



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### San Diego State Football Press Conference Quotes

Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2018

Fowler Athletics Center

#### Head Coach Rocky Long

##### **Opening statement:**

"Seems like a long time since we've played a game and we've still got over a week before we actually get to play. The good part about it is we're practicing and Thursday, we'll start to game prep. Practices will change starting Thursday. Thursday is basically Monday in the preparation period. Right now, we're working mostly on us-against-us and that's the good deal. The bad deal is when you have this much time on your hands, you watch more and more film. And the more film I watch, the better they (Ohio) get. I think that one week of preparation before you play most games is probably plenty for a coach. When you have basically three weeks to prepare for a team, you see more and more things that they do well. I don't know if that's good on my psyche or not. But obviously we're getting a lot out of these first two weeks developing our team for next year basically."

##### **On comparing the bye week in the regular season to extra preparation time for a bowl game:**

"The bye week is more about getting guys healthy. Guys that are playing beat up or maybe haven't played some because of an injury or two. So most of the time after a bye week, everybody gets over bumps and bruises and they're a little bit fresher to play. The way we've been practicing the last two weeks, I'm not sure that's going to be the case because we've been actually going through spring ball. Our last spring practice will be today, then we'll actually start getting ready to play the game."

##### **On what makes Ohio so good after reviewing all their film:**

"You have the opinion that they're a run team first, which they have been late in the season, and they've been really, really good at it. Then you go back earlier in the season to try to find out who played the best defense against them and what I found out looking back is that their quarterback is really, really accurate with the football. Earlier in the season they weren't running it quite as well, so he had to throw it more and they were still able to win games because he threw it so well. Late in the season they're running the ball so well that they haven't relied on the passing game as much. So if you put both halves of the season together, they can do both, which obviously makes it a lot harder on you."

##### **On where Ohio creates the most stress for a defense:**

"Now this sounds old school, and it is, but I think for all levels it's always up front. If you control the line of scrimmage on offense or defense, your chances of winning the game are much, much better. And I think controlling the line of scrimmage against the run as well as rushing a passer. If you're talking about our defensive line, we have to control the run and still be able to play zone coverages, which puts a bunch of pressure on your defensive linemen. Then if they want to throw it, those same guys have to get pressure on the quarterback. I mean, it's the same type of pressure we try to put on other people's defenses. You want to put eight or nine guys up there to stop the run, well we got all those one-on-one situations out there, let's throw it. If they don't want to take a one-on-one situation, they have to play zone coverage, which means you rush four guys and try to get pressure

on the quarterback. It's always up front. If the two sides are pretty equal and they compete on an even level up front, now the skill guys decide who wins. Skill guys don't decide who wins if one side of the ball or the other dominates the line of scrimmage. I saw it this weekend—the Chicago Bears. Everybody's patting the L.A. Rams on the back about how wonderful they are on offense and they do all these amazing things on offense and nobody can stop them. Who stopped them? The guys who dominated the line of scrimmage. They punched them right in the mouth and they didn't score any points. So it's always first about up front. If you dominate the line of scrimmage, you're going to win. When it's even up front, that's when all those other guys matter."

**On how he would categorize Ohio's offense:**

"They're a spread offense. They will get into some two tight-end formations, but they're not any kind of option team. They'll run a little speed option, which means the quarterback carries the ball and if you try and tackle him, he pitches it to a pitch back. But they don't read the line of scrimmage. They're a zone read spread team. When he rides the running back into the line of scrimmage, he's reading someone at the line of scrimmage. If that guy closes, the quarterback keeps it. If that guy doesn't close, he hands it to the running back. Now, they also use that action for play-action pass, too. They want to run it because they want to control the clock and they want to control the ball. But they're in a spread formation, so they can throw it all over the park if they want to and early in the season, they had to in a couple of games and they threw it really, really well."

**On what concerns him about Ohio's defense:**

"All those teams in that league are very physical up front. They're not going to fool us, unless they put in a different defense. They line up in standard formations at the line of scrimmage and they play pretty standard coverages. But they're very physical up front on both offense and defense, and they execute well. We're a little bit different on defense. We move guys; we blitz guys, we do all that kind of stuff to try and confuse the other team. They don't do that, they just execute well."

