



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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Head Coach Brady Hoke:

Opening Statement:

“Reflecting back on the weekend, the one thing I can tell you is that we're really proud of our team and how we prepared last week. They played their hearts out and played within our cornerstones of being mentally and physically tough. Our challenge is always to improve, and we've done that, but we've got to keep doing that. We got to be a little more consistent in some areas and then we got to finish the game. That's something that obviously, you want to do. You always want to score in the fourth quarter, and you want to keep them out of the endzone in the fourth quarter, and that's something that we got to do a better job with. Our execution was better as a team overall. From an offensive and defensive standpoint and in the kicking game in a couple of phases. We knew it would be a battle going to Fresno, a good and well coached football team. They are very talented, especially at wide receiver. We knew it would be a battle and we'll learn from it. It's a team loss, not one player determines the outcome of the game. We talk about that as a team all the time, the six to eight plays are what determine the outcome and that's what makes football the greatest team sport that there is. We all got to be playing our best and executing, that's all part of it.

Offensively, we had some poor field position and that's really dedicated a little bit to your special teams. We had some field position that wasn't great. Our time of possession has been pretty good all year. It goes both ways, offensively and defensively. But you can't have turnovers, and that killed us. We had some foolish penalties, we had three false starts and the only two possessions in the fourth quarter. 58 seconds and 50 seconds off the clock isn't exactly what we're looking to do. From that part, those are the negatives. The positives, we scored 28. I thought we started fast. The start of the football game, I think the third downs we were really good being 6/11 and the 23 with fourth downs. I think all those were positive. As far as rushing the football, we rushed for 158, we would like to rush for more. I think that's something that we're always going to do. Trying to run the football is a big part of who we are.

Defensively, I thought we played very physical on the line of scrimmage. I thought the front seven played hard and I thought they played well. We need to play a little tighter on some coverage aspects and need to get our hands on some balls. We gave up six big plays and we can't do that. I think critical penalties, we had two offsides that hurt us a little bit and hurt us more probably in the rhythm of playing. We had 13 missed tackles and eight missed assignments, but the positives, we stopped the run. That's always a goal we held them to minus three yards rushing and had 11 TFLs. Three turnovers, two interceptions and then a fourth down stop, we really came up big with the blocked field goal. In the red zone, we held them more to field goals and I thought that was great. The goal was to affect the quarterback, I think

he's a very good quarterback. But I guarantee you he knew that he played a football game the next morning because our guys got after him and hit him at least 12 times.”

On 4&1 on Fresno 29 (4th quarter):

“I know he really didn't because I told the offense that I felt good about it and we're going to go for that fourth down. We had some success with it. The other part of that is always how good you feel about defensively having a plan.”

On the Onside Kick:

“It was a good bounce on their part. They had a punt that they dropped and were three yards from getting that. The ball is shaped funny and different things happen, but we work on it all the time. I think the only thing I would have probably thought about doing was maybe calling a timeout. We practice the same onside that they showed us.”

On Jake Haener playing:

“We've never made a big deal about it because the other quarterback's pretty good too. I mean, he throws the ball well. You know Haener was probably as good as anybody in the league. I don't know if it really bothered us, I think we did a lot of good things on that side of the ball.”

On Browning's role this week:

“I can't answer that right now. It's only Tuesday. He's getting better each day. He kicked some extra points yesterday, punted a little bit, so I can't tell you that for sure. I feel good though, Reeser's in there for kickoffs, even though those first ones went out of bounds, but he's got a strong leg. He's a lot like Jack in some ways, when you look at mentally how he approaches the game, which I think is positive.”

On doing so well but still ending with a loss:

“Look, there was a lot of heartbreak for everybody. We look at football as being the ultimate team game and I was proud of how our guys played. We need to do some things a little better. But this is the most complete game, to some degree, that we've had. No tears in our locker room I can guarantee that. The 24 hours it's over with and the guys did a great job in the weight room in the morning and then in practice. Yeah, it's heartbreaking but who can predict what's going to happen. Right now, there's a lot of people beating a lot of people and we're excited about the next three games at home.”

On UNLV:

“From a physical standpoint, I think they're a physical football team. They've got a good set of quarterbacks. You've seen three of them play and they all look good. I think the offensive line has improved. From the running back perspective, they've had some portable guys who made a difference for him. So, the expectation is, they'll be well prepared, and they'll come in here and it'll be a battle.”

On preparing special teams for UNLV:

“We worked so hard on it. The guys work hard at it. You know, we catch punts every day. Twice a week, we do the onside kick. So, we work at it and to be honest with the onside kick, that was a ball that was going to be tough to handle.”

