



2011 UTSA Roadrunners Football
UTSA 31, Northeastern State 3
Saturday, Sept. 3
Alamodome · San Antonio, Texas
UTSA Postgame Quotes

Head Coach Larry Coker

Opening statement ...

"As I told our team, we're extremely proud of them. We had a great fall camp. The guys bought in and did everything we asked them to do. They're young players, but they were on time and they were attentive. They did their work. It wasn't an easy camp. As I told them, we want to make sure they are college football players. We practiced early in the morning, we met, we lifted weights and we met again. It was a long day for the coaches and for the players. They responded. I knew they had done [camp], but you never know how well we'd play. We learned a lot about ourselves [today]. I think we also learned a little bit about our coaches. We wasted timeouts and saw some things that we have to get corrected, but what we saw is definitely correctable. It was just a great win for us. As far as this being our opening game for the city, the university and for the players, I just can't say enough about how well they responded. I really like the energy we had. I think our energy was very special."

On the execution of the offense to start the game ...

"I think Travis Bush called an outstanding game. Our staff really had our guys prepared; and of course Eric Soza played for Travis so he kind of knew the offense before he came in. He's still a young player and I was just really pleased about how we played. We didn't have a lot of foolish penalties on offense. Guys came out and executed well and made plays. You get concerned with young players sometimes wondering if they came keep the focus for the entire game. I think in the end we might have lost it just a little bit, but I don't know that I've ever been around a first game with such flawless execution for the first three drives."

On today being worth the wait for the past two years ...

"This may be the most awesome game I've ever been around. I'm being totally honest with you there. I look around the dome and even some of the coaches came to me in the third quarter and said to me, 'Coach, this place is loud!' That's a good thing. Seriously, I think for these players to come here on a dream and a vision, and it's only one game, but to win this first game in front of this fans base hopefully will excite our fan base, our city and our university. I know it excites the coaches. It was worth the wait for me."

On his feelings leading the team out of the tunnel ...

"It was just like in the SEC. I've never been around anything like that and that's being honest. I've played for national championships and I've never been at any event like [today]. It wasn't any false emotion, [the players] were hyped up. It was an emotional thing and I thought to myself, 'Wow, this is pretty crazy.' I'm glad to see that for our players because they work hard. Seeing something like that today is pretty exciting."

On if he expected the emotions to be so much different than in the past ...

"I didn't really know what to expect. I didn't know how well we'd play. I know it's a lot more exciting for me than sitting out on a golf course in Fort Myers, Florida, that's for sure. You knew that people were so hungry for football here. We're in Texas and there's no Division I football here in San Antonio and no professional football. It's a phenomenal place to play and you knew to potential was there."

On if he was surprised at his team's play today ...

"I told our team this. We have talent and we really stepped our recruiting up to recruit what I think are Division I football players. You go down the list of our guys and look at some of the places they had the opportunity to go. Now that doesn't make them Division I football players, but that says something about the guys we have. I felt like we have good talent. But then good talent only just gives you a chance. What are we going to be as a team? Are we going to have each other's back? Are we going to do the things we need to do to win football games? [Game days] are totally different to how they act."

Everything was to different today. I had to be a little bit of a jerk today and settle some guys down. They had to get the headsets off and the cell phones off and all of those things to help get them focused."

On the defensive play ...

"At halftime I asked Neal [Neathery] about our defense and he said, 'Coach, we haven't played much.' I guess that was true; they hadn't had that many plays. I was very pleased though. The defense is a little thin there in some areas and I was very happy with how they responded and they really did a nice job out there. We talked about all the hype and everything surrounding the game, but we talked about the way you win football games is don't give up big plays, don't turn the ball over and let's create turnovers. If you look at the Red Zone offense and the Red Zone defense we did a pretty good job. I thought we did a pretty good job in the kicking game except for that missed field goal."

On how important it was to score on that first drive ...

"I don't know overall. I think as a young team to go out there and have a drive like that is pretty important."

On how important it was for the entire program to go out and perform today ...