**On whether he has decided on quarterback rotation for the bowl game:**

"It's going to be the same as we spent the last half of the season. Christian (Chapman) will start; Ryan (Agnew) will play in the game somewhere along the way, and whichever quarterback we think gives us the best chance to win, that's who will finish it out."

**On the youth of the offensive line and if he's seen progress:**

"I think that didn't bother us at all going into the season because the young guys coming back had some experience. Because of injury and some other things that have happened, I don't think our offensive line played to the expectation level that we had going into the season. That's one of the reasons we didn't score as many points. Now, some of it had to do with Juwan (Washington) getting hurt and Christian (Chapman) getting hurt. I mean, you can point to all kinds of things, but I think the offensive line with injuries and such probably didn't play as well as we thought they would. But they're almost all coming back, so there's a chance they'll play much, much better next year."

**On if he thinks the two programs are carbon copies of one another:**

"I think our philosophies are the same. The way we go about it is not even close to the same. I mean, they're almost exclusively a one-back formation team, and we're a two-back formation team. But the philosophy is we want to run the ball first. We want to keep the ball from the other team. We want to use field position and time of possession to give us the best chance to win. I think the philosophies are very similar. The way we go about it is completely different."

**On if Ohio compares to any other teams the Aztecs have faced this year:**

"We've played several teams that have similar schemes. The teams we've played with similar schemes aren't nearly as patient as Ohio is. I mean, Nevada runs a similar scheme, New Mexico runs a similar scheme, UNLV runs a similar scheme, but those schools aren't as patient as these guys. These guys will take three- and four-yard gains in the running game and be very happy with it, where those teams I'm talking about there if you only get three or four yards running the ball, they'd just as soon throw it. These guys are a lot more patient."

### **Junior linebacker Kyahva Tezino**

#### **On the preparation going into the bowl game:**

"It's the same as it's always been, maybe with a bit more energy. We're just excited to have a game to play and finish off the season right. We're going into (the game) excited, a lot of energy and can't wait to play."

#### **On if Texas football is better than California football:**

"When we get here it's like we've played with each other for a very long time. The coaches instill that in us from Day 1. We build a relationship like no other. Even if there from wherever, like Parker Baldwin from Arkansas. It doesn't matter where you come from, you're going to build a relationship with them and feel like you've played with them forever."

#### **On if players from Texas have different personalities:**

"I'd say they're more loyal than anything. It's where they come from. They come from a family oriented state of caring for others. That's what I see from the people down south and in Texas. They're just more caring and caring for your well-being."

#### **On winning a bunch of the team awards:**

"It meant a lot because that's what the team thought of me. Just for the guys to think that of me was a big honor. I'm so grateful and blessed to have my teammates think that of me. I couldn't be able to have those awards or do the things I did this season without those guys. I just thank them and the coaches for that."

### **Junior defensive end Myles Cheatum**

#### **On the preparation going into the bowl game:**

"The team is looking forward to the opportunity. To be able to send the seniors out the right way is the most important thing. We want to finish the season correctly."

#### **On the Texas guys coming to San Diego State:**

"I think we all like it here. When you get here it's a collective bond that you bring with you, repping that Texas pride. You want to represent where you are from."

#### **On getting the chance to play in Texas for a second straight year:**

"Always getting an opportunity to get to play in a bowl game is special. We don't take that lightly. Getting to go back home again is extra special for the Texas guys because our families don't get to see us play all of the time. You get an opportunity for (your family) and friends to come that wouldn't necessarily get to see you play. It gives you a little juice and energy."

#### **On what makes Texas football so special:**

"It's the pride. You want to represent where you are from well. It's the same when you are playing against Texas guys. It comes down to where you are from or where they are from. It could be 10-to-15 minutes apart from another school and you want to have that edge over them. You see them out in the grocery store or at different places, you have a little extra swagger if you beat them."

#### **On if Texas football is better than California football:**

"I may be a bit biased, but I think the Texas guys have a little different mentality. But when you get here to a place like this, our coaches to a good job of getting everybody on the same page and making it all about the team."

**On how aware the high school players are of coach Jeff Horton:**

"I think very aware. A lot more guys are more open about going to other places because of social media. You see how the different places that you could go. It helps having guys before you go play out of state. It gives you more hope when out-of-state schools come recruit you. I was able to hear what (coach Horton) said and take it in."

