



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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San Diego State Football Press Conference Quotes

Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2019

Fowler Athletics Center

Head Coach Rocky Long

Opening statement:

"(It's) an awfully busy week for us. Obviously, we're getting ready for the bowl game. We leave tomorrow to get the Albuquerque for a couple days of practice and activities, but probably more important for the program tomorrow is the early signing day. We've had a couple recruiting weekends. Hopefully we're going to sign the majority of our class tomorrow. We'll find out when the letters of intent come in. We figure we have 18 to 19 scholarships available this year. We hope to sign anywhere from 9 to 12 guys tomorrow. And if we do that, that will put us a long way toward finishing our class. We won't have many to recruit for the second signing date, which is in February. So it's busy, busy, busy. Our players are just finishing finals and trying to get themselves ready to play in a bowl game. We're real busy, but it's a nice way to be this time of year."

On if San Diego State is getting contacted by a lot of kids because of the transfer portal:

"Not a lot of kids. I think the young men who put their names on that portal check out your team before they do it to make contact with you. (They'll see) what positions you're in need of or where they might be able to play quickly. I think they are pretty thorough about which teams they contact once they put their names on the portal."

On the weather for Saturday's game:

"I don't know what the weather report is. It sounded to me when I looked at it that it was going to be in the high 40s, the sun was going to be out and there wasn't going to be too windy. I've spent some time in New Mexico, that's not bad weather. That's pretty darn good weather, really good football weather."

On Central Michigan:

"The team we are playing is very balanced. They like to run it, but they throw it a lot too. The last half of the season they've been successful scoring a lot of points and gaining a bunch of yards. I'm sure they are coming into the game excited."

On Central Michigan's quarterback:

"They actually use two quarterbacks. One quarterback is a good athlete that would rather throw it than run it. The other quarterback is a good athlete that would rather run it than throw it. So they've got the ability to put whoever in there. They are a team that even though they throw it a lot - they throw it a lot more than they run it - it's more of a controlled passing game. They try to run the clock and try to keep the ball on offense like other people do running the ball, but they do it with a very controlled passing game."

On the biggest challenge when a quarterback has only a week and a half to prepare for his 3-3-5 defense:

"I don't know, you'd have to ask the quarterbacks. In this case, they've had two weeks to get ready for so I'm sure this quarterback will really understand our defense more than most quarterbacks do because of the extended time period he's had

to get ready. I'm just guessing, but I would guess it is totally dependent on the quarterback. Some quarterbacks spend a lot of time studying film and get a key or two that gives them an advantage. Some quarterbacks their advantage is athletic ability - buying themselves time for somebody to come open and that sort of thing. Nowadays in college, most of the offensive coordinators or head coaches in college have somebody spotting your defense upstairs and then they call the plays. So it has very little to do with the quarterback understands what's going on. He either hands the ball off on a run from the call from upstairs or in the passing game, he has a progression he goes through. It's really, really simple with today's offenses. It's very, very simple on the quarterback. I've been told in the NFL the coaches called the plays where the quarterbacks to and that's why they put the rule in that with whatever however much time left on the clock., they turn off the headsets because coaches were at the time telling their quarterbacks where to throw the ball. So I think a lot of that by the quarterback has gone out the window. I think a lot of its being done by the coaches."

On if he'd like to see it going back to the quarterbacks calling their own plays:

"Certainly, I'd love the quarterbacks to call their own plays and have to do all that on their own. I'd love that sure."

On if he'd want the defense calling the plays if the quarterbacks had to call their own plays:

"We could have the middle linebacker call it. I like to let the players play."

On the biggest challenge on teaching the success SDSU has had with the 3-3-5 defense:

"I think that in our defense, when we first started running the 3-3-5 we were unique and there were only a couple of schools in the country that ran it. Now there's a lot of people running it. A lot of the NFL teams use it as their dime package and their nickel package. There's a lot of people running it now, so it's probably the most versatile defense out there. You can do more things with it. Then you've got to be very, very careful that you don't give your players so many assignments and so many adjustments that they make mental errors and they don't play fast. It's very versatile if your linebackers could be defensive linemen and safeties at the same time or a safety can be a DB and a linebacker at the same time."