"I'll be honest with you. I started watching the clock after the first quarter. I think it really set a good tone from the standpoint that they felt like we were better than they were, today anyway, and that it was going to be hard to beat us. I like that our team just refused to lose today."

On the performance of Eric Soza ...

"I think he was almost flawless for most of the game. I just wanted him to run the ball and execute the offense. I think a big difference today was speed. I think our speed stood out on offense at the wide receiver position and especially at the running back position. I think Eric just made it all happen."

On how they go out and play next week after all the hype around this game ...

"I think I'm going back to that golf course in Florida now. I don't mind being a one-hit wonder. That's a good question though. I think the thing that we have to do as coaches is enjoy it for the day. I give them 24 hours to enjoy it and then it's a new week. I think that's the thing we need to make sure to handle the right way. We've won one game. Now we've got some things to look at and something to build on."

On what it meant to perform like they did today in front of all the support ...

"It meant a lot. I don't think had we lost the game and not played well that nobody would come back. I think this just wet the appetite of the university and of the city. I'm excited. I told Lynn Hickey that this first game is mine and I'll get crowd here, but next week is her responsibility. She has to get it done. The crowd was awesome today. The noise level was there and they responded like an old veteran crowd. This might be an old "Cleveland Dogpound" crowd out there. They were great."

On playing in front of such a hungry crowd ...

"I was concerned about that. I told the players before the game that there were two things I would really upset me about this game. Number one was if they don't give a great effort. And number two was if they played tight. I wanted them to go out there and fly around and be loose, and whatever happens, happens."

On the offensive and defensive lines ...

"They were solid throughout the whole game. We played a few more players on the defensive line than on the offensive line. I thought the offensive line held up pretty well. They have some very young players; we have a red-shirt freshman at right tackle from Smithson Valley and a true freshman left tackle from Smithson Valley. We have a lot of Texas flare there. Nate Leonard was just unbelievable at center making the calls, being poised and using the clock. I was really pleased with our offensive line. There are some areas we've got to improve on. We've got to run the ball better inside the tackles. I think all-in-all we played pretty well though. Our defensive line was pretty dominant. We didn't give up any big plays and Northeastern State had to work for what they got."

On how important it was to set the bar so high right out of the gate ...

"I don't know that we set it any differently. We set it high before we ever even played. You don't know what's going to happen. If we win we're going to prepare hard for the next game. If we don't win we're going to prepare hard for the next game. We're going to compete to win every game. How many that will be I don't know, but that's going to be our focus."

On all the South Texas players on his team ...

"I think it has a huge impact. It may be unusual but I recruited this area when I was at other school and I know the talent in this area. I think we would be extremely foolish to fly over these players in San Antonio when recruiting. I was asked several times if we're going back to Florida to get some of those guys. If he looks like a great player I don't care where he's from. We're going to try to recruit here in San Antonio and work our way out. Winning creates excitement and if we keep winning kids will be excited about coming here. If any kids saw this game today I would think they would get excited about it."

On their success with all the youth on the team ...

"It's unbelievably gratifying for them. They came here and I showed them a picture of the locker room and told them that's where we're going to be someday. For them to step out on a vision, and then to be here and have some success is great. I told those guys it's not about where we are, but where we are going. I think with our leadership we know where we are going. It's tremendously gratifying. I'm sincere when I say that and not so much for me, but for our university, for Lynn [Hickey], for Dr. Romo, for our university and for our students. Are those students awesome or what?"

Eric Soza, So., QB
Mark Waters, Sr., S
Steven Kurfeks, So., LB

On being surprised about how well the team executed the game today ...

Soza: "We were not so surprised. We have been doing this for a year now, and we had all 11 guys back from offense last year and we had all 11 guys back from defense last year. We have gotten to that meshing point and we knew that we could execute. Northeastern State gave us a great game. They were blitzing a lot, but our offensive line picked all of that up, so we were able to get to the outside to get the ball to our slots and running backs to make some plays."

On scoring the first touchdown in UTSA history ...

Soza: "I was just trying not to get caught. It is a privilege and an honor for that to happen to me, but if it weren't for the other 10 guys on the field, it would not have happened or it would have happened to someone else. I am honored to have that next to my name, but the offensive line and the backs blocked well and I am just the one getting the glory for it."

