



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

### **Opening Statement:**

"Obviously we're very disappointed with the outcome on Saturday. We never got started, particularly offensively. We began with the penalty in their student section on the second play of the game and never found a rhythm after that. Then Braxton gets poked in the eye, although he's practicing, and he'll be good to go for the next game. We had five false starts on the offense and on defense, we had a big penalty called on us for roughing the quarterback. We have to play better and coach better, which falls on me. Our defense needs to create some turnovers and opportunities which we haven't done yet. As for our offense, we need to find a rhythm— run the ball when we need to and control the ball a little better, but we can't hurt ourselves with the dumb penalties. That's a discipline thing and we have to do a better job coaching that."

### **On the status of Will Haskell:**

"He and I have had some conversations over the last two days and when the portal opens, he is going to investigate it. I encouraged him and I believe he's going to finish his classes and do all the things that he has to do. Guys want to play and if they're not playing, they're not staying. I get that. He's a competitor. Although I would have loved for him to stay, I fully support the decision that he and his family made. We really wish him the best of luck."

### **On his confidence in Jeff Hecklinski to turn the offense around:**

"I have a lot of confidence in Heck. There's a lot more moving parts than just one guy. From his work ethic to his philosophy, I have a lot of faith in him. We started with a young offensive line and now it's even younger. There's a lot of factors that can play a role. We played a great football team in a harsh environment, and 5 false starts were a byproduct of their students and the noise level. And that type of stuff will happen out there, so I still have a lot of faith in Heck and the rest of the offensive staff."

### **On Kyle Crum's performance:**

"For a young player coming in there in that situation and in that environment, he handled it well. I know he missed one read early, but we talked it over on the sideline and he identified his mistake immediately. He knows what he's doing, he knows the offense, and I'm excited for him and his future."

### **On desired offensive growth:**

"We have to find balance. We rushed the ball for 380 yards one week and just 113 this week. Although a bright spot from this week was the way Jalen Armstead ran with the football and the physicality of his playstyle. That room of running backs is a great one for us, and we have to keep utilizing it."

### **On Jessie Matthews:**

"Jessie's one of the great leaders on our team. You have a guy who earned a scholarship because of his attitude and what he does. We haven't been able to get him the ball one way or another, whether it be not protecting him well enough or just making a wrong decision. It goes both ways, but the targets will come."

**On changing anything offensively to protect Braxton Burmeister:**

"We're going to look at different things to help him."

**On Braxton Burmeister running the football:**

"He loves to run the football. There are times he probably should stay in and make something happen. He might have not felt confident, but he's an aggressive guy, that's one reason I love him. He has a good sense for who he is."

**Any consideration to move Jalen back to quarterback?**

"No."

**Why did 3 out of 4 quarterbacks leave and the other one move to defense?**

"They really wanted to leave. Even Lucas, after having a great bowl game."

**Over the last 3 years how would've rated Jeff Nicholas:**

"I think Jeff has done a nice job, would we like him to do better, yes. But it's just not Jeff."

**On if something is missing on the backend:**

"We haven't gotten pressure on the quarterback, we have got to beat more one on one. If the quarterback feels good about being able to stand there and throw the football, then the backend isn't going to be as good. We have to do a better job up front."

**On Toledo:**

"Toledo is a very good football team, believe me I've coached there two years. They are a really good team and Jason has done a really good job. If you look at the from a defensive standpoint, the two linebackers are really good players and their defensive lineman are really twitchy and can make a lot of plays Offensively their quarterback DeQuan is a really good player, he makes things happen, extends plays, and does a lot of good stuff with his feet."

**On how the Mountain West plays vs the MAC:**

"When you look as a whole, their conference is very similar to the Mountain West. Different states from different parts of the country, there are a lot of similarities from those teams in that league."

**Anything you want to focus on this week?**

"Offensively we want to run the football, and we want to run play actions. When you look at another team that dictates a little bit within your system what you want to do offensively, is it a quick game because they're playing off, whatever it might be."

**On his time at Toledo:**

"It was great, I loved it there. I worked for a guy named Dan Summerall, he is one of the best coaches I have ever worked for or been around."

**On Sanders making big plays:**

"He makes a lot of chunk plays and a lot of that comes from his ability to extend the play. You have got guys running free sometimes down the hill."

**On Cooper McDonald:**

"I was lucky enough to play with my brother in college. It's kind of neat to see Cooper and Caden, they enjoy each other an awful lot on the field, and they bring a lot of energy. We are excited that he's going to be here for two more years. He plays his tail off like his brother, and his brother wouldn't let him not play hard."

**On the passing game:**

"What we want to do is win, and whatever is going to give us the best opportunity. Whether it's running for 380 yards, even though we would like to be a little more balanced. Whatever it takes from us to play our best football and win."

**On Chance Bell:**

"We will see at the end of the week where he is at. I don't think we will have him this week, but we'll see."

**Senior Linebacker Caden McDonald**

**On current mindset in the locker room:**

"Last season is said and done. That was last year's team, this years a whole new team. One thing to ruin something great is to compare it to something else so we just need to focus on this team and this year."