On Luq Barcoo being named to two All-America teams so far:

"I think he's getting a lot of accolades for having a good year. Being the first DB in the history of this school, and they've had a lot of good DBs go through the school, to make the Walter Camp All-American team. That's pretty cool stuff. That's really neat. I think he enjoys it too."

On getting less practices than normal before the bowl game:

"Well by the time the game shows up, we'll have had a total of eight practices. Most of the time we have around 15 practices for the games we've played in the past. It was a spring practice for the younger players in our program. We've had one day this this (bowl) practice season where we've actually worked the young guys and it was only the last 30 minutes of practice. So we haven't had the advantage that we normally have with the bowl game."

On if it's a hard time of the year with practice going on with finals:

"I think it's hard on the players. They're being pulled and in so many different directions. Obviously, we want the concentration on the practice field and meeting rooms. Some aren't even there for the meetings because they're taking finals or they're studying for finals. I think it's hard. I think this is harder than most because of how early we were playing. Usually it doesn't really matter if they're late or miss meetings or practice during finals because we have another three weeks to go before we actually play in the game so them being distracted is not a big deal. But obviously there are a lot more distractions and crucial practices this year than there have been in the past. Now, I don't know Central Michigan. I don't know their final schedule. They may not be doing the exact same thing. So there might be an advantage or disadvantage. I don't know when their finals work."

On how much he's watched on Central Michigan:

"I think that we've watched every film but we only computer broke down the last four games. And they are like everybody that we play. They give you a variety of formations and motions, all that kind of stuff and they just count. I mean football is so simple

at the college level now. They count. If you have enough guys in there to make it hard to run they throw it. If you don't have enough guys in there to make it hard to run they run it. If they're able to get a numbers advantage just by looking at the way your lined up that gives the offense advantages all the time. And then if you take in the deal where you can't hit them anymore, the offenses always have an advantage. Anytime you hit somebody hard now it's a penalty."

On why this Aztec defense is so good if the offenses always have the advantage nowadays:

"Players making plays and playing hard. It's not scheme."

On if collectively this is the fastest defense he has had in a while:

"I can't tell that. I think if you count every single game from the very first game to the last game, it's the most productive defense that has been here in the last 10 years. And probably the most successful defense because the points they've given up is better than any other defense that came before. This is a tribute to the players because of how hard they play and how fast they play, because they are not the most talented defense since I've been here. There's been a couple defenses here that have had four and five NFL guys and those defenses were much more talented than this defense. I don't know how many pros are on this defense, but not very many."

On if we would rather play following a three-week layoff or right away:

"I like playing week-to-week. I don't even like bye weeks. To get good players healthy though - the players that were playing with some form of hurt or injury and they're trying to play through it - a bye week or a couple weeks off in this case is really good for those guys. So usually when you have a week off or two weeks off you have all your best players ready to go."

On the health of quarterback Ryan Agnew:

"He won't be a 100 percent. He's good enough to play though. I think he won't be quite as fast as he normally. I think he's still moves around, his agility is still good. I think he'll still be able to buy himself some time, but I don't think he'll be as fast when he takes off with the ball."

Senior fullback Isaac Lessard

On what he thinks the most exciting thing about going to a bowl game:

"Being on the road for a couple of extra days is fun. You get to spend more time with the team and all that, then playing a team you're really not used to playing from a different conference. That's fun."

On if there's particular restaurant chain in Albuquerque that the team will visit:

"We'll have to talk to Keshawn Banks or Jordan Byrd to see what special restaurant they have down there because Californians have In-N-Out, Texans have Whataburger, so we'll have to find out."

On balancing practice with final exams before the bowl trip:

"I haven't really had any tests this year for finals, it's all been papers. I try not to procrastinate, but I always end up doing it a little bit, so I've been working pretty hard and working extra hours. I just actually came here from writing a paper. After practice I'll probably have to go to the library to finish up. It's tough, but you can always make it work."

