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San Diego State Football
Virtual Press Conference Quotes
Dec. 1, 2020

Head Coach Brady Hoke

Opening statement:

"We're back to work. It's a little different than last week. We know who we're playing, we know where we're playing at. We started yesterday on our preparation for Colorado State. We hope to have some guys back as we move forward, especially on the offensive side of the ball. Seyddrick Lakalaka, we hope to have back defensively. It's football. Things happen. Guys get dinged up a little bit. We've got to go to the next man up and keep playing. We had a good practice yesterday and expect the same thing today."

On playing a Pac-12 on the road on short notice might have cost the team a bowl game:

"I am proud of how the kids got ready. Defensively I thought they played well, but we had the one drive that really hurt us when we had four penalties on defense. They were all aggressive penalties, one was a dumb penalty. We've got to do a better job that way. We look at this as we're going out there to try and win every game. We're going to try and put our players in the best position to do that. As players, they're going to give their best effort and that's what they did. Was it all pretty? No, but I'm proud of this football team."

On improving the quarterback play:

"Right now I think with that same process a little bit. It's been a little frustrating. The guys are working hard at it. They're doing their due diligence of studying their opponent and studying the game. It takes all 11 (offensive guys). It's not all on the quarterback. It's just the position that gets highlighted. We're going to keep working forward with all three of them."

On who the starting quarterback will be:

"I'm not at liberty to say anything about that yet. So the answer is I'm not sure yet."

On Dwayne Johnson Jr. saluting his grandmother prior to the last game at Colorado:

"Obviously being voted by his teammates as a captain, I think guys really think the world of Dwayne. It was tough for him to miss the Nevada game because his grandmother passed away. She really helped raise Dwayne. When he told me about it, I said you've got to go. Missing a game is not that significant like being there and missing out on being with family for your grandmother."

On the referees not reviewing a possible interception by Dwayne Johnson Jr. on Saturday at Colorado:

"As you know we try to have great communication with the officials. This was a game where I've never seen so many targeting calls, then reviewed and (ruled it wasn't) targeting. I think we were going for a record. But there wasn't a whole lot (to it). We asked if they were looking at it? They looked at it and said it wasn't an interception. So that's the way it goes."

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On playing a Colorado State team that has only played three games and hasn't played in three weeks:

"They've played three games. They haven't played in 23 days (when SDSU and CSU plays on Saturday) so it's going to be a fresh team. I would believe that they're going to be fresh. I'm sure they've looked at things and self-scouted that they may want to try or do. That's part of it when you have that much time as a coach, you get a little bored if you're not trying to do some different things. I know from an offensive standpoint they've got two quarterbacks. One is a very good dual-threat quarterback, one is pretty much pro-style. They've liked them both. They've started one against Wyoming and they started another one against Fresno State. They've used both of them. They're both pretty effective. They probably have the best tight end in the league. He scores a lot of touchdowns. Dante Wright, a wideout (slash) running back. He's very dangerous. They've got a lot of grad transfers. Two guards and a center are all Boston College grad transfers where (head coach) Steve Addazio was from. They have an Auburn transfer wide receiver (Nate Craig-Myers) and they have a grad transfer from Miami (Brian Polendey). They have a lot of experience on their football team. They want to be very physical on both fronts. That's how they like to play. Steve is a former offensive line guy, still is, but that's where their bread and butter is."

On the health of running back Greg Bell:

"It's always improving. We've done a pretty good job, our athletic trainers have and he has. He's invested a lot of time getting treatment and those things, and as we move forward it gets better every day. Hopefully it feels real good on Saturday."

On the running back situation:

"Kaegun (Williams) and Chance (Bell) would be the two guys, and then Jordan (Byrd). Hopefully Greg (Bell) is in that mix."

On reformatting the team's goals:

"We play to win every game. That should upmost be in (the players) minds. We're preparing to play what's in front of us and who's in front of us. We are preparing to win. From that standpoint I thought we started weights yesterday morning at 6 a.m. with three different groups outside and they were fired up. They had energy and same thing with practice (on Monday). I think we have a focused team that understands the goal is to win every time we take the field."

On if there is an advantage of playing a team that has had three weeks away from competition:

"I don't know if I know the answer to that. I really don't. You get a little time if you're not playing to heal up and get guys healthy, because we all have guys who are beat up. I'd look at that part of it. Then a little bit of game speed. I'm sure they're good coaches and probably done a good job of doing some live 1-on-1 stuff, scrimmage kind of stuff to get ready to go."