On giving up chunk plays:

“It depends, if you extend the plays, the quarterback gets outside the pocket, or he gets to step off inside of the pocket. It's all those things and it drives you crazy. It's all going to mesh

together. Kirk did a great job yesterday with the defense in talking about bad plays and good plays, and we got to have a better rush here so that they don't get to him."

On Jalen's progress the last 3 weeks:

"Well, I think he learned a lesson about throwing the ball out of bounds. You know, he's got to get it out of bounds obviously, but I think his progression has been good. His leadership, you know, last week or two weeks ago I had to use two timeouts. Right. Well, we've got that handled. We didn't have to use any. That's a big-time deal. But I think he's progressing, and a good relationship with Brian and him is very important. And I think the discussions of what we want to do and what he can do, I think have been positive, I think that's awesome."

On any surprise of Jalen coming back to quarterback after 8-10 months:

"I don't know if I'm surprised, you know, but obviously he's a football guy. I think if you have that instinct in that part of your DNA, it's never going to leave."

On Shawcroft last year vs his dominance this year:

"He's an instinctive football player and he's a mike linebacker and you know, for us because of different things we do but he is very instinctive. He has a great feel for the game. He studies the game and the preparation that he puts in I think is second to none."

On if Shawcroft has had the biggest jump as a linebacker:

"Well from 2019 when I first got back here as the D line coach, I didn't know who Mike Shawcroft was. Over these years he's improved in I think a lot of areas. I think how he studies his game, but how he reacts you know, Jake Fely was that way, Jake to me was one of the best linebackers to play here because of his instinct. I see a lot of that in Mike."

On Mike coming here as a senior in high school during the spring to watch and study:

"Well and we know he's banged up a little bit, so we always give him a day off. I sometimes give him two days off. Punish writing back the defense, he's in the stands and he's forty yards away. And he was doing what to call and reacting to what he sees. So, I mean, I give Mike a lot of credit, I give Kurt a lot of credit because of how Kurt teaches."

On his inclination to pull the guy out immediately or let the series finish when a personal foul pulled them out of field goal range:

"I think it varies a little bit. And when I say that, I mean, my first is get the guy off the field. Because when you start getting into those things, those things to me, you know, you can always say to young, inexperienced player, so well. I think last week I told you that you know if you've started six games, you're not young anymore. So, you know there's always types of places, and we can't afford that, it hurts the team. And Intel guys realize that you're not going to get much of a chance"

On how to attack penalties:

"You have a lot of conversations and different consequences."

On his thought process for kneeling the ball at the 48:

"It was time to get off the field and get into the locker room."

On what is said to Braxton Burmeister about what has happened this year:

"He's had a great attitude and I'm sure it's hard. For me, I think it's hard for anyone. Right? So, the one thing is, you know, I always check in with him to see how he's doing, how he's feeling,

and you know, there's going to be a time we all remember where you know, he's going to come back and help us win a championship.”

On the difference between playing in the queue last year vs Snapdragon this year:

“Well, they like playing here more than we did up there obviously. I mean, it was what we had to do and what we needed to do. But it's so much different and so great to play at home. Thanks Coach.”

Senior Quarterback Jalen Mayden

On improving since coming back to being quarterback:

“I definitely have improved since being over there, but it's really just in terms of being comfortable and just talking to coaches and making sure I'm on the same page with them. At the end of the day, I'm the final guy who gets to see that picture. As far as moving forward on what I think I can do better, it's just a sense of urgency. Sometimes I feel like I stay in the pocket a little too long, but just knowing that timing and getting the ball out as quick as I can is something for me to be better at.”

On chemistry with quarterback coach Ryan Lindley:

“It's been really good. I can tell that there's a certain standard that we have as Aztecs, and he makes sure that I'm meeting that standard every day in practice and I'm not getting complacent. He's always keeping me on my toes, but also making sure I'm comfortable by bouncing ideas of each other. There's nothing in the game plan that I don't like or that I'm not comfortable with and he makes sure that happens.”

On biggest jump in his game:

“Really just having confidence in everyone around me. I used to think that I had to do it all on my own but trusting the guys around me and believing in them is where I felt like my game jumped up.”

On deciding to stay after losing the quarterback job:

“I just really love it out here and I felt like this is my home. Whatever I could do to get on the field and help the team, and as I just mentioned with coach, we bounced ideas around different positions, and it led me to playing safety.”

On thinking if he could come back to playing quarterback:

“I didn't. I didn't at all. I had fully bought into playing safety. The whole summer I had been talking to Pat [McMorris] and Ced [Barfield], getting different skills and techniques down outside every day. I never thought I'd be back at quarterback.”

On adjusting to being a quarterback again:

“As far as throwing and stuff like that I thought it would be okay, I just didn't know if I would be able to readjust to the speed of playing offense and seeing that at the quarterback position again.”

