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San Diego State Football Press Conference Quotes

Sep. 12, 2023

San Diego, Calif.

Head Coach Brady Hoke

Opening Statement:

"There are some positives and you know, there's much more negatives from the other night, but there's a lot we can learn. If you watched practice yesterday, I thought our guys went out there and had a good work ethic. I was happy about that. The positives, which weren't a whole lot, but we did control the tempo and we talked about that. When you look at time of possession, you don't have the points that you would expect out of it. We gave up way too many big plays defensively, and that's due to not tackling; that's due to not leveraging the ball, as well. I think there were six runs over 12 yards and seven passes over 15. We've got to play better there and we will play better. And again, it's leveraging the ball and it's getting bodies to the ball. I thought we played hard, but we weren't as physical at the line of scrimmage as we needed to be. Missed assignments and our effort are two of the things that we always talk about the most. Offensively, a couple things that were good were the screen game and time of possession. We had three interceptions, that wasn't good, obviously. Too many drop back pass situations, and that's not who we are. We are more play action, a little bit more out on the perimeter, so we've got to do a better job. We are disappointed because we had a chance there in the third quarter to score 14, and we didn't get it done. Obviously the interception down there, and the critical situation, fourth and one and we get a penalty there which moves us back. That was a penalty that we can't have and that was a substitution penalty, so that's on us as coaches, and we've got to make sure that we clean that up. This week, obviously going up to Oregon State, they're ranked 16. DJ, the quarterback, a transfer from Clemson, is a good football player and highly recruited guy. I think Martinez the running back is really dynamic. You know their defense is fast. They play fast. Trenton Bray, their defensive coordinator, they're going to be aggressive with what they do. I think Jonathan has done a really good job with the program. Their investment in the program has been really good. I was up there a long time ago, 1989-94. But they've really done a nice job with the stadium, with the indoor facility, and they've made a really, really conscious effort. We've got to have a good week. I could say that every time I come up here, but that's what it's all about. I do like how we practiced yesterday. We've just got to come back together and play better, there's not a whole lot of secrets."

On the identity of the team:

"I think we learn more every day, I think we learn more every week. There's a lot of truth about finding out who you really are. I thought we had a really good week last week and I thought we'd play better, and as a coach, you come back in here on Sunday and you look at the tape a couple of times. We've got to look at personnel, look at what we're teaching and look at what we can handle."

On how the coaching needs to be better:

"We have to ask ourselves: how did we play double teams, how did we play reach blocks? From the standpoint of rushing the passer, were our rush hands good, did our feet stall, all the things that you look at. What can we do to make sure that doesn't happen? Are we getting off blocks, you know, that kind of thing. And you can go position by position, secondary, our wideouts, what were our splits? Were we consistent on splits? How about the breaks? We had some opportunities to make some plays. We are a young team in some of those spots, we haven't played much at some of those spots, and we just have to grow up fast."

On the crowd impact playing on the road at Oregon State:

"Well we're doing a much better job than a year ago, period. Is it good enough? No. We didn't really have any dumb penalties besides the critical one on the substitution, and that's on me. That's on the coaches. So we have to clean that up. But there's no question that there'll be a loud crowd. They'll be into it, 12:30 start, they got a great football game that they're gonna see and then they got a lot of partying going on in Corvallis that night. Reminds me of Athens, Ohio."

On the extra challenges of playing a 12:30 kickoff game:

"Well, it's early, but the one thing is we lift early in the morning, we run early in the morning. The one difference is we're staying in Portland, about an hour and 45 minutes away, which will be a little different. We're going to address it today and show them a little video on coming from Portland down to Corvallis and then once we talk about it, they'll be ready for it."

On OSU running back: Damien Martinez

"He is very impressive. I mean, you watch the San Jose State game, and then last week's game. He's a guy who's very physical, but he's quick, really good balance. Can get in and out of his burst really smoothly, and then he's a physical guy too. He's not afraid to put it down and run through you."

On the uncharacteristic big plays given up by the defense:

"There are run fits all the time defensively, and you've got to do your job. If I'm a defensive lineman, linebacker, somebody in the third level or secondary, we have our run fits, and we got out of our run fits at the line of scrimmage. Once that happens, then the linebackers and the secondary, their run fits change. They don't get to the spot and you get a big play. Same thing with the long slam, our second level defender, our linebacker should have stayed inside number two, should stay inside, and instead he head up to outside which was a critical point for the receiver to cut, catch the ball, and with a match coverage, you don't have the guy in the middle of field like you doing cover three. So from that standpoint, that happened."

On changes that need to be made as a result of the game:

"Well, I think some of it is young guys. I think that you have to continue to grow and continue to get better. I think we're always going to be very critical of ourselves first and foremost. Then I always go back to fundamentals. Our fundamentals and techniques to everything you do. I really think that as a coach, I take great pride, and especially as the D line coach, with fundamentally being sound. And I think at times we have got to make sure that we're all fundamentally being sound."

On whether or not there will be personnel changes:

"Oh, I wouldn't say that yet. I don't think there will be, but we also played a lot of guys, which is a benefit right now. You can see where guys are at, and see their progress. I think that's important and it also gets you ready for the conference play."