On if not playing a conference game last week hurts the team in moving up the standings and trying to get a bowl berth:

"For us we need to be focused on winning this week and getting to 4-2 (in league play). Then getting out to play BYU up there and win."

On how to determine the makeup of the roster next season with seniors being able to get another year of eligibility:

"Those are things we've got to talk about who comes back from this senior class. I've told the guys on the team we'll have those discussions on the Monday after BYU."

Senior Offensive Lineman Kyle Spalding

On the challenges Colorado State's defensive line presents:

"They offer a lot of challenges. They've been a solid group up front for a couple of years now, so that's no surprise to us. But I believe our job is pretty clear in what we have to do. It doesn't change; the people just change. Making sure what can do what we need to up front is going to be important."

On the willingness to play on such short notice last week:

"There's a big difference between seasons, obviously. This is unprecedented in what we're doing. We were told when the week started we weren't going to have our game (at Fresno State). But we knew we'd be playing Saturday if it was possible, so we were game planning however we could. We were planning for as many teams as we could, just trying to get the options set in. We knew we were going to play, and we were told all year to be ready. So being ready was always on our mind. We were in the right mindset."

On how the quarterback changes have impacted the offensive line:

"You know, the game plan doesn't change too much when we go from quarterback to quarterback. We still know our job up front. It changes a couple aspects of it, but we're all comfortable with whoever's in there. They split reps all week. It's nothing new when someone else shows up. We know what we have to do for him and if we get that job done, it doesn't matter who's back there."

On what the team is focusing on collectively for the rest of the season:

"We're working on putting together a full 60 minutes of Aztec football. We've come short of that a couple of times this year and it's let us down. But really focusing on ending (the season) the right way. Getting the right momentum coming out of this year."

On how he's handling the losses this year and helping teammates with it:

"That's something that we've all had to handle a little bit this year. Making sure you just don't dismiss the game as a one-time thing or a couple of times or having a bad year or we didn't have our players. (It's about) taking what you can from the game and move on, learn something. Making sure we don't become used to it and stay true to what we believe in and that we should be the best team out there every weekend and win all of the games that we should."

On Colorado State:

"They're a solid group. They had some transfer guys come in and fill some spots. They've got a lot of production up front. But it's going to be a good football game. It's going to be a physical football game and we're excited for it here."

On running back Greg Bell:

"As far as I can tell, I know that when he is back, he'll be 100 percent. He's done a lot this week to come back and get closer to game shape, and we're excited to see him."

Sophomore Defensive Lineman Cameron Thomas**On if the move to defensive end helped his performance at Colorado:**

"I was ready for whatever challenge was given to me. I was practicing at defensive end a few (times) before that, and then when Jonah (Tavai) went in there, he did a terrific job. And I ended up finding myself out there at defensive end. I just kept believing in myself. I don't think it really had any major impact on my game. I was just ready for the challenge."

On if there's any frustration in not finishing a play when pressuring the quarterback:

"Like I said, I just believe in myself. I know my coaches believe in me; I know my teammates believe in me. The coaches give me the best game plan to get back there. I'm just doing my best to execute that."

On if the early sideline conversation with Brady Hoke inspired his play at Colorado:

"He was frustrated with me. I did not come out ready to play. That is something we always talk about during the week is to be sure we're prepared and ready to play. That was something I struggled with early. I got my head wrapped around things. After he gave me a few specific words, I was ready to go after that."

On the opportunity to face a Pac-12 opponent on such short notice last week and to play as well as he did:

"We were ready to play all week. We didn't know exactly who we were going to play. We had a good idea it was going to be a Pac-12 (team), but we weren't certain on that. When the opportunity was presented late Thursday on Thanksgiving, we got together and we made sure we were well-prepared. We treat every week like a championship week, especially against our conference opponents. With them (Colorado) being out of conference, it wouldn't say that it took the pressure off. But it was a little more relaxing knowing that it wasn't too heavy on us, too detrimental for us trying to win our 22nd conference championship."

On practicing for an unknown opponent early last week:

"We didn't really focus on that too much. We just focused on us, preparing our keys and stuff that we work on every single day in practice. Obviously, the game plan was a little bit delayed, but we just focused on us and being the best we can be every day."

On the decision to remain close to home given how everything has unfolded in 2020:

"I was not able to go home for Thanksgiving. We had a team meal here (on campus). I was not able to go home, but having my brother here, it was nice having a family member to share that day."