**Text

Description automatically generated**

**Head Football Coach Brady Hoke:**

**Opening Statement:**

“First, I want to talk about the bye week. I think it was very beneficial to us as a football team and gave us the ability to get some guys healed up. We practiced on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and we thought we got a lot out of those practices. It was a time for us also to be able to self-scout, see where we're at, and assess offensively, defensively and in the kicking game. I was excited about the fundamental work that we got done that can help us become a better football team. You look at what's ahead of us and our destiny is in our own hands. When you look at where confidence is it's kind of up in the air. We looked at it and talked about it yesterday, our cornerstones of mental and physical toughness. These are things that we've got to rely on, and every week is going to be a battle. We are going on the road for two games, and we haven't played well on the road. Basically, we talked about that yesterday, we got to be more disciplined. Obviously, it looks like Utah is a pretty good football team, but we hurt ourselves with false starts and at Boise we hurt ourselves with false starts. We've got to understand that environment and we've got to be disciplined in it. We have to have great communication. Nevada, playing at their homecoming, it's a good rivalry as of late when you look at the last four meetings. They were decided by a total of 15 points, so we've had some pretty good football games with them. As far as the quarterback situation, Mayden will be the starter. Braxton came in on Sunday and he and I had a long conversation on where we're going next. He asked and we had talked about it, but there'll be a package we're hoping he’ll be a wide receiver for us. He's so athletic and he's so competitive, so he will be our second quarterback. Liu Aumavae will be our third and I really liked his progress and what he's done. We'll have the package for Braxton at quarterback and wide receiver. He knows the offense, the couple of things that we had in our offense we will keep in there that he does really well with. We're excited about that. We had a guy who was a safety come in say ‘hey, you need help at quarterback’, and that's pretty cool. You got a guy who's your quarterback, who obviously was impressed like a lot of us were with how Jalen played. Obviously, he wants to play, and this is another opportunity for him to get on the field. So as far as that goes, I think we're in good shape there in Nevada. Statistically, we're in a lot of the different areas we're similar. It’s a new staff, Coach Wilson, they're a run first, they would like to be a run first mentality with the two backs they have. Tua and Lee, I think both of those guys are physical and they run hard. Where we're at as a team, we’ve got to get better against the run, that has been an emphasis. Nate Cox, the quarterback, and for 6’9 guy he runs a heck of a lot better than you would think. But they're going through a season. They've got some things that have gone well, seeing some things that haven't gone as well. We got to worry about us, we got to execute, and we got to finish.”

**On why Mayden is now stepping in as Quarterback:**

“I would be lying if I didn't say yes, I was a little bit surprised. But at the same time, being around him, it doesn't surprise me. Obviously, I'm not with the quarterbacks all the time, I think he just maybe got lost a little bit.

**On Quarterback competition & Braxton on moving to Wide Receiver:**

“He didn't get to do anything last week because of the concussion protocols. That was part of it, and then he came in on Sunday after checking in with the trainers. He just said, ‘do you think I could play some wide receiver?’ I'll be honest with you, we kind of talked about it a little bit, because of his competitiveness and athleticism.”

**On Braxton not wanting to compete after seeing what Mayden did:**

“I think he saw what Mayden did, and I think that's a big part of it. Even though he's so competitive, I think he also saw what made it.”

**On Putting Braxton at Wide Receiver to not get hurt as often:**

“You can take some hits as a wide receiver. But look, he's not done playing quarterback either. Remember what I said, there'll be a package for him and what he does well. There will also be a package from a wide receiver standpoint.”

**On Nevada Staffing coach change & how to prepare for that:**

“Horton and Wilson know each other really well. I think obviously you want to know where he leans on offense, defense, and all that kind of stuff. What they do, they're going to do, they really want to run the ball. They got two running backs I think are really good and really physical guys. At the same time, their quarterback Nick Cox, he can get pretty good. At the same time, like I said, he's pretty athletic for a 6’9 guy.”

**On Mayden’s Strengths:**

“One thing about Jalen, what he does in the pocket, he's very composed. I think you can see that at times the pocket is coming down, but he's really composed and gets the ball out quick. I think those are his biggest strengths. He's got a progression, and he's patient enough. When he stands in the pocket he can get through that progression. The other thing we have to do is protect. We got to do a better job at that one too. I don't know if Braxton always had great protection.”

