



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

5500 CAMPANILE DRIVE, SAN DIEGO, CA 92182 | (619) 594-5547

GOAZTECS.COM | @GOAZTECS | @AZTECSPR | #GOAZTECS

San Diego State Football Press Conference Quotes

Tuesday, Nov. 20, 2018

Fowler Athletics Center

Head Coach Rocky Long

Opening statement:

"Obviously, we got another game this week. I think both teams will be excited about playing each other. We're teams with very similar talent levels. They throw the ball around like crazy. They've got one of the leading passers in the country, a couple of the leading receivers in the country, and they throw the ball a bunch, so they're up there near the top in passing yardage and those kinds of things. After I watched the (Chiefs-Rams) game last night, when they throw it around like that, I mean, it makes it really, really hard on the defense. So our offense has to keep the ball away from them or we're going to have to play really, really well on defense."

On whether he likes watching games with a lot of offense and points:

"No, I don't like all those points being scored. I mean, I think it's good for the fans to see the ball in the air and great athletes making plays. But a lot of that has to do with (the fact that) they're throwing it around younger, catching it younger. They're more skilled at it. And, a lot of it has to do with rule changes that have made it impossible for the defensive guys to have a fair shake. You can't touch them anymore and you can't hit them anymore. Can't hit the quarterback, can't hit the receivers, can't touch the receivers in a route, but they can shove off of you. So that's the game they want and I guess that's for TV and fans and so the game is going to continue that way."

On what is the best part of a game for him:

"I think when it's not totally a skill game and there's some toughness involved. The game is turning into a total skills game where a team with less talent that might be the tougher, more aggressive team is having a less and less chance of winning because of the rule changes and because the offenses have gotten so skilled at what they're doing. The passers are much more skilled than they were 10 years ago, the receivers are much more skilled than they were 10 years ago. The one thing the defense had was aggressiveness. You could hit quarterbacks and you could light up wide receivers on crossing routes. Well, now there's no fear factor. If you touch a quarterback, it's a penalty; if you touch a receiver, it's a penalty. If I had a son growing up who wanted to play football, I'd tell him to make sure he played on offense."

On if thinks the game has evolved that way to please the fans or for safety reasons:

"I think it's all the same. I think it's safer. I think you can practice that stuff all year long and players like practicing that kind of stuff. So you can practice that stuff all year long, but you can't practice running into each other and you can't practice pushing on sleds and all those kinds of things. And I think it's healthier, eliminating some of the violent contact is healthier for the players. If I was a regular fan and not a coach, I think it's more pleasing to the eye to see all those athletes out there doing all those fantastic things. I think there are a lot of things involved on how the game is going and it'll probably make it more popular."

On the problems Hawai'i poses for the defense this week:

"I think it's the same challenge we have almost every week because everybody's running similar offenses now. The only question we have is which quarterback might play. But they throw it. I mean, they throw it and throw it and throw it and they catch most of them and they run with it and they score a lot of points. I think they're close to averaging [32] points a game. They're (averaging) [428] yards of total offense a game and most of their games are high-scoring games. They don't win them all, but they seem to be all high-scoring games. I think they scored (three) touchdowns in the fourth quarter last week to win. And it wasn't (with) the starting quarterback; they took him out and put the backup quarterback in. They're not going to change the offense, but it'll be interesting to see which quarterback starts."

On if he feels Hawai'i is still a dangerous team at 7-5 after starting the year 6-1:

"I think the teams are very similar. I think they started off hot like we did. I mean, after the first game of the year, we got to where we could win some games. All of their wins except for one were fairly close games. Then they got into some tight games where the other team was just a little bit better than they were or the other team made the play at the right time. Now last week, they made the plays at the right time to win. I think the teams are very similar."

On if there's anything defensively the Aztec offense could exploit:

"It'll be interesting to see because other than playing Army, which is a triple-option team, they haven't played any running teams. I think it's hard on their defense if you're seeing the spread in practice every single day. It's hard for a defense to get ready for a running team, so hopefully we'll be able to run the ball. Now this is an off-season discussion on what our offense is about, but we don't have a chance to win if we don't rush for 150 to 200 yards. If you look at the days we struggle running the ball, those are the games we lose. That's the way we're built it's been very, very successful over the years. But we're not running it with the efficiency that we once did or with the effect that we once did. So there might be some discussions during the off-season and all that stuff. Now's not the time to do that. For us to have a chance to win, we've got to run the football and keep it away from them."

On what is going to remember about this particular senior class:

"I think that they all hung in there. I mean, expectation levels are high. It always helps if you have a lot of juniors and seniors on your team to keep the success rate going at that kind of level. There were very few seniors. There's a few more juniors, but very, very few seniors. So I think it was more difficult on them to lead the team than the senior groups in the past. I mean, if you have 25 seniors, that kind of affects the whole team. When you have 14 (seniors) and you've got 40-some freshmen, guess who has the biggest opinion in the room. It's not the seniors, it's the freshmen who have the biggest opinion and we were all that age at one time. That opinion is very flawed."

On whether quick scoring plays like last week put added pressure on a defense:

"It does, but you never look down when you score a touchdown. I mean, scoring a touchdown is worth it no matter how long (the defense) out there. Now, we're back to how our team is built. Our team is built for our offense to control the football and our defense to play well. That's how the team is built. Last week, not only were we unable to run the football, the time of possession was way in their favor, too ... It could've gotten a lot worse than that, but I saw some life last week. I thought we played with more energy; I thought we played with more intensity, I thought we played with a little excitement that we haven't seen in the last two or three weeks and hopefully that carries over to this week."

