



**SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS**  
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### **Head Coach Brady Hoke:**

#### **Opening Statement:**

“We played a much cleaner game, we made plays, we protected the football and had a really good balance. I thought the execution was good, and overall, the effort as a football team goes back to our cornerstones of our program. It is mental and physical toughness that we have to play with, and we need to make sure that goes up just like the offense and defense does. I am really proud of what they did, it was a good football team that we played. It was one of the better teams in our league and still is. We had great practice and great preparation last week and that showed on Saturday. I am really proud of how we finished the football game and we have been doing that for the last couple weeks and we have to keep doing that.

We would like to rush the ball a little more offensively, we would still like 200 yards rushing. We were more balanced but for what we did against that front, I believe is the best front in the conference. I think what Jalen did, I think he had a great day. He did throw one pick early on and we don't want to do that, but I think when you look at 43 points and the big plays that we had. As well as the time of possession plus 19 minutes, red zone instead of field goals, third down conversions were really good. We want more consistency in the rush game.

Defensively we played a good football game, we didn't start well. A couple big plays in there but I thought some of the adjustments that Kirk made and some things that he did after those 14 points went well. They only had 119 yards in the next 9 drives. In that standpoint, we affected the quarterback with 5 sacks and 14 TFL's. I think the momentum of our game came from our special teams. You look at the kickoff, it was really gratifying because we put the return in for them and it didn't work perfectly but it worked well enough for us to score a touchdown. It gave us momentum offensively and defensively that we were really happy with. Jack hit the two field goals and only had to punt twice, and he did a good job keeping them down. It was a full team effort, and I am really excited about how we finished and what we've done. Everybody knows that we have a short week this week but that is no excuse, it's just a shorter week. We have work to do, and our guys got back to it on Sunday. Obviously yesterday we had a good day and today is going to be a good day for us.

#### **On Mayden at QB:**

“I would say hats off as much as anything. I think just his complete handling of the offense. When you're getting all the signals from the sideline and how you present that to the rest of the offense is huge. When I played, I was an inside linebacker and I called the defense, and that was always important. I kind of relay it to that and there is some learning to it obviously. His composure is something that helps him be as good as he is.”

#### **On passing offense change:**

"I always refer back to the bye week. It was a tough week but there were some decisions. When I say that, we took Caden from playing the inside linebacker and moved him back out and I think that has helped his defense and made him more comfortable. I think his brother has played better because of that. Even though he's backing him up I think that is something that is really good for us. Defensively we have played better, gotten turnovers and part of that is the offense being on the field. We play very well when we are watching the offense, the time of possession, the execution. It's the number one guy when things are bad, it's the number one guy when things are good. A lot of guys care about each other in that locker room and you're looking at some expertise of Coaches that have been around a long time. Horton has done a great job; the offense has done a great job. I think you are exactly right when you talk about the offensive line getting more experience and getting better. The attitude of this team is good. Arizona was a good football team, and we knew Utah would be good too. With us relatively young, we're growing, and I am excited for what's ahead of us. Historically when we have more time of possession or we win the turnover margin, we win the field position, we win. I think we are doing that as a team."

**On Jalen's biggest impact:**

"If you are Jalen, have a coach who played a position, which I don't think is always necessary. I think the experience that Ryan has is number one, being an Aztec, starting here and playing here and playing really well. With what he did in the NFL is always something. I think that is something that Jalen feels really good about the relationship. He is up here a lot, and when you're up here a lot you tend to have a good relationship."

**On Jalen coming back & QB coach:**

"I hope so, I have got a lot of things we got to get done."

**On motivation in younger players:**

"I think guys who are growing up and Jonah probably sees things a little differently than me sometimes. But I do think the younger guys are starting to understand that there is a standard that they need to have."

**On seeing more new players for the last two games:**

"You might, there's some guys who we travel, but we haven't done anything with them. They haven't played. But there's really a good group of guys that are going to be really good football players for us. A guy like Chris Johnson who's playing a bit on special teams. I could probably talk about more guys than just him, but he's a guy that's made an impact."