On which position he likes more:

“I think so, I mean I really do like both positions equally. Its just fun being out there and playing with my teammates.”

On staying for one more year:

“Definitely. I know we had a conversation, I want to say two weeks ago, where they’ve asked me would I want to be here. I said that you have to be of value for you to be able to come back here and I feel like I’ve built a little bit of value. I’m hoping to get them to see me for another year.”

On losing weight:

“I lost, I want to say, maybe 15 to 20 pounds. Moving to safety, I knew that it was going to be a lot more running, and I was going to have to be a lot more agile.”

On benefits of losing weight:

“I think so. I mean, I’ve always kind of had a quick step to me, I think now I just maintain stamina a little bit better. As of yesterday, I was around 215 to 216.”

On how playing safety helps his quarterback performance:

“I feel like as far as physicality, I didn’t have that previously before I got to defense and it kind of changed the mindset of how I operate now. Also, pre-snap alignments, knowing where they can and can’t go as far as them showing a shell and whatnot, but those are the two things that helped me discover that.”

On improved physicality:

“Just finishing runs. They always talk about that as a big point of emphasis in the running back room, just finishing falling forward. I try to do that same thing, while obviously I’m not taking the that same grunt that they’re taking, but when I do take off, I have tried to finish forwards.”

On last week’s interception:

“I felt the pressure in my face and me just trying to be perfect all the time, I just didn’t want to take a sack which would get us out of field goal range. I tried to locate it to the nearest receiver and throw it over his head, but I didn’t put enough into it.”

On the vocal support he receives from his family in Texas:

“It means a lot to me because sometimes I don’t get in the same headspace and I’m not always big on myself. They always are in my corner and telling me to stay the path and just believe in it, believe in it, believe in it. Now that they’re seeing what I’ve been doing, and that they knew that I’ve been able to do that, it just means a lot to me they always stay in my corner.”

On how he transferred to San Diego State:

“My brother. There was a USA Football type of organization, and a lot of coaches were invited to the game, and we get coached by them. He knew Nik [Embernate], so when I put my name in the transfer portal and I was looking at a couple of schools, my brother hit Nik up. I took a visit and fell in love with it, and the rest is history.”

On imagining the past few weeks:

“I don’t think anybody could imagine that all that was going happen, but I’m glad about the situations I’ve been in and who they’ve shaped me to be.”

Senior Safety Patrick McMorris**On the defensive front’s performance:**

“They did a great job last game making the quarterback hold the ball. The guy’s up front are just working, you can see they’re playing with a little different attitude. Like you said, they got seven sacks last game, so it really helps us on the back end to try to cover for as many seconds as possible to let them get to the quarterback.”

On Jalen’s presence on defense:

“He’s just a great guy to have at the meeting room. Just to be able to talk to him, especially from a defensive standpoint because he’s an offensive player of the day. Just from that view, telling me about route concepts and things of that matter. It’s always great to have him around.”

On Michael Shawcroft:

“He’s a great player. He studies the playbook, watches the offense and what they do, and I feel like he just fits perfectly in our defense and in our scheme. Every time he’s getting to the quarterback, making plays, it’s always great to see him just go out there because I know he put a lot in through injuries and things of that matter. Like I said it’s great to see him make plays.”

On bouncing back after a tough loss:

“For me defensively it’s about just bringing energy. Yesterday we had a great day of practice, which started off with just coming out there, being energetic, and not forgetting what happened, but understanding we have UNLV up next and preparing for them.”

On the defense having to play lots of snaps:

“Here at San Diego State, we always are prepared to be able to play whatever amount of snaps we need to. It’s just the way we practice first of all, so we’re ready to play any significant number of snaps that we have.”

On challenges facing Fresno State’s Jake Haener:

“At first, we didn’t really know if Haener was really going to play is injury. All week we were preparing for their second-string quarterback who had been starting up until then. So when we got out there, it’s just a little different mindset because you know how good of a quarterback he is. There was a different feel for him out there, a little more competitive, but he’s a great quarterback and he can get the ball out to any of his wide receivers. Just having to be locked in and being able to have to communicate on defense. It means saying hey, this guy’s good, he has quick throws, he can get back in the pocket, and he has great vision. We had to be able to lock in and really focus on how to win that game.”

On challenges facing UNLV’s Doug Brumfield:

“Again, that’s a quarterback that’s been out for a few weeks. He has a great arm, lefty, he’s good in the pocket and he can move so just kind of the same gameplan. I know our front guys will get to him, so we just have to cover for a certain amount of time and hope that happens.”

On if it helps to see a lefty in practice:

“Most definitely. When you’re in the back, it’s shoulders that you’re looking at, so it’s a different feel when you have a righty and a lefty. Our scout, DJ Ralph is also a lefty so he does a good job of doing that.”