**On Offensive Growth:**

“I think they got some confidence. I was in a meeting this morning and just listening to Mike and listening to them answer Mike on either a fundamental, a technique or an assignment. There were younger guys who really felt their bravado and how they spoke there was a little bit more certainty in what was going on.”

**On how well Braxton can catch:**

“From an athletic standpoint, I don't know if there's a whole lot he couldn't do. I mean, he does have soft hands. I've seen him catch balls off of jumps and I've seen him catch punts, but he is very athletic. I think he can stop and start, and make a guy miss pretty good. I think he has good acceleration.”

**On how Ryan Lindley has enjoyed working with Jalen:**

“Yeah, I think it's really been good. Jalen was up here from 10 o'clock yesterday until practice. They were talking about what we want to do and how we want to do it, and how he expects it to be done.”

**On the team’s response to Jalen’s new role:**

“Well, I think obviously him playing defense gained a lot of trust. The guys on defense really like him, because of that, when he was one of our players of the game on offense. He got a pretty good applause from his teammates. I think he has a good rapport with really everybody.”

**On what Ryan Lindley brings to table:**

“I think the intangibles are number one. He's prepared guys to be a quarterback. I think sometimes you get guys who play and really don't understand it. I think always, since my relationship with him from a long time ago, he's always been a guy who wants to know the why’s and how’s. I think that part of it, in what I started to say, he was grooming guys for the combine. I think that's teaching, so that's part of it. I think him going to Mississippi State with Zach, on the defensive side of the ball he learned more. Like, what's your look and pre-snap and all those things. What are the tips that you can find? I think all that has helped him become a better coach.”

**On things to focus on:**

“From a defense standpoint, we've got to do multiple things. I probably shouldn't go through this list. But there's some things that we have to do better.”

**On having exhibition games:**

“I think it'd be a huge benefit. I always thought, even when I was an assistant at Michigan, why don’t we scrimmage in the spring or preseason against Eastern Michigan, Central Michigan, or Toledo or you could go from Power Five to Power five if you wanted to, obviously, out of the Big 10. But I always thought we should do it; I don't know why we don't. I have thought that we could go to USD during fall camp. That way you're keeping your guys healthy, a little bit and you're keeping their guys healthy and you're not beating on each other. In the NFL, now they go have those practices with each other. I really think it'd be awesome if we did that.”

**On Defense struggling this year more than past years:**

“When we played good defense here, I promise you we've had a good time of possession, especially over the last 13 years. Now, I think if you look at last week, we held him to 14 points 2 weeks ago. I'll take that anytime any day. Points allowed are the big thing, what we're not used to, and we can't tolerate is rushing defense. We've got to be much better in the rushing defense. That's something we’ve addressed the last three days, obviously yesterday, and we'll continue to.”

**Senior Wide Receiver Tyrell Shavers**

**On if there was any surprise by Jalen Mayden’s performance:**

“It was kind of a really big surprise for us but he's playing quarterback before, I’ve played before so when I see him doing something I've seen before it's something that I knew he had in him.”

**On the numbers shuffle at quarterback:**

“We just had a lot of quarterbacks, a lot going on at the time. So, I just feel like the situation is just one of the best for the team but now we're in a great situation.”

**On offensive changes with a different quarterback:**

“I believe that it just gives a lot more people an opportunity. So that's what it does. It doesn't really change. We don't run the ball more; we don’t throw the ball more. I just think it gives an opportunity and a chance to make plays.

**On what kind of wide receiver Braxton Burmeister could be:**

“He'd be a really good receiver. I think that he is honestly one of the most explosive athletes I've ever been around since I got to college. He's really good. Like, you can see him yesterday do some things like you shouldn't be able to do that on your first day as receiver. But you can, so it's really good. It's going to be fun to watch.”

**On what it was like to have a breakout game against Hawaii:**

“It was honestly really a blessing. Things like that, you just pray for you know, there's just a lot of people just saying stay patient, stay patient and that's one thing like the people in my corner that they preach to me. So that's one thing that I did. It was a blessing. It's fun. I love it. Obviously, I want a good game.”

**On how much he enjoys the special teams aspects of football:**

“I love it honestly. I'm not going to say I love it more than offense, but special teams is fun. I look at special teams as another opportunity to make a play, another opportunity to get in the endzone and put points on the board for our team. So, it's just something I really take pride and take joy in. If I could, I’ll play all four, but I do what I can for the team on special teams and I love it.”