On whether he prefers to have more time to prepare for a bowl game like in some other years:

"I'd rather not have a lot of time. It's just thinking more about the opponent and all that. I'd rather play football than practice. In years past, it's been nice for the program to have a few extra practices for the younger guys to kind of see where they're at heading into the spring. But personally as an older guy, I'd rather just get out and play."

On his reaction when learning the Aztecs would face Central Michigan in the New Mexico Bowl:

"When we play on Saturdays, you don't really get a chance to watch a lot of teams, so I didn't really know much about Central Michigan. As soon as I found out, I looked up on ESPN to see who they played and what the scores were. Seeing that they made it to the MAC championship, congratulations to them. That's a tough conference. We think we have a tough conference out here. We kind of give them respect, too. We've played Eastern Michigan, Northern Illinois and Ohio from last year, and they've all played us tough. Just knowing a little bit of what we'll get from them, they'll be a physical team ready to come and play."

On playing in a bowl game before Christmas:

"Very happy. We wanted to play in one of those New Year's Six bowls or something like that, and there are some good bowls after Christmas that we would have loved to play in. But for us to be able to go home and spend time with family, I'd personally rather play before Christmas."

On what the coaches want the players to report back on when hosting potential recruits:

"Personality traits to see if they could fit into the program. Try to talk and figure out who they are as a person and see if we're a good fit for them and they're a good fit for us."

On what struck him most about the Aztec program during his recruitment to SDSU:

"I liked the honesty of the coaches. I never visited campus before going on my official (visit) or anything like that, so it was kind of a shot in the dark. But I just trusted the coaches and the program as a whole."

Junior defensive back Dwayne Johnson Jr.

On what he thinks the most exciting thing about going to a bowl game:

"The gifts. I love the gifts. I also love the gear. That's the fun part and then just getting to play a different team from a different conference and have a different type of atmosphere."

On balancing practice with final exams before the bowl trip:

"I just finished my last final, so it's been okay. Balancing practice and finals is kind of the same as regular school. You just have to know how to approach it, but I think it was the same as normal."

On whether he prefers to have more time to prepare for a bowl game like in some other years:

"I'd rather just go play. I don't really enjoy the three weeks (of preparation). I feel like it's just adding on to a long-anticipated game, so just getting right to it is more fun."

On his reaction when learning the Aztecs would face Central Michigan in the New Mexico Bowl:

"I found out on Twitter. We were just trying to find out where we were going to go and who we were going to play. Just anxious to see that honestly. I didn't get to see them play all year, but we went and watched some highlights from them and saw the scores of the games they played. They're a pretty good team just like Ohio was last year, so it's going to be fun."

On playing in a bowl game before Christmas:

"For sure, I'd love to play before Christmas, but at the same time, you'd love to go to a big bowl game, too, so it's like a trade-off."

On hosting potential recruits leading up to early signing day:

"You just show them campus. They do a pretty good job of showing the campus, the library, classrooms and things like that. Our job is to show them the atmosphere of campus, what the people are like, how it's going to be like when they get here. Try to build that connection with them and see if they fit in here. Try to make it seem like home. I feel like that's what we focus on."

On what struck him most about the Aztec program during his recruitment to SDSU:

"It was home, that was a big part. I liked the atmosphere of it. They worked hard, that was like the biggest thing and they weren't going to hide it. They told me you're not gonna come here and be (given anything), you're gonna work for it. I enjoyed that a lot and they just spoke the truth. Those were huge things for me."

On Coach Long praising the Aztec defense:

"It's hard to get a compliment from Coach Long, so you take them as they come. So when he says you're part of the best defense (he has coached), I mean that's a huge compliment, especially for someone who's been coaching that long. The most athletic side, you look at classes like 2015 and 2016 and you can see they just had freaks. I feel like we became the best defense because we just have a lot of hard workers and everybody knows their assignment and tries to do their assignment the best they can."

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