On transfer DJ Uiagalelei playing in the OSU offense rather than Clemson:

"I can't make that comparison, Lee, but I do think the style itself from the boots and the naked and the play actions to the eight man protections, you know, in the alumni zone 40 to 40, they like to take those shots and he's really good at it. And so I

think that he's got a good grasp, and a good feel when you look at pocket presence and those things, he's also relatively a big guy."

On the coaching experience in Corvallis:

"It was fun. My wife and I, and our daughter, Kelly was I think four; it was really the first time we had crossed the Mississippi River. I worked for Dave Kragthorpe for two years, a really, really good man. Then Jerry Pettibone came in and that's where I started working with Rocky because we were on Jerry's staff together. We enjoyed it. We weren't very good, I'll be honest with you. It took us a little bit but I think we won four games last year and we beat Oregon. We were 0-10 I think and we went down to Oregon and beat them to keep them out of the Rose Bowl. So that was a win."

On keys to the game on Saturday:

"We can't give up big plays, number one, from a defensive standpoint. The rushing game wasn't great last week, so we've got to do a better job there at the point of attack. Taking care of the football. Overall I think we're plus one on turnovers, but they've (OSU) been very good since Jonathan's been there when you look at taking care of the football, we got to do a better job there. And time of possession is always another critical one."

Senior defensive lineman Garrett Fountain

On what the defense hopes to improve this week after UCLA:

"For starters, just some errors that we made mentally and then leveraging the ball. We have to bring guys down. We just made a couple of mistakes and we have to fix those this week in practice."

On if UCLA going no huddle hurt the team:

"I think what hurt us was really ourselves. We knew they were probably gonna go tempo, no huddle and so we had prepared for that. But mentally we have to prepare better."

On if they were surprised to see Dante Moore play most of the game:

"We were expecting all three and we were ready for all three, but they were rolling with him (Dante Moore) and they felt comfortable with him. It didn't really matter who was out there. We just had to make our plays and make the adjustments."

On Oregon State's quarterback:

"Well, he's a big quarterback obviously. He's got a good arm. He's got a good line up front. He's a tough guy that can sit in the pocket and make throws and so we have to put some pressure on him. He hasn't had a lot of pressure all year so we have to get some turnovers and get after him."

On the experience to be on the road as a team:

"I feel that when we go on the road, it's just us, it really is just us. There are not as many Aztec fans traveling to some of these games. So you're not relying on the crowd and having home field advantage. You have each other and that's when you fall on each other and really lean on each other. Everybody does their job and everybody sticks together and does their thing and we make some big things happen."

On if staying in Portland has an effect:

"Maybe for some of the younger guys, maybe they'll think that's a little bit different. But for me, we've had some longer bus rides, like the trips up to Carson obviously. But you can't let that affect you. When you're on that bus, you have to be locked in

the whole time and it gives you more time to think about what you got going on as far as plays and all your weeks preparation. Maybe go over a little bit more film and study your opponent a little bit more. So really, it just gives you a little more time to actually do that and concentrate on that."

On what he sees in Damien Martinez:

"He's a big strong back and he runs hard. He's got a good line in front of him. But we just have to leverage the ball. We have to square him up and not try to make arm tackles on him because he has the ability to run through arm tackles. We just have to get all 11 Aztecs to the ball and get every Aztec tackling him. That'll be a good way to stop him. Just get everybody."

Senior running back Kenan Christon

On how they can minimize the crowd noise at Oregon State:

"Every game we play, we really focus on communication but going on the road where we know the crowd is going to be loud, so we game plan for that. We have a lot of things that we work on in practice, like nonverbal cues so that we can all keep in good communication with the loud noise going on."

On what the field is like to play on turf:

"It's going to sound kind of funny but grass is different. There's different types of grass that you play on. But when we play at home, one of my coaches said this when I was at USC, they call it fast grass. So when we play at home the grass does feel nice and kind of bouncy and fast opposed to turf, which is kind of absorbent to your steps."

On Jaylen's ability to make the offense feel different because of what he can do with the speed:

"Because he has that ability, I think a lot of teams have to respect it. So when we do things with receivers out to the side like a screen or something they have to respect him being able to run the ball so they can't just all go flying to that because then he could take off for a long run. I think it really helps us spread the ball out because at some point a team's going to have to respect it and if they don't, then he's gonna do exactly what he does. Take off and make big runs and big plays."

On the scoreboard not reflecting the dominance in the time of possession:

"As an offense we always want to win the time possession battle, because you have the ball longer, essentially you give the defense less of a battle that they had to fight but we wanted to try to score a point a minute. We just have to be better, finishing our drives, finishing in the red zone, and scoring more points."

On if the team takes it as a challenge to be the underdog:

Christon: "I think we do take it as a challenge. We talked a lot as a team about how we reviewed this year, and how we were underdogs in a lot of the games that we had to play in so we took on that challenge early this year. So we're definitely going to get after it."

Fountain: "I would say the same. Take it as a challenge and just show up and play. We have to play our game and if we play to the standards that we hold for ourselves, then we have the ability to make things happen."