



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### **SDSU Football Press Conference Quotes**

#### **First Spring Practice**

**Monday, March 4, 2019**

#### **Fowler Athletic Center**

#### **Head Coach Rocky Long**

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

"Yeah, we're pretty excited with spring ball starting today. We had a good offseason to this point. Our team has worked really hard trying to improve on some of the things we didn't do as well as we should've last year. It's always fun this time of year, and it's a little different this year because there's so much football still going on. Usually there's no football and we totally get involved with basketball. The most exciting thing is our (men's) basketball team is playing so good right now ... But we're excited that we're starting spring ball even though I can watch football on TV every day of the week it seems like."

##### **On implementing the spread offense into the system this spring:**

"You'll see more spread formations this spring than you have in the past. You'll see the quarterback a lot more in the shotgun than you have in the past. To be truthful, it's really going to be easier on the quarterback than anything we've done. If you look at all our quarterbacks that we have here now, every one of them came out of a spread system. We have to teach them how to take a snap from center rather than taking the shotgun snap because they've been doing that since they were 12 years old or maybe even earlier than that in Pop Warner. The running plays that we're going to put in are exactly the same running plays, the blocking schemes are exactly the same blocking schemes. But when you put one more wide receiver out there, one of the defenders that usually goes out there to cover him, that makes the numbers at the line of scrimmage a little different and probably makes it a little bit easier on the offensive linemen. So in reality, it'll be easier on the quarterback than what we've tried to teach them in the past."

##### **On why changes are being made this year as opposed to any other time past or future:**

"There's no reason to change things as long as you're successful. The worst thing to do is to try and make problems when there weren't any. We didn't play as well as we wanted to or we should have last year. So when you go into the evaluation of your program, you look at everything and decide what's going to help your players perform better. My decision was that if the quarterbacks were more comfortable in the shotgun because that's what they've done all their lives, let's put them in the shotgun. We're not changing our philosophy now. We're just lining up in different formations. We're not changing what we're going to do. We're going to run the same running plays and if we can run it, we're going to run it. We're going to use play-action pass. I just think it makes it easier on the quarterback, especially the quarterback, but it also makes it easier on the offensive linemen when you don't have as many people close to the line of scrimmage. There's less chance of blocking mistakes."

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**On if he thinks the running backs will bust more chunk plays because of the spread:**

"It depends on how well we throw the ball. Just because you're in a spread formation doesn't mean you can't stack the box for the running game. It just puts you in a lot more one-on-one situations, (defensive backs) against wide receivers. But you can still put enough guys in there that make it hard to run the ball. If we throw the ball we enough in one-on-one situations, now they have to start spreading people out and playing more zone coverage, which maybe gives you a little advantage in the running game. Now I think that some of our running backs are disappointed that we're doing this because one of the reasons they came here is so they could be the tailback in the I-formation, but every one of them was in the spread in high school. So they have a lot more experience running the ball from a spread formation, in the pistol formation or the offset back formation. They have a lot more experience doing that than they do the I-formation because no high schools run the I-formation anymore or very few. There's probably a couple that still do, but there's very few."

**On if he is expecting his players to succeed in the new system:**

"We trying to give our players a better chance of success. But at the same time, we're trying to make it easier on them, so that we can play at a certain physical level that we didn't play at last year. We're trying to get our edge back."

**On the multitude of pro football leagues this time of year:**

"That's what strange about this year because usually when you're going to (start) spring practice, you know, the only football that's going on are the college in spring practice. But now you've got all the extra pro leagues. I think we had an arena game last night in San Diego, right? Then you can flip on the TV Saturday and Sunday and watch the AAF. It's fun to watch the San Diego team because they have eight or nine guys that are former Aztecs on that team. That's fun to watch. So it's not the same feel for spring practice that it normally is because it's not like football's gone away."

**On JC quarterback transfer Jordon Brookshire:**

"He came out of the spread system. We thought he was a talented guy that can run with the ball well and he still throws it pretty well. We thought he was a really good competitor. Obviously when your team wins the junior college championship, you have to have a pretty good quarterback. We have confidence in Ryan Agnew, but we wanted some depth there and we wanted some competition. The competition that Ryan would've had would've been really really young. Now we've added a more mature kid into the competition, which is good for all of them."

**On the possibility of adding a graduate transfer after spring ball:**

"We still have our eyes out there for a couple of positions where maybe a graduate transfer would fit in, defensive line, offensive line, corner, quarterback."

**On if the quarterback competition would extend into fall:**

"I never know. I would guess it would go to the fall because that's my personality."

**On what the first week of spring practice will entail:**

"Well, it's very disappointing because I'd like to go out there in full pads today and scrimmage. But the NCAA has rules that make you ease into it. That's because they're not football coaches making those rules. We can only be in helmets and shorts and shirts for the first two days of practice. The third day of practice we're allowed to go in shells, helmets and shoulder pads, but not full pads. We can't go in full pads until the fourth practice of spring ball. Then there are some other rules in there that we can only go live 20 percent of the time in spring practice. In our situation, I'd like to go full pads 100 percent of the time and live 100 percent of the time. But the rules are made to prevent people like me from getting what we want I guess ... For player safety, I think those rules are probably pretty good rules. To keep them from being abused by a coach like me, you know."

**On the comparison of offensive and defensive players practicing in full pads:**

"It's really hard to play defense when you don't have pads on, where the offense can actually work on timing and assignments. They can do drills that help an offense a lot more than no pads help a defense. Now that's probably by design, too, because the game has changed over the last 20 years where they're trying to get more offense out there because I think fans like to watch offense. So they're always trying to get where people score more points."

**On the other areas of his team that he is most intrigued to see other than quarterback:**

"I think the most concern on our football team is the defensive line. We're very very young and very few of them have played any. There's some young talent, but you know, the closer you get to the line of scrimmage, the more mature you have to be."

**On if he's more at ease with Brady Hoke coaching the defensive line given the unit's youth:**

"I think Brady's the best defensive line coach I've been around. I told him they were really really young when he decided to take the job and he said, 'Okay, that's fine,' until today. Then he said, 'You know, we've got a long way to go.' I said I told you that when I hired you ... I've only coached with so many d-line coaches, and I think he absolutely knows the techniques that are required to play that position. He knows the mentality that is required to play at that position and he is really good at teaching young players how to do things the right way."

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