 **Head Football Coach Brady Hoke**

**Opening Statement:**

“Obviously, it’s good to win, that’s what you compete for. The guys went out and played better than we did in week one. There is still a lot of improvement though we have to do. Looking at it defensively we only go up 80, still a little too much for us. Only 11 missed tackles versus 35 last week. 3rd and 4th down conversions they were only 6 for 21. We have to do a better job at turnovers and get the ball back for our offense and we haven’t done that much. We have to get more bodies around the ball and take advantage when the opportunities come. We gave up a big play which is bothersome, we don’t ever want to do that. We did much better in the red zone. Penalty wise we had two offsides that can be very costly, and we have to be more disciplined with that. Offensively we rushed 380 yards, that’s pretty good but we need to be much better at 3rd downs. We were 7/16 and we need to get over that 50% mark. We had two turnovers, we need to take care of the football obviously. 380 yards rushing is a good day, but we want to be more balanced, that has been one of the things we’ve worked on this week. We had some near misses when you look at some balls that needed to be thrown a little better or look at the spacing that needed to be a little better. We lost two fumbles inside the 30 which is somewhere we never want to lose the ball. Finally, time of possession we have to convert third downs so that time of possession is better.”

**On playing five cornerbacks and Chris Johnson:**

“He’s been very confident since he’s been here. He has done a really good job for a young kid. I give him a lot of credit because he is confident and at that position you better be confident.”

**On Utah Quarterback Cameron Rising:**

“He’s a whole different animal and he does a tremendous job. You watch him in the Rose Bowl and watch that game and then against Florida. He can run and get out of problems, extend plays, he’s a really good football player.”

**On Utah’s passing game:**

“Andy's always been a great guy as a coordinator, and I think he does a great job offensively. But they’re built when you look at them with their tight ends, H backs, U backs, and M backs. I mean they’ve got some guys who are really talented at the line of scrimmage at a blocking standpoint. Kuithe is like having another receiver on the field, he is really talented. I think when they lost a couple guys a year ago, he went to the tight end offense a little bit more.”

**On beating Utah last year:**

“Two different teams, I don’t know if that did anything. We got beat by Fresno, so I don’t know.”

**On Utah Quarterback Cameron Rising’s Improvement:**

“I think he’s better, obviously he’s had more starts. They’re the reigning PAC-12 champions and he led them.”

**On Jordyn Byrd:**

Since I’ve been back here in 2019, I have suggested Coach Horton because I think it stems from him. But his room, when you look at the guys who are on our special teams, Byrd does it all. You look at the other running backs, we travel 6 or 7 of them and there all on those teams somewhat. That’s a real tribute to how they’re coached in my opinion, and I think that’s something as a football player he takes a lot of pride in everything he does.”

**On preparing for noise:**

“We will do some crowd noise things during practice this week. Put as much pressure as we can on our offense, on our quarterback, on our receivers, when they have to talk with their hands a little bit more.”

**On being an underdog and if being an underdog is enjoyed:**

“No. I don’t know if I would say underdog. I know one thing, we want to go out and play well. We want to compete. We want to win.”

**On enjoying the opportunity to face a ranked team:**

“I don’t think about that part of it. Personally. I’ve been doing this a really long time and in a lot of different places. I just want us to improve and play our best football and then we’ll give ourselves a chance.”

**On motivation for the team as being an underdog:**

“They’ll know. I don’t have to remind them. I don’t think.”

**On last year’s meeting and if this is a possible sign of disrespect:**

“It’s a different team. Both teams are different.”

**On wanting more balance and flipping the switch with passing:**

“A lot of it is timing. Timing can get disrupted. The receiver can get pressed at the line of scrimmage, that disrupts timing. We can cut a guy loose in protection, that disrupts your timing. I think what you see out there and how our offense has gone about it, and how Brax has gone about it. I know the timing is getting closer as we go.”

**On Braxton being off target last week compared to scrimmages:**

“Sometimes the environment, I don’t think that he’s played in a lot of big places and a lot of football games. Sometimes you just have a bad day, it could be something in your mechanics. Sometimes you just have a bad day, not just the quarterback.”

**On Chance Bell:**

“He was out there yesterday. We’ll see how it goes.”

**On depth for running backs:**

“I think that we have pretty good backs. They’re all very prideful. I think Horton does a tremendous job. I think it is something we have to count on. We’ve got to ride those guys as much as we can. They’re different. Jalen is a heck of a lot different than Chance, in terms of his running style, and Jalen is probably 20 pounds heavier. He promises me he’s just eating salads but I

don’t believe him. He’s a physical runner. There’s a difference in all of them.”

**On who will get Chance’s carry if he isn’t ready:**

“I think at some point, the hot hand will get the carries during the game.”