**On if his high school friends ask him about playing for San Diego State:**

"Always. They always say that I'm living the dream of getting to live in San Diego and play college football, and I don't think they are wrong. There's not a better place to come to that I can think of to play football rather than San Diego, California."

**On if he tries to see any of his friend to come to San Diego State:**

"I don't try to sell anybody on anything. I try to advise them of my experiences here. I always tell them that wherever you go, nobody can play there except for you. At the end of the day it has to be their decision."

**Junior quarterback Ryan Agnew**

**On growing up in Texas playing football:**

"Football is a religion down there. When you say that, it speaks true, you know, the entire town. It's kind of like in the movie Friday Night Lights, driving through town and they say 'closed, going to the game.' That's what it kind of felt like growing up in my hometown, kind of the same way. Football is religion down there, so it'll be awesome to go back playing in front of the home crowd and see all the support there."

**On what convinced him to sign with San Diego State out of high school:**

"Coach Long, coach (Jeff) Horton, coach (Blane) Morgan, the winning tradition that's being started here, and who wouldn't want to come live in San Diego, California, for a few years. So all those things drew me right towards San Diego State."

**On how well people in Texas are aware of San Diego State:**

"They're very aware, especially the people in my hometown. They like to check in, keep up. Family, friends, kids who go to other schools, they like to keep up and get texts after games Saturday and Sunday, you know, catch up with everyone across the country, so it's pretty awesome."

**On how he wants the season to play out:**

"As an underclassman seeing the past few games not go the way we wanted, you want to do nothing but send the seniors out on the right note. A senior class that has the most wins in program history over a three-, four-year span, they deserve to be sent out the right way, especially (after) the way they came in."

**On the best thing about returning to Texas to play in a bowl game:**

"Going home to Whataburger, going home to Costa Vida, Baker Brothers. The food is what I'm looking forward to going home to and then just having friends and family there ... So having all my friends, family and past coaches just being there and getting the support from them is going to be awesome."

**On if he was friends with the Aztecs' other Texas players prior to college:**

"I wasn't really buddies with anyone on the roster, but I knew of a lot of guys. Sergio (Phillips) was from DeSoto; I played (against) him. Kam Kelly was from Wylie (High), so I definitely knew a bunch of guys from Texas. When I came out here seeing all of them, it kind of felt like I can be at home here, too."

**On if the number of Texas players was a magnet for others from that state to come to SDSU:**

"Yeah definitely. We had one of the recruits from one of our rival high schools come out here this past week and I just want to preach to him that even though it's California, it's still great football, (there's) still that blue-collar mentality ... Football is football anywhere you go."

**On what challenges the Ohio defense presents to SDSU:**

"They're a good group, a couple of all-conference players on their defense, very stout defensive line, very good front seven. Very tough against the run with guys on the back end that can make plays. Kind of similar to Eastern Michigan and Northern Illinois in the past. They're going to be a good defense, tough to scheme up, great coaching, but we're looking forward to the challenge."

**On being chosen the Aztecs' Offensive Player of the Year by his teammates:**

"Like John (Baron) said, the most important thing is that it's voted on by the players, the guys in the locker room, the guys you spend the most time with starting in January. Those guys giving us those accolades mean the world to us. Even though we earned the accolades, we wouldn't be able to do it without our teammates. John's going to be the first guy to say that without the long snapper and without the holder, he's not making the kick. Without the offensive line, receivers, running backs and tight ends, I wouldn't have played as well as I did."

**Senior placekicker John Baron II**

**On how he wants the season to play out:**

"Obviously, we want to win ... As you guys know, we've lost the last couple games and (are) kind of on a (downslide) right now, so we definitely want to end on an (upbeat note). As a senior, I think that would be really special and for the rest of the team as well."

**On winning three awards at the team's annual banquet on Sunday, including Special Teams MVP:**

"Before the other night, I never received an award from SDSU at a banquet, so it was a really big honor for me and I know how huge it is and how special it is. I really appreciated it and I think it says a lot about your teammates on certain awards that they vote for and about your coaches and how they think about you. So I'm just really honored and blessed that I got to receive them, but at the same time, I'm looking forward to the game."

**-SDSU-**