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SDSU Football Press Conference Quotes Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2017

SDSU head coach Rocky Long

On the state of the team:

"We've been practicing but it feels like it's been forever since we've been getting ready to play a game. We got into it yesterday with putting a gameplan in that we hope works. We'll try to refine it by the time we play and hopefully we can get the ball more than five or six times because they do an amazing job of keeping the ball away from people."

On if ball possession is their plan as well:

"That's what we try to do too, if it wasn't for TV and commercials it would probably be the shortest game in history."

On Army West Point competition wise:

"I think they are the most physical and the most aggressive team we will play this year. Part of it is the offense we were just discussing, people will say they are a triple-option offense, but they are not. They line up in formations that make you believe they are triple option but they are speed option. They will run down the line and the quarterback will keep the ball or pitch it and have four or five guys out in front of him. They will lead up in there and let him run power plays and lead plays and all that. They do get into the shotgun a lot and they run zone read option, which if you are actually reading the linemen on the line of scrimmage, that's a triple option. We're not sure he's reading it, it's been called for him and the idea is to be very aggressive because when you read it's a little slow reaction if you are actually reading the guy on the line of scrimmage and trying to determine if he's taking the dive back or not. But if all that is called for him, you can be really quick, really fast and really aggressive. Just like the offensive linemen, I do not think it matters how we line up on defense, they block targets or they block sticks. They aim for a spot on the field and they come off as fast as they can come off of the ball and they hit whoever shows up. I'm serious, they are the most aggressive and physical team we've played all year."

On Army West Point senior quarterback Ahmad Bradshaw:

"I think because of the design of the offense, he might be even more physical than the guys we've seen. He wants to carry the ball and a lot of what they do on offense is designed for him to carry the ball with blockers in front of him. They run a speed option where everyone runs out in front of him and blocks for him so he's able to see the first seam that opens up and plants his foot and gets up the field. He's an outstanding athlete, like a great running back, he sees the hole quickly, gets up into it quickly and he's strong enough to break open tackles with good speed for when he gets in the open field."

On Rashaad Penny being close to the (Donnel Pumphrey's) Aztec record for rushing yards:

"We know exactly where he is. The number one goal is to win the game, the number two goal is to make sure he breaks that record."

On why the armed forces teams have a great ground attack:

"Well I've said this many times and I still believe this, and I think Army has simplified it because they don't run as much triple option as Air Force and Navy do, but they do run zone read option because they want the quarterback to carry the ball. The quarterback carrying the ball gives you an extra blocker. If you are actually reading the triple option there are two extra blockers. I think it's the best offense that has ever been designed, it's the most difficult to stop, it's the most difficult to control and if it weren't for selling tickets and pleasing TV, fifty percent of the schools in the country would be running what they run because it gives you some strategic advantages. If you don't have to block two guys, you have two extra blockers. If the quarterback carries the ball, you've got three extra blockers. For the normal fan, it's not fun to watch. The ball is not being thrown in the air so you don't see great athletes making great plays in the open field. The uniqueness of the offense and what is fun to watch, you can't see from the stands. If you want to see, come watch the film and see what happens between the tight ends. It's amazing stuff but it's hard to see from the stands."

On Army West Point's blocking:

"They cut, if they are actually running the option game, they cut. That's very difficult because we don't let people cut in practice and the spread teams in the world never cut on running plays so the players of today don't ever see cut blocking. You don't let them do it in practice so for the first quarter and a half or so all you see are your defensive guys on the ground. We've got some good athletes who can defeat a cut block once they get used to where they are coming from, but early on it's devastating."

On Army West Point's shockingly low fumble numbers:

"That's amazing. I also think it's amazing they have played four games without throwing a pass and I think they won three of the four [games]."

On how the cornerbacks' play differs when they know they aren't going to defend many passes:

"They focus on run support. We've played other teams where in certain formations they are primary run support guys. They put one receiver almost out there on the sideline so you have to take a cornerback and walk out there with him. If they aren't going to throw a pass, why don't those two guys go sit on the bench? That's basically what you are doing, you are playing 10-on-10. They bring that guy in tight sometimes and then it's 11-on-11 again but when he goes out wide they have nothing to do with the game out there. The majority of the time they are in there close and the cornerbacks have run support responsibility that they don't normally have."

On when Army West Point throws the ball:

"They threw the ball a lot in one game because they were behind late. Everything they throw is play action pass and for those that know this offense really well, most of the time there is no one within ten yards of the receiver and it's all about if they throw it well enough to catch it. They have had some big plays in the passing game, they had one in the Navy game. If he had thrown it a little better, it would have been a touchdown instead of a 20-yard gain. It was underthrown a little and he had to come back and catch it. Usually they have wide open receivers when they throw it."

On the field conditions during the Army-Navy game:

"There were some plays when their quarterback slipped and fell down but he was getting ready to go a long way. The field conditions helped both defenses."

On the difference in atmosphere between a bowl game and regular season game:

"I think it's all depending on how the coach handles it and I've been criticized on this before but I still believe that's what you do. A bowl game in my opinion is a reward for having a successful year so we go to win the game but it's also to have a good time and enjoy yourself. For the seniors, we want them to enjoy the experience and enjoy the last game that they play no matter what happens. So it's completely different than the regular season, now if they let a non-Power 5 school in the playoff, we wouldn't treat it like that. It would be do or die. Bowl games are rewarding to go play hard and have a good time because you started playing the game in little league football because you loved to play and some of the fun of playing football is lost as you get older because people put more and more pressure on winning. We're going to try and win but we're going to have a good time too."

