



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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San Diego State Football Press Conference Quotes Tuesday, Sept. 18, 2018

Head Coach Rocky Long

Opening statement:

"I think it'll be interesting to see how this game is played and how it turns out because my experience is that every time you play a school from this league (Mid-American Conference), there's one thing you're going to be sure of: they're going to be physical, they're going to be tough, they're going to play you hard all the way to the end. I've got great respect for that league and how they play football. This team has shown in their first three games that they can move the ball. They're averaging way over 400 yards a game, they're averaging right at [35] points per game. They run the spread, they've got a two-quarterback system. One's a little bit bigger, probably throws a little bit better. The other one still throws it just fine, but he's a little bit more of a runner-scrambler, so you have to have two defensive game plans going in. They haven't played anybody that runs the kind of offense that we run yet, so it's kind of a guessing game on how they're going to play defense against our offense, too. So going into the game we don't know what to expect other than that they'll be tough. They're big, too. They're a strong, physical football team and they'll be tough. Any team from that league is tough.

On avoiding a letdown after last Saturday's victory over Arizona State:

"I hope it's true. I mean, you never know how a team's going to show up. Sometimes practice doesn't even give you an indication. We didn't practice all that well last week and we played pretty well. Practiced really well the first week of the season before the first game (and lost). We played all right, but not real good."

On the team possibly getting distracted from the ASU win and looking ahead to the Boise State game:

"I don't think the one the following week because we have a bye week. That's not even on their mind. I hope they're mature enough to handle a win like we had and move on to this game because if they're not mature enough to handle that, we're in trouble."

On the Aztecs being a circled opponent on Eastern Michigan's schedule:

"Our team doesn't see it that way. Our team sees (them) as a very good football team coming here to play us. Now we've played Northern Illinois from their league the last two years and Northern Illinois was maybe the most physical and toughest football team we've played the last two years. We really struggled in the game to win (them). I think when those two teams played last year, Northern Illinois beat Eastern Michigan in overtime. So we're going to get the same caliber of team."

On Aztec placekicker John Baron:

"We've got the best of both worlds. We've got a really good kicker and he tells me when he can make it and when he can't. I mean, he's honest about it, so I go to him and I say 'Can you make it from here?' If he says no, we either punt it or go for it. If

he says yes, we send him in the game. So far he's been right every single time. He's been around a while and he's been a good kicker for us for a long time."

On his opinion of placekickers in general:

"Yeah, I love good kickers. You know, when you have a kicker that is out there to make a 30-yard field goal to win the game and he misses, it kind of ruins it for about 150 people. So I think they're extremely important to the game and any success that you have. But if you're a bad kicker... We haven't had to worry about it too much here lately. We had a kicker one time, he couldn't make an extra point most of the time, so we just went for it every time. Made the decision really easy, and John (Baron) makes our decision really easy now."

On if running the ball will be a key to beating Eastern Michigan:

"For us to win, we're going to have to run the ball well. Now, this is a typical team from that league, they're huge. They're huge up front on offense and they're huge up front on defense. The size they have on defense, they have some quality linebackers, too. That lends you to believe that they can play against the run pretty well. People have been running the ball against them out of the spread, so it's purely a number system. When you have to move guys out there for coverage, there are more blockers than defenders at the line of scrimmage. They've been going against the spread and they've been moving guys out there for coverage and people have a numbers advantage on them in the box, so to speak. We don't provide that kind of challenge. They can put as many in the box as they want to because we're all in there, too. We don't have them spread from sideline to sideline. So it's a completely different running game that they're playing against this week than in the past."

On having confidence in running back Chase Jasmin after his performance vs. ASU:

"We already had the confidence in him, that's why he was the backup. But he proved it to everybody else that he's a quality running back, so the tradition continues, which is a good deal where you have a starter and a backup who both can play. That's a great tradition to have."

On whether or not he thought Chase Jasmin fumbled on the last drive vs. ASU:

"I couldn't tell on game day. I watched the replay on TV and that was not a fumble. Instant replay is not infallible... It was (a) pretty bang-bang (play). In my opinion, it seems to be the way this works out, what they call on the field they'll stick with if they're not sure. Now, I'm prejudiced. It looked pretty sure to me that he was down before they yanked the ball out of there. That looked pretty good to me, but that's not the way they saw it, so they ruled it a fumble."

On Chase Jasmin fighting for a first down on his final carry before the fumble:

"It's been a long time since I've carried a football, but he had no idea he'd made the first (down). When you're running in a crowded situation like he was and he wanted to make the first down, he didn't know when he had made it. So he was getting as many yards as he could get before he actually hit the ground."

On the success of linebacker Kyahva Tezino this season:

"He's a good player. Anytime you have a good player out there that reacts correctly and has instincts, they make plays. Last year, he hadn't started around here and we had some injuries, so we put him in the game and it made us all look bad because he should have been playing all along. But sometimes you don't see things in practice that actually happen when it's game time and Kyahva's good player. He's having a great year so far."