**On Redzone Defense:**

"I just think we need to play better as a whole. People were talking about how our DB's weren't as good as last year but we haven't gotten as many sacks as we had last year at this time too. It's the whole defense thing, there's not one group to blame, no coach to blame, we have Aztec's defense to blame."

**On applying pressure as a defense:**

"I think we need to be more efficient with our technique and our fundamentals. A lot of teams like to max-protect against us because we do bring the house so we just have to win our 1-1's"

**On playing with brother Cooper:**

"Phenomenal. It's the funniest thing in the world. I'm probably yelling at him more than anyone else on the field but that's just because we share the same blood, so I'm allowed to. But I hold him to a higher standard as I know what he's capable of. But it's a very good feeling to look over and see your brother. Our parents raised us to go hard every single play because if you're out there, why not."

**On Haskell leaving:**

"He's a great young man as well, he was a phenomenal teammate, but to each their own. You hear about quarterbacks in the transfer portal all the time and how only one quarterback plays for a program. Truly wish him the best and we'll be keeping him in our prayers."

**On the surprise of seeing Appalachian and Marshall upset big schools:**

"Yeah. It's awesome to see that. I love seeing the small schools upset big schools. The bigger schools get a lot more than us, we know that. It's just football at the end of the day. It's not about the five stars you have, it's about the amount of want you have and the guys on the field."

**On how defense played in the first 15-20 minutes in Salt Lake:**

"We were on a roll. We were playing very, very good football but there's room to improve all around. We have not played our best game yet. We're not even close to our best game yet and that's the exciting part. Same with our offense. We as a team, we have not played the best Aztec football yet. The potential that there is to come is very exciting to think about, to know that we have that in store is very exciting for the rest of the season. We have not peaked yet. We're nowhere near close to peaking. I'm excited to see what we got coming up this week.

**On having the experience of playing in San Diego at Snapdragon in front of family, friends, and students:**

"It's awesome. It truly feels like home. You know everyone and the fans are San Diego natives and they're here for San Diego State football. I think the coolest part is our student section, when we have that student section in the endzone. In my years at Qualcomm, at halftime the student section is gone, no matter if it's a tie game or not. It was just the way the stadium was set up, it wasn't very inviting for the students. But now that they're up close and personal, the fans are making an impact this year on our games and it's definitely something we have not had here at San Diego State that we do now.

**On relationship with Garret Fountain, switching positions and doing what is best for the team:**

"He is one of the true definitions of an Aztec football player, just doing whatever it takes to win and whatever the team needs. He puts the team before himself. Whether he is hurt, he is 100% all the time. He has the petal to the metal all the time everyone sees it. Ballcarriers maybe they just do a D bomb or something, he is chasing them from D line all the way down the field. He's a really good guy. Great man off the field too. High character and classy young man. He is a great guy to be around, and he really is a student of the game, really likes to learn and is always asking a bunch of questions. He works extremely hard and it's an honor playing with him. When he's on the field, you know it's 110% from him."

**Senior Offensive Lineman Alama Uluave**

**On current mindset in the locker room:**

"It hurts us more than it hurts the fans. We don't like losing, we're all very competitive, and we're gonna come out swinging no matter what."

**On how the noise factored in and how to prepare for that:**

"I also think having young guys not having played in a big stadium like that. But i think it's good to experience it with preseason games to get those jitters out of the way so that moving forwards we can lessen those mistakes"

**On protecting Braxton Burmeister:**

"For me, I think we have to protect better no matter who is behind us. That's on me and the O-Line as a whole."

**On Cade Bennett:**

"He's definitely improved a lot from when he's come in. Just from our simple combos, it's a lot better. He's been working really hard so I'm excited to see him keep growing"

**On how to keep the team's confidence level high given it's struggles:**

"One thing we say is "Be the guy you said you were going to be when times are low". Don't say you're going to keep fighting and then when the time comes, just dwindle into yourself. That's what I preach to our guys and the offense as well."

**On Haskell leaving:**

"It's tough. We're definitely gonna miss Will, we wish him well wherever his path takes him"

**On playing teams at their level:**

"We're not going to undersize ourselves and say we are smaller and weaker than these guys. We are going to go toe-to-toe with any team in the country. That's how we have always been taught that if we're going to swing, let's keep swinging at anybody. But it is nice to play teams that are group of five and stuff like that. It's college football. Each team has guys on scholarship, got great players all around. You have to come ready each week because you can lose to anyone. Even the FCS schools play great football. No matter who the opponent is, you have to strap down and get ready to play college football. Anything could happen, any week, you saw Appalachian State and Marshall upset those big schools."

**On the progression of Kyle Crum and how he improved:**

"I think he is very promising. He is definitely very young and definitely coming into his own. We as offense have to play better to put him in more successful situations. The O line has to block better, receivers have to get open, and quarterbacks have to complete passes."

**On having the experience of playing in San Diego at Snapdragon in front of family, friends, and students:**

"Absolutely amazing. There's no better feeling than staying in San Diego, not having to take a two-hour bus drive up to Carson. It has just been a blessing, truly a blessing."

**-SDSU-**