On coaching against an armed forces team:

"It's a different feel for me personally and I try to make it a different feel for my players. I think it's a learning experience and because Air Force is in our league I think our guys know exactly what the guys we are playing against are all about. Not only are they sacrificing by going to school at an academy, the real sacrifice they are going to make is later on in their careers and that is all for our benefit. For all of us that are lucky enough to live in this country and have people like them protect you, you have to have great respect for that. When you don't play them every year, you have to be educated. Our guys don't have to be educated because we play Air Force every year."

On saying goodbye to the senior class every year:

"It's not hard, I'll miss a lot of them but I think they are moving on to a more exciting time of their life. If they are great football players, they are moving on to great NFL careers. But the best time in their life is when they are a young adult working for a living with a little extra money in their pocket. As long as they got a degree, I think it's a fun time to see them go."

On if he's talked to Donnel Pumphrey about his record potentially only lasting one year:

"No I haven't talked to him but he talks with Rashaad all the time. I'd love to hear those conversations because I'm sure Pumphrey will say he wants Rashaad to break the record but nah, that's not true! I'm sure they have a good conversation when they talk about it."

On Bobby Hauck being with the team through the end of the season before he leaves for Montana:

"He will be with us until the end of the bowl game."

On what Jeff Monken has been able to do at Army West Point:

"I think he's done a great job. Academies are a very difficult place to coach when you talk about win-loss records. When you talk about the players you have and the attitudes they have, I think it's a great pleasure to coach at an academy. I think it's rewarding but very difficult to win in those situations because of the scrutiny those kids have to go through to get into the academy and a lot of great athletes who think they are going to be professional players don't go to the academies. So you have guys that play really hard and have skills and talent but they are not the NFL type guys because their life is completely different than what an NFL guy's is going to be. So I think he's done a great job. I think all those academies do a great job."

On Army West Point having a worldwide fan base:

"I've played in three bowl games against Navy and it seemed like it was 90 percent their crowd. I would assume this is going to be the same way. It seems like the whole student body is there too. I don't know if they pay their way or give them leave but the whole student body is there."

SDSU senior linebacker Tyler Morris

On if he watched the Army-Navy game on Saturday:

"We actually had practice that day so we got cut off at the very end but we were able to watch some of it. It's not too much different than what we saw in the film from the rest of their season. Both teams played hard, the snow looked fun."

On the key to stopping the Army West Point offense:

"The line of scrimmage. They go lower and harder than any offensive line we've played all season and if we're going to let them push us four or five yards and they get four or five yards every carry then they will march right down field. Guys up front, linebackers and defensive line have to be firm and strong. When they dive, stop the quarterback."

On if Army West Point is a similar challenge to Air Force or New Mexico:

"I'd say they are more similar to Air Force. They might come out a little harder and they definitely don't option as much, they tend to stay with the fullback and stay with the quarterback."

On Army West Point senior quarterback Ahmad Bradshaw:

"He has shown he can make people miss as well [as be a strong physical presence]. He's a very good athlete and as you can see, they want him to run the ball. They had under 40 pass attempts on the season so we know what we're going to get."

On not playing for a month:

"I think we'll be a little healthier hopefully. It gave us a lot more time to prepare and watch a lot of film. Hopefully we get all our guys healthy and they are as excited for this game as any other game we've ever played."

SDSU junior quarterback Christian Chapman

On if he watched the Army-Navy game on Saturday:

"[I] saw some blitzes I expected them to bring. They are a hard football team, they play hard and physical and sound so it's going to be a good game."

On being at San Diego State for this long:

"It's crazy. Time flew by and I'm blessed to get that many starts and play that much ball here. I'm excited for the future to keep things rolling and I'm happy for the success I've had over the last few years."

On playing in some of the senior's last game on offense:

"I came in with them so I feel like I'm a part of their class, so I'm losing a part of my team and my boys. It's going to be rough but it's Mikah (Holder's) last game so we're going to let him go out with a bang and hopefully get him some yards."

On teammates from Texas showing the guys around:

"Definitely. (Ryan) Agnew, the other quarterback, is from Texas and he lives probably 30 minutes from the stadium. He told me he's going to show me the ropes and take me around to see some spots so I'm excited."

On there being a difference playing a service academy team:

"Definitely, especially given their background and what they go through. Right after college they go to the forces, so it's a different type of vibe going into the game. There is a lot of respect but once you are on that field it's football, you play football. After the game you have to show your respect with what those guys are going through every day and what they are doing for our country."

On the perfect scenario for the seniors' last game:

"A win, Rashaad (Penny) to beat the (Aztec single-season) record and Mikah (Holder) to get a touchdown and a career high in something, just give him the ball. Get an all-around good win would be a good way to end it with those boys."

On the players' perspective of how senior running Back Rashaad Penny was treated nationally:

"I think the team is more upset than Rashaad personally. We all believe he got snubbed, we know he's the best [running] back in the country. At least show the man respect and bring him to New York or put him as a finalist for something. He's going to prove people wrong at the next level so let that will speak for itself."

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