On the Aztecs' defensive strategy during ASU's final touchdown drive last Saturday:

"Obviously when they got the ball with four minutes left in the game, the idea was to make them inch it down the field so that they would end up with no time on the clock even if they scored. That was the goal. Now, we don't normally play defense that way even though we do practice some of that. Obviously our guys made some mistakes while they were playing soft coverage,

which means everything that is thrown deep you're over the top of, so when you come to the ball, you're coming forward or back toward the line of scrimmage so you get good side of the football. Well that's not exactly what happened. I mean, there were some deep throws over the top. We did make them inch it down there and they did take a lot of time off the clock and if the fumble is not a fumble, we're getting in victory formation taking a knee. That's not the way it turned out, but the instant replay saved us later, too."

On Eastern Michigan being at a disadvantage have to play in the Pacific Time Zone:

"I've been around a long time, that's all made-up stuff. I can remember coaching at a school that was at 7,500 feet (elevation) and a team from Hawai'i came there to play and they were losing and they couldn't catch their breath. Well, two years after that they came to the same school that was over a mile high and they were playing really good and they never got tired. I think that these are in-shape athletes that can perform at any level and (in) any time frame no matter what the situation is. That's good reasoning, though, I guess. Scientifically that's good reasoning, but as a football player it means nothing."

Junior quarterback Ryan Agnew

On the challenge presented this week:

"Coming into every single week, it's going to present a new challenge. We know Eastern Michigan is going to be a very physical football team and they're going to come with it. Like we said, Northern Illinois last year was a very good football team and they play in the exact same league and they have the exact same mentality and they are going to be a big, bruising football team that is going to want to come in here and win. We've just got to put last week behind us and really get prepared for this week because we know it's a tough challenge."

On the offensive performance against ASU's high-ranked rush defense and its potential:

"The sky is the limit with this offense. We have great offensive linemen, I'm sure Chase can attest to that. We have many running backs — not just Chase, not just Juwan — but we have many guys that can make plays in the running game and the receivers that can block outstanding tight ends that block outstanding. When that gets clicking, then we can start throwing the ball around because they're going to stack the box on us. We're really just trying to improve in every aspect. It was really good to see the running game come alive, especially against a defense that prides themselves on stopping the run. It was really nice to see."

On Eastern Michigan's run defense and the offensive plan of attack this week:

"I think the expectations are just to perform to the best of our ability. The coaches are going to put in an outstanding game plan and our job is to go out there and execute it as best as we possibly can. Now, we don't really look at the statistics [of the opponent's run defense] because if we had looked last week, we would have been like, 'Oh, we can't run the football.' We don't really try to worry about the people on the other side of the ball; we focus on what we can do, how we can get better, how we can improve. On Saturday nights, we see the results and see where we are."

Junior linebacker Kyahva Tezino

On his success thus far this season:

"I just need to give thanks to all of my teammates. They push me every day — the offense, Ryan Agnew, Chase Jasmin — they push me every day to get better. I can't forget about my linebacker room. Those guys right there, we bring each other up when we're down and we praise each other when we're high. Right now I'm at my highest and I just feel like it is all because of my team, and I thank them."

On his level of play time last season:

"I don't know, maybe at practice I wasn't showing little flashes here and there, but I just had to wait my turn. I'm actually happy it worked out the way it did. Everything works out the way it is and everything happens for a reason. I'm just glad I can be able to help the team out."

On preparing for a dual-quarterback scheme with two guys who have different styles:

"Coach Long is very good at when it comes to running quarterbacks and pocket-passer quarterbacks. I was watching film yesterday and I know [EMU QB Mike Glass III] is one of their running quarterbacks, and [EMU QB Tyler Wieggers] is the pocket-passer. Coach Long is a really good defensive coordinator and head coach with knowing how to game plan against guys like that. I feel comfortable that he will know what to do in that situation."

On the key to his versatility as a linebacker:

"I would say I just watch Bobby Wagner's highlight tapes and a lot of great linebackers, honestly. I try to model my game after him. Even if it's just watching Ray Lewis a little bit here and there. I just try to model my game after him. It's just me watching film, me coming to practice every day ready to work, and just the preparation that gets me ready."

Sophomore running back Chase Jasmin

On the history of the running back position at SDSU and what it's been like to follow in the footsteps of some successful Aztecs:

"Well, it's pretty spectacular. I came in as a freshman in the running back room with Donnel Pumphrey, Rashaad (Penny), Juwan (Washington) — a lot of great backs. A legacy of great backs have come here. To be able to help the team from that position, it means a lot and it's a lot of responsibility, and I take it with one hundred percent dignity and respect."

On how he feels now about the fumble and how it felt having Juwan Washington there to support him:

"[It feels] a lot better. Having it happen to you in such a pivotal part of the game, you can only blame yourself, but you have to be able to shake things off and have a short memory. Having Juwan as that mentor and being able to relate to me and talk me through it and keep me up and keep me positive to keep making plays and helping our team win — that's what it's all about."

On waiting his turn and having guys like Donnel Pumphrey and Rashaad Penny featured in the run game in past seasons:

"It's not that tough when you're watching such great running backs make plays and help our team win. What it's all about is what can you do for the team. When I came in here, all I wanted to do was see the field. You kind of realize once you get into the program and you start to mesh with the team that here it's about winning and what we can do to help each other win. Being patient wasn't a problem and I'm just happy I got the opportunity."

On finding his groove in Saturday's game vs. ASU:

"We prepare for this every week. Camp, every week, every practice, everybody is prepared to go in. Sure, there's an adjustment to the game speed, but once I was in there I felt comfortable and just wanted to help make plays to help us win the game."