On holding a team that scored 43 points in its previous game to only just three points ...

Kurfeks: "Our defensive line played fantastic today. We only had to blitz a couple of times because the defensive line was taking care of it. We couldn't prepare for the loudness of this game, so we had a lot of trouble at the beginning trying to get calls from the front because we couldn't hear. But once we got going we could get the calls from the front and then we executed very well."

On noticing a difference in speed between the two teams ...

Kurfeks: "I think we had a lot more energy than they did. We have had this built up for a year. Everyone has been waiting for this day. We were ready for this day and we came out flying."

On the comments from Larry Coker before the captains took the field for the coin toss ..

Kurfeks: "He told me that we have been working really hard for this with all of the hours in the weight room and on the field and that it was all about to pay off."

On what it is like to see Larry Coker on the sidelines during the games ...

Kurfeks: "He is an amazing role model for us and seeing him there calms us there. We know where he has been and what he has done so having him by our side gives us a lot of confidence."

On the crowd and the fans before the game ...

Waters: "They helped us win the game. It felt like a dream playing out there. It was picture perfect."

Soza: "It was even better than what I pictured. Even during warm ups when we ran by the student section and they exploded, I got chills all over my body. It wasn't because I was nervous but because I was ready to play right then and there an hour before the game."

On how the emotion of the crowd affected the players during the Spirit Walk ...

Soza: "It was fantastic. I did not expect that many people to be out there. I thought it was going to be just a short walk, but it turned out to be something great and I am so glad that we did that. The fans saw us and we got even more focused when we saw all the fans. It was like walking up to our house at the Dome."

On what it means to be able to play in the locally-recruited players' backyards ...

Soza: "It is a pride thing. Most of the team is from or San Antonio or around this area. Playing in front of family and friends is something that we all take pride in. One thing that Coach Coker told us is that this is our house. We have the entire Alamo in our backyard. Colonel Travis drew a line and said for everyone that wants to go until the end, cross this line. He told us that people can't just come in here and mess around in our house. It is just one of those things that you take pride in. It is hard to explain but it is easy to feel."

On the best part of the day ...

Kurfehs: "The whole day. From the beginning of that walk through the crowd to the walk back to the locker room, I had to hold back tears because it was such an amazing day."

Soza: "I agree with Steven. It was everything. One big dream and we can love it right now, but tomorrow we have to start preparing for the next game. Hopefully we can feel like this for another five times back here in the Dome."

On the possibly having an emotional hangover next Saturday ...

Waters: "We didn't prepare for only this game. We have started preparing for all 11 games. We know that we have to take it one game at a time, because Northeastern wasn't our only opponent and we need to prepare for the next ones. We knew that we could not be ready for just September 3, we also have to be ready on September 10 and all the others after that."

Kurfehs: "I am so happy with the way today went, but Coach Coker told us in the locker room we have to turn around and start getting ready for the next one."

Soza: "I think our coaches play a big part in keeping us grounded with that. We are young and the coaches will help us enjoy this game and forget about it, too. We have 10 more games to go and like Mark said, we have to get ready for every Saturday. As a team, we have to look at this and realize that this one game is not our season. Our goal is to go 10-0, not 1-9, so there is no room for emotional hangover."

On getting ready for the next team after defeating a team that scored 43 points in its previous game ...

Soza: "You can't take any opponent lightly. Those are the games that you are most scared, because that is the kind of team that could come out here and kick our tail. We have to prepare for all the other games just like we prepared for this one. We need to go out there, execute and protect the ball and have our defense hold them."

On Kam Jones' opening drive kick return ...

Waters: "It definitely wasn't surprising because we all know what Kam can do. He is such a great athlete, so we were expecting it."

On Nic Johnston's opening tackle ...

Kurfehs: "It fired us up for a big hit like that on our first defensive play. He told us he was going to go out there and knock some heads off when he went out there. He left the game with a bloody nose and a busted lip, but that is just how Nic is. He definitely sets the tone for us."