On quarterback Christian Chapman:

"I don't know, I think Christian's about like was before he got hurt. I don't think he's 100 percent anyway. He got hit a couple times in last week's game and it didn't look like it felt very good. Guys who are completely healthy, they don't ease up off the ground, they jump up off the ground and that sort of thing. So I think he's probably still a little injured, which makes it more difficult on him, but he played pretty much like he had before he got hurt."

"Christian will start and somewhere in the second quarter Ryan (Agnew) will come in for two series and then our coaches will decide at halftime which guy should start the second half."

On if the small size of the senior class made their role as team leaders more difficult:

"I think it made it a lot more difficult. Since our program is built that way, we try to make our seniors the leaders on our team. I think there's a lot of anxiety on their part because a lot of times they're not put in that situation. There's a lot of stress that they're not normally used to because they haven't been put in that position before and when things go wrong there's a lot more stress on them. I think it's really good for their education to feel all that stuff, by the way. But the more of them you have to spread that out and the more seniors that you have to put in leadership roles, the more influence they have on the whole team. They just come in contact with more guys. If you have 10 seniors, they come in contact with a third of your team every day. If you have 20 seniors, they come in contact with two-thirds of your team or three-fourths of your team. Every single day, one of the freshmen will bump into a senior. They see each other on campus, they see other in the locker room. When you only have a few seniors running around, they don't have the same influence because they don't see those guys all that often."

On junior linebacker Troy Cassidy:

"Troy Cassidy is a good football player who is now starting. Hopefully he's going to be a better football player next year. You know, obviously he's had good days and bad days. He's got a world of potential. He's a really good athlete. I think he's just scratching the surface. We expect him to be a much better player next year."

Senior defensive end Anthony Luke

On thoughts before last home game of his career:

"It's surreal, man. It came really fast for me. It's been the fastest four years of my life, but the funnest. I'm really grateful for the opportunity to be an Aztec and I wouldn't want to be with anyone else. I'm just taking it all in each day. I love everyone here, so I can't wait to play."

On if this last game means more since they played in junior college before coming to SDSU:

"For sure, 100 percent. Just coming from the JUCO struggle and being able to make it to Division I and to live your dreams out, it's been a dream of mine since I was a little kid. Playing in my last home game is just going to be probably one of the greatest days of my life, honestly. This is what I signed up for. I know it's coming to an end, but it's just a new beginning."

On if it's more emotional exiting the tunnel for the first time or for the last time:

"I think for the last time, for sure. I was emotional coming out of the tunnel for the first time, but when it comes to football, that's where most of my emotions come out. My last game is going to be way more emotional for me, especially because I'm going to have all my family there. That's like the first time for me, too."

On how close this senior class is:

"As seniors, we're all pretty close. We all hang out outside of football and there are not a lot of teams in the country like that, that are close outside of football. There's a lot of teams in country that are individuals and I don't think this team is a bunch of individuals. I think we're all like a good family. I like how close we are as seniors."

On leaving it all on the field for their last home game:

"Of course we're going to give it everything we have as seniors and we expect our whole team to give everything they've got for us. We're just going to give everything we've got for our last home game at our Aztec stadium."

On if there's pressure to finish the season strong:

"You can't lose your last game. Any game we want to win, but the last game makes us more hungry to win."

On what you will remember most from playing here:

"As an Aztec, I will remember coach (Adam) Hall's workouts most definitely. I'm going to miss it all. Even right now, I'm still playing here and I look back at those workouts like they're actually fun, but they're hard. You kind of miss them though, like, I want to go run 15, 100-yard tens right now. Can't walk no more."

Senior offensive tackle Ryan Pope

On thoughts before last home game of his career:

"It's bittersweet. I've also enjoyed my time here and I wouldn't trade it."

On whether the small senior class makes it more difficult to lead the younger players:

"It's definitely hard to reach out, but it makes it that much more important for us to do the right thing because they do look up to us. But as an older player with less seniors, we have to rely on the younger leaders and put thoughts into their ears. That way they can reach out to the younger crowd for us because we can't all reach out to all 105 guys that we have all in one sitting. It's difficult."

On if he sympathizes with the thought patterns of some of the freshmen:

"Yes and no. On the same token, I was them too, so I understand like maybe they feel overwhelmed or confused. That's when we take it upon ourselves to sit them down and say this is how you think, this is how you're going to get through it."

"Going through this program, you're already going to listen to the seniors because the things that we do are difficult. It takes a lot of mental toughness, like I said before. They definitely soak in the experiences that we've gone through. They'll sit down and listen and take notes. Whether they do it or not, that's on them, but they sit down and take it in for the most part."

On if there's pressure to finish the season strong:

"You can't go out with a loss."

On his thoughts going into the Hawai'i game:

"We can't make mistakes. Literally, we can't make mistakes. We need to be consistent and we haven't been all season. We're hot and cold and we need to bring the energy, that's what we're missing. I feel like we're missing energy as a team. We can feed off one another, but our team is very young. It's kind of hard sometimes. We just need to bring the juice and if we do that, we'll take care of business."

On why the Aztecs maybe have been lacking energy:

"Parts of it may be we don't have that leader like Damontae Kazee or Alex Barrett, some of those older guys. They were alpha males and when I came in, I looked up to them. Watching them play and watching them practice, I was like, I want to play for you because you're going all out so I will, too. We're missing that. And the senior class is smaller so it's hard reaching out at times."

On playing with former Aztec defensive back Damontae Kazee:

"Damontae did carry a swagger and he was loud. We would have runs at 5:30 in the morning and he's yelling at the top of his lungs."

On what SDSU's offensive line needs to do:

"We just have to make bigger holes for running backs to hit. Coach (Mike) Schmidt said it's attitude, so we just need to bring the attitude this week."

-SDSU-