**On more players returning for one more COVID-eligible year:**

"We had some conversations, but we're not there yet."

**On New Mexico's third-down defense:**

"They play hard. That's what makes any defense good. When we play well, that's because we play hard. We chase the ball, we pursue, and we play physical at the line of scrimmage— it's no different. Their coach gets them playing hard, and it's the one thing he's always been able to do."

**On learning throughout his 100-win career as a head coach:**

"There's a lot of different experiences that you deal with. Whether that be players, parents, or situations, you learn from all of those. I learned more from Lloyd Carr and Gary Moeller than I probably did from anybody. Dan Simrell, who I coached in Toledo. There are so many guys that

you learn from, and you hope that you're ready for that first job. I don't know if I was. I probably don't get it if I'm not an alumnus at Ball State, to be honest with you. There's just been a lot of different experiences that has happened, and you deal with them— good or bad.”

**On the possibility of another walk-on receiving a scholarship this year:**

“Possibly. I will let you know, believe me. I'm not going to tell you who, but if it happens, I'm going to tell them first.”

**On the defensive coordinator next year:**

“We talked about it. We also agreed that we'd get to that at the end of the season.”

**On the coaches:**

“I just think there's different personalities. There's different ways guys do things. I'm different than Coach Long when he was a head coach. I think we all have different strengths and weaknesses and I think experience is something that always gives you a leg up with the different experiences you have.”

**On adjustments to the offense:**

“I think that you learn a lot, especially being a defensive coach, you learn a lot because of what people try to do to you. Whether you're a five-man front, four-man front, or three-man front, I think you always learn from that. I see things and I talk to the guys on offense, and I say, check this out. Just like the Colts. The Colts do some really neat things offensively. We're always going to look at what they do, and that decision on what we do is still going to be one that the staff believes in.”

**On the transfer portal:**

“It's tough. It has definitely changed. We want to keep the guys, and this is why we were pretty fired up, like Jaden Maylen who's staying and saying that they're staying. I feel really good about that and about him— his character, and all that kind of stuff.”

**On changes to the new rules and NIL:**

“There needs to be some sort of boundaries or regulations and I don't know who's going to do it. The NCAA is not going to do it; they want nothing to do with it because they'll just get sued. They would like the federal government to do it, but I think there's enough the federal government has to deal with. It has to be something, somehow, that everyone can agree on. Which is hard to do.”

**On New Mexico's offense:**

“They have two really good football coaches and mind. Offensively, they struggle a little bit like us— they've been through three quarterbacks. Offensively, they scare you a little more than you think because of the triple-option aspect of what they're running. They went through the same thing coordinator wise, kind of like we have, but it's really about the triple-option and we're going to get that down a week from now. It's different from Air Force or Navy, but more like what Army did.”

**On the NIL making it hard for Mountain West programs to find quarterbacks:**

“The only thing I know is that [Chevan] Cordeiro is pretty good in our league. [Jake] Haener is obviously pretty good in our league. I think we're grooming in that position. I don't know. UNLV has, I thought, three good quarterbacks. Obviously, they just played the one. I think it would depend on some NIL, and I hate it, because what are we teaching kids? Look, we benefitted with a couple of guys: Cooper, Tavai, and Redman, all from the portal. They were all in different

positions, but we benefited. Though I also think: don't we have to stay, and fight, and compete?"

### **Senior Running back Jordan Byrd**

#### **On being the first player since 2018 to have a kick return, punt return, receiving and rushing touchdown**

"It's an honor, coach gave me the opportunities to go out there and show my potential. It's an honor knowing the team trusts me to have the ball in my hands. I really appreciate the team, coach, and everybody. "

#### **On the locker room vibe:**

"We all love each other, from our first game to our last. We always will have that bond together. From offense to defense to coach. We all come together and just have a brotherhood. In the locker rooms, outside the locker room, we're all in one brotherhood community."

