saturday afternoon. I wish every one of our games was then, but they're not. So it'll be different for both teams to get up that early and get ready to go on. I don't think it'll make any difference to either team, but we'll see how it turns out. We're used to playing at 7:30 at night. We're still half asleep at 1:30. I mean we're taking naps and watching TV. So it'll be interesting how that works out. But it's nice to play in the afternoon."

On whether he thinks playing Boise State is a rivalry game now:

"I think you have to play a school many, many, many times to have a true rivalry. I think whenever you have teams together that have played well in the past and have won conference championships, that adds a little flavor to the game. I think it adds a little excitement to the game."

On if he thinks Boise State has a mystique of playing on the blue turf field:

"I don't think it changes because I've seen a lot of teams play on that field, and they have a great home record by the way. That's for two reasons: they're at home and have a great fan base, and they're a very good football team. That's why they win at home. It has nothing to do with the field. If you ask players who have never played there before, they go out there and it's a little weird during warmups. But once the game starts, they don't even notice the color. I've had hundreds of players tell me that. So the players have convinced me that if you've never played there before, after warmups it's a football game. You don't even know what surface you're playing on. Some play on grass, some play on turf. The reason they have such a great home record is because they're playing at home in front of a great fan base and they're really, really good. It's amazing how that works for winning home football games."

On comparing the crowds in Boise and the crowds at Aztec games:

"We've had great crowds for this season so far and last year we had great crowds. In fact, I think we led the league in attendance. Now obviously we're playing in a gigantic stadium, so it doesn't look as big as when you're playing in a smaller stadium and you fill it. Whenever you have a home crowd that adds energy and gives you moral support when things aren't going right, I think it gives the home team a huge advantage. I think our crowd has given us a big advantage this year so far at home. We've played some really tight games, and guess what, there were a bunch of people there and the student body was there and I think that energy helped us win those tight games. I think playing up there, they have another advantage because they'll have a great fan base and it'll be a full house and they'll be loud and supportive of their team. That makes it harder to win."

On if injured quarterback Christian Chapman is returning to football-related activities yet:

"He is. He's throwing passes in individual drills. In scout team work, he's playing quarterback a little bit on our offense against the scout team. Any stuff where it's 1s-against-1s and 2s-against-2s, he's not doing any of that yet. But he's actually jogging around, he's throwing the ball."

On the growth of the team's secondary:

"We're trying to get better in practice every day ... every time they play, they get better. They're better now than they were four weeks ago. They're better now than they were last week. They're getting better as it goes, but I'm going to say it again, I don't think we're having any more troubles than most people are, probably 90 percent of the teams in the country. The 10 percent that are not having trouble in the secondary, they have a dominant defensive front that puts unbelievable pressure on the quarterback. Well, most people don't have a dominant defensive front; we don't. We've got a pretty good defensive front, but we don't have a dominant defensive front. So our DBs are suffering the same problems as every other secondary in the country. I can remember the day where it was in the media for 10-15 days if someone threw for 300 yards. Now if you don't throw for 300 yards, something's wrong with you."

Junior tight end Parker Houston**On what he did last Saturday during the Aztecs' bye week:**

"I spent mine watching college football and relaxing on the couch. Staying off the legs and keeping them fresh."

On if there was any interest in getting away from football during that time:

"It's a huge part of our lives. I got several texts this weekend saying 'What am I supposed to do on Saturday night? There's no Aztecs football game to watch.' It's involved in our everyday lives and you watch it to see if maybe some guys do something different that you can add to your game or maybe you can steal a play from a TV game or something like that."

On the difficulties of reading players on film:

"After watching film, you pick up on tendencies with blitz packages and they shift a lot on their defense line. You watch the little things because the little things are what are going to help and give you an advantage in the game."

On the Aztecs' injuries, especially at quarterback, fullback and tailback:

"It's just fighting against adversity, every team goes through it. Nothing new to the game, nothing new to the sport. We're all together and some of us have lived together. You trust your brothers next to you and you know the next guy up is going to step up and do his job just as well as a starter could."

On the differences in playing with starters vs backups:

"There's slight differences like with Isaac (Lessard). I know in certain pass protections he's going to have one side and I'll have the other. You know that he's going to be there. You know how fast he's going to be there. With (Chad) Woolsey, we've worked on our timings for a lot of things and same with (Ryan) Agnew. Quarterbacks always throw in the routes for tight ends, receivers and running backs. So he's always been plugged in and has his timing down already. It's kind of like when you lose seniors, you just plug the new guys in and keep going."

On the difference between Aztec running backs:

"I don't really notice the differences between the running backs. The only thing I see when I watch them on film is how hard do both of them run and how much that they try to get those extra yards."

Senior defensive end Anthony Luke**On what he did last Saturday during the Aztecs' bye week:**

"I went to the Cal Berkeley vs Oregon game. I went back home to Sacramento and watched one of my best friends play. Jordan Kunaszyk, middle linebacker for Cal. He did pretty good, but they lost the game."

On if there was any interest in getting away from football during that time:

"No, I love football honestly. Everything in my life revolves around football. The way I do my classes, make sure I get good grades is for football. What I eat during the season is for football. Everything is around football."

On how much football he watched besides film:

"I watched the Boise State-Wyoming game on TV and I was at a game. The whole time at the game, I was watching the D-line. I was pretty much comparing and seeing how they play. I was watching opposite line sets — everything. Almost like I was watching film in the film room."

On what he might have picked up from the watching Boise game that could help this week:

"They're fast. They're really fast. Their receiving corps is really good. I just know that their offensive line sets are pretty good, so we need to be able to get a good rush in and give our DBs some help because this game is going to be tough. They're a good team."

On why the Aztec defensive line is confusing to other teams:

"We just have a lot of movements and stuff in our defense. It's different every week so it's hard to game-plan against that I guess because we're just switching it up. That's one of the reasons why I think it would be confusing. It took me almost a whole year to learn our defense, so I couldn't imagine an offense trying to learn our defense in a week."