**On Jordyn’s punt return play and the coverage if he makes the first man miss, then an open space:**

“If you study special teams over the years, if your punt returner can make the first guy miss, you have a chance for a good return. And he did that. But I will tell you, we talked about Chris a little bit going in there, you should’ve seen what he did to the guy he was blocking, there were a couple other guys who did the same thing and just shielded Byrd a little bit. Jordyn has really good vision and really good speed. He can turn it on pretty well.”

**On how much help looking at last year’s game is:**

“You look at it, you know on both sides, obviously the personnel is different. They are well stocked, I will say that. You’ll look at it, what are they doing on third downs, what they want to do on first and second down from a defensive standpoint, as well as the same thing offensively. Obviously, the Florida game is a game that you can really study and last week the first half you can study that. They’re a well-rested football team because they played a lot of their second team guys.”

**Senior safety Patrick McMorris

On getting ejected in last year’s Utah game and thoughts on upcoming game at No. 14/15 Utah:**

“I’m very excited to go out there and play a really good PAC-12 team. I was excited last year but even more excited now because I didn’t get to fully participate in the game last year. Hopefully I won't get ejected again.”

**On facing a top 20 team on the road:**

“My brother coaches there and he talks about the atmosphere a lot and it’s going to be a great atmosphere to play in and compete versus a team that has changed a lot since we played them.”

**On Utah QB Cameron Rising:**

“Their offense seems more elusive when Cam comes in. From what my teammates said, it's a whole different game when he’s back there at QB. Last year when my backup came in, I felt like we didn't skip a beat. I’m hoping to make a bigger impact, stop that run when he gets out and to be able to be around the ball wherever he puts it.”

**On where last year’s Utah game ranks:**

“Obviously I didn't really play, but just to watch and spectate that second half, it was amazing. To be at home, in front of our fans, with triple overtime, it has to be top 2 at least. And then coming out with a win, that's always good.”

**On where the defense needs to improve:**

“In the first game versus Arizona, tacking was an issue and we really emphasized that last week but it’s still kind of an issue, so I feel like tackling and getting to the ball are still our emphasis throughout this week.”

**On bouncing back after giving up a huge play to start the game:**

“We just have great leadership on the sideline and within the defensive players. Yeah, they scored a big play, but we just stayed committed to playing Aztec football– and like you said, we went out there and played fast, played physical, and we didn’t let them score for the rest of the game.”

**On what Davaughn Celestine brings to the defense, and their personal relationship:**

“Davaughn brings a little swagger for sure. He loves the game. Every time he makes a play, he’s always jumping up and getting everyone excited. He can get in and out of the breaks quick. He’s confident, and just like JB said, I think that’s the most important thing for these younger guys to have, especially for a defensive back. And I feel like he does that well. We came in together, so I don’t really see him as a walk-on. I just see him as one of my best friends. He’s done everything right since he’s been here and for him to get the opportunity and make the most out of it is great to see.”

**Senior Running Back/Returner Jordan Byrd**

**On being underdogs in upcoming game:**

“It’s football. I think it’s going to be a really good game. Never take any team lightly, what happened last year was last year. This is a new team on both sides of the ball.”

**On facing a top 20 team on the road:**

Jordan: “It’s exciting to me, a lot of kids don’t get these opportunities. It’s going to be an honor to play against them.”

**On having an encore performance after last week:**

“One of my goals is getting a kickoff return. Just going out there, having fun, helping the team out, it’s what I love to do. Being here for 5 years, I have to prove what I can do out there.”

**On the feeling when seeing an opening to get through:**

“It’s a blessing. My team sets it up for me, I always get the credit but it’s really nice to have those blockers out there opening holes for me. My heart beats a little faster but it’s always in my head to protect the ball because when you see the hole you want to explode and forget about the ball.”

**On where last year’s Utah game ranks:**

Jordan: “It was a nerve-wracking game for sure, especially at the end. Going into all those overtimes, you don’t really get that often and it gets your heart beating.”

**On improvements he wants to see from the offense:**

“When we first get the ball, we can’t go three and out. That’s definitely one thing that we have to fix. Another thing is making sure our young guys know that they’re doing okay. We have a lot of young players on our team and being a fifth-year senior, I feel like I have to be that guy for them. Talking to our linemen and receivers, I think that just giving them confidence and instilling that mistakes are going to happen is crucial. I really want them to have that confidence, especially going into big games like this one.”

**On the teams response after Chance Bell’s injury:**

“Whenever any player goes down, they’re going to need their teammates behind them, and I feel like all of us were behind Chance. We knew we still had to go out there and perform, and we did it for him.”

**On the running backs success in the recent game:**

“It was good. We knew what we had to do. Coach is always pushing us to protect the ball and just have fun out there. Ball security is probably the number one priority in winning a game, and we did that. Another thing we did great that Coach drills into us was finding holes and hitting them.”

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