#### **On adjusting to being "the guy":**

"It's not really hard to adjust, you know, just work hard at practice. That's one thing, defense pushes me to be the best I can. I'm always pushing them as well and always giving them a good look whenever we're going against each other. But they really gave me an opportunity to show my potential on game days."

#### **On the kick return touchdown:**

"Just in that moment, what was going on in my head was, Coach D telling me not to let the kicker tackle you. You know, that's one thing we always talk about. Once I passed him, I looked up at the jumbotron and I saw that I was by myself. Okay, I can finally relax and just finish the touchdown."

#### **On what advice he would give to teammates on coming back for one more year:**

"I'd say the same thing you know, just take the opportunity. You may never know when your last game is going to be. Taking the opportunity to play another year is one thing I'm glad I took. Probably Caden as well, most players that took that extra season."

#### **On what he wanted to accomplish in his college career:**

"Building a legacy and getting my name out there. I come from New Mexico. You don't really get a lot of people from New Mexico. Just wanting to put New Mexico on the map and show that we have athletes as well. I just always wanted to let people know that I can be an athlete, even though my size. I wanted to show people that I can do it as well and other people can do it. So that's one thing, I'm trying to be a big role model for other kids."

#### **On what the picture looks like after this:**

"The same, playing anywhere, overseas, here in the United States. It doesn't matter as long as I get to put a helmet on and run with the football. I've been playing since I was seven years old, and I still have that love for playing football."

### **Senior Linebacker Caden McDonald**

#### **On how the defense took Coach's comment about the other team having better defense:**

"I think as a whole, as a defense, we took it as who's the better defense that game. Coming in to fight San Jose, their defense plays lights out, they've been quite good all year. I know their defensive front is really good too. We took this game as who has a better defense, us or them. We really take pride in that we want to be the best defense in the country every year. So, when our head coach says well, I think they have the better defense. Of course, that lights a fire under all of us. I think we did what we did to win the game and I think other people know who's in charge."

**On the locker room vibe:**

"I think we've just grown more as a team. Starting out the year, we knew we had a young team and now those younger guys are getting snaps under their belt and they're becoming more comfortable playing football on Saturday nights. Throughout the season, you always come closer, especially when you're winning too, that helps a lot, everyone is a lot happier. I just think it's everyone growing closer together, spending more time together, but people get more comfortable playing their positions too."

**On what advice he would give to teammates on coming back for one more year:**

"I say pray about it. Ask God about it. Because that's one thing that you can do, he knows the answers to everything we should do. That's what I did, I really got into prayer about it. And just went on my own, didn't want to hear any outside voices. It's a decision for you because at the end of the day, you're going to be the one back here in January for winter, doing all the crap. It's hard. It's going to be you doing everything, so you have to make sure you want to do it for yourself and make sure you love the game. Because if you don't, it's a job, it's hard. If you love the game, you're not working a day in your life. So just make the decision for yourself. But pray about it and just do what's best for you."

**On what he wanted to accomplish in his college career:**

"I'd say for me, I grew up in a great household, had everything given to me growing up. My parents provided me with everything, been able to go to all the camps, everything like that. There's a lot of kids that I've learned here come from hard places, and for me to have the same opportunity that those guys do, it's a blessing. After my six years here, it's truly been a blessing to be around those guys, and to work with them. You just don't realize how hard people have it and it's just a blessing to have it so easy in my life. For those guys to come here and do the same thing I do, it's remarkable. It's inspiring to me because people have it rough, it's hard. I've never experienced that and it's amazing to see how they react to things and how they take things. But in my career here, I wanted to be first team all-conference. My freshman year I saw Nick carrying out the shield and I was like "Aw, I got to go that", and I've been able to do that, I've been able to accomplish my goals. It's truly been a blessing of a career here at San Diego State. I really take pride in wearing the Aztec logo on my chest. I'll definitely be an Aztec for life for sure."

**On what the picture looks like after this:**

"I definitely want to try and play NFL football or play any type of football at the next level. I think that would be a blessing to get paid to play and I really love football with all my heart, mind, and soul. And to be able to do that and to be able to inspire others along the way, I really have a passion for it and take pride in what I do."