**On if there is a competition with Jordan Byrd:**

“We don't but we should make it a competition. We’re down there a lot and we work hard every day in practice and on the game so we make plays.”

**On how hard it is to have four quarterbacks in six games:**

“It's been hard, been difficult but it's nothing that I feel like me and this receiver unit aren’t built for. Like we've been through a lot. There's been a lot going on since I've been here, before I've been here, with guys that are still here. So, I just feel like it’s something that we're built for and we're prepared for.”

**On if there is a difference from getting the ball from a right-handed quarterback and left-handed quarterback:**

“It is, it is a little different. The spin comes out different, the rotation on the ball is different so it is different but it's not too big, minor adjustments. You can make your own.”

**On how it feels in the game:**

“My first catch with Jaylon, it came out so weird. I think I dropped it. But after that, I just had to get back to it. Recognize that it is coming from a lefty now. I haven't seen it in forever.”

**On the 3-3 start and the identity of the team:**

 “I think this team is nowhere close to the ceiling that we’re capable of reaching, there is so much talent on this team offensively and defensively. And we've run into so many struggles. But not j struggles, so many obstacle courses so far in the season. We have a quarterback leaving, you bring another guy from the defense. There are a lot of things going on that I feel like we just haven't been able to come together as one yet and be able to perform and showcase our talents on the maximum, defensively as well. This is one of the best defenses in the country every year, every single year. I know that they have been placed to the standard that they hold for themselves.”

**On what it means for Jalen to go to Coach and take quarterback and with Braxton as Wide Receiver:**

“Like Jonah said, -- it just shows what kind of guys we have on the team, to show that they're not all that to themselves. They're about this team winning, winning another championship for this university, and to have guys like that on the team that's when you really can win championships.”

**Senior Defensive Lineman Jonah Tavai**

**On where the defense is right now:**

“No, I think it's nothing about the play that we run or the amount of time we played on the field. It's more about just our players wanting to get a little bit more and more aggressive. We've been working on that a lot along with obviously tackles that we've missed. Definitely gotten better, but they're still there and are still killing our defenses and some of the teams that we had to stop it a little bit more. We have a pretty high standard for rush defense. So, this year, the numbers that we've had is definitely something to work on.”

**On playing with his brother this year:**

“It's been good. It's good to have another set of eyes for both him and I. Obviously we break down the film together as much as we can. We talk about plays as much as we can while we're practicing. Obviously, I'll give him tips because I play a little bit more than defense than he plays right now. He corrects me when he thinks that he can, I correct him when I think I can. It's definitely a mutual relationship that we've had. It's definitely good for both of us.”

**On what disappoints him the most regarding defensive metrics:**

“A little bit was surprising. I'm not going to lie, none of our stats are where we want them to be. Probably the one that I want to work on the most is points allowed per game especially. It's part of our defensive philosophy and the more you keep it out of the endzone, the better chance you have of winning. And I think that's something that we're going to work on.”

**On what to do to change points allowed:**

“It's more critiquing players. We do have a lot of guys that have either come up to play a big role or moved down like Garrett did to the D line. Just fine tuning those little things that make our defense as good as it can be.”

**On the 3-3 start and the identity of the team:**

“I think it's a work in progress. I think we lost a little bit in the beginning of the season. I think every week after that, we started to build a little bit more. We had a little bit of a break during the bye weekend. We definitely worked hard. So, I'm excited to see what our team has in store for us and obviously I think the offensive changes and the defensive changes that we made have been good to put us into a challenge.”

**On respect for Jalen and his perspective on what he has done:**

“You can ask him yourself. I think he became, in my opinion, a much better player after he came over to the defense, not in terms of athleticism, not in terms of knowledge, but I think he showcased a little grit that he hadn't showcased before. Again, I give him the most props out of everybody. I've seen him do a lot of things for our defense, coming in for the Toledo game was big for us. More importantly, he was on a lot of our special teams as well. Just making a transition, sticking to what he believes was right. Obviously, his outcomes were pretty good for us on defense but then going over to the offense and doing what he could, what he did. I gave him the most props out of everyone on the team for this last week.”

**On what it means for Jalen to go to Coach and take quarterback and with Braxton as Wide Receiver:**

“It just showed that obviously they are not just putting themselves before everybody but putting the team before themselves. Players like that don't come along much. So, I'm really proud of what they did. And I can't wait to see what they do.”