



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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San Diego State Press Conference Quotes Tuesday, Oct. 22, 2019

Head Coach Rocky Long

Opening statement:

"Well, we're moving onto to the next game. Obviously we were in exactly the same situation last year, same record. Didn't play exactly the same teams but very similar teams and we went to Nevada, so it's the same state. We went into Nevada and Nevada beat us. We really struggled after that winning games. Our league is such that there isn't any dominant team in our league. But there's no easy gimme's in our league either. UNLV has struggled here lately but all you have to do is turn on the film and watch them against Vanderbilt and you can see how good they can be. They've just been inconsistent. They are a talented football team that has a world of potential that just hasn't hit their stride. Now they hit stride against Vanderbilt which is a Southeastern Conference team and it wasn't even close. They outplayed Vanderbilt so bad it was unbelievable, so I was assuming that Vanderbilt wasn't any good. Then I saw last week where Vanderbilt beat Missouri, who was (ranked) in the (Top 25). So obviously UNLV has some excellent athletes and can play really, really well at times. The idea that we are going to go in there and just win the game is ridiculous."

On UNLV freshman quarterback Kenyon Oblad:

"Well I would like to know who the starting quarterback is going to be. Because they have three guys listed, (Kenyon Oblad) is listed as the starter and he has played very, very well as a true freshman. Has good touch on the ball, good accuracy with the football, buys time with his feet, doesn't run it a lot, but buys time with his feet. The other guy on the list (Armani Rogers) that was the starter to begin with this year, he's a great athlete, throws the ball pretty well, and runs it really, really well. He's still their second-leading rusher. The other guy on the depth chart at quarterback is the guy (Max Gilliam) that played against us last year and beat us. All three of them have talent, all three of them play well, even though maybe inconsistently, they all three play really well at times. They all require a different defensive scheme when you play against them, so basically we're spending only a third of the time on defense than we normally do when we know who the quarterback is going to be."

On how much more work it is when you don't know who the starter is going to be:

"It's not more work really, because you can only practice for so many hours in the day and we keep our practice schedule, once we get into the season, exactly the same. So you get a third of the reps, a third of your reps against what you think one quarterback does well, a third against what the other quarterback does well. You split your practice into thirds. So consequently you're nearly as prepared if you were spending all those reps on just one quarterback."

On going back and forth between turf and grass fields:

"I hadn't even thought about that, but yeah. Every week we practice on both. We spend half of our time on grass, we spend half of our time on the turf. We used to practice on the turf when we were going to play on the turf field and we would practice on the grass when we were playing on the grass field. But there are so few grass fields left in this world that that's kind of a waste of time. But I do think grass is softer, grass is easier on players, so we spend half the time on grass and half on the turf because I think it's good for the players to be on the grass. They get their legs back a little bit better and when we spend half of the time on the grass we don't wear it out either."

On UNLV's running back Charles Williams:

"He's as talented a running back as there is in this league and when he is hot, he makes them a whole lot better of a football team. He's one of those guys that can make you miss, he can run through arm tackles and if he gets out in the open, he's fast enough to out run you. So he's a challenge in his own right that makes you honest against some of the other things they do because he's so good at carrying the football."

On the keys to the offense and defense this week:

"(The) offense needs to do what we did in the second half against San Jose (State) and that's to control the line of scrimmage and be able to run the ball. When we needed to throw it to get a first down, throw it and catch it and get a first down. Now that's a positive, I think if you count both the offense and defense, the best we played all year was in the second half against San Jose (State). I didn't think we played worth a darn the first half on either side of the ball, but we played well on both sides of the ball in the second half against San Jose."

On if he is surprised on Tony Sanchez having tough time at UNLV:

"I think Tony is a really good coach, he's proven that he is a really good coach. You never know unless you're in the situation yourself and in the program yourself. I mean around here after we went 6-1 early in the season (in 2018) and we had a below par second half of the season everybody wondered what was wrong. I mean it could've been something wrong, it could've been we had a whole bunch of our good players hurt, it could've been a whole bunch of different reasons. So there's no telling what the issues are there unless you're within the program you don't know what they are. But, he's a really good coach, a really good guy. If they give him time like they should he will get it right."

On overcoming all the penalties last week in the win at San Jose State:

"Anytime we have an issue we try to correct it in practice so we're working on certain things in practice. The ones that get you are the illegal procedures where your offense and linemen move before the snap of the ball or those kind of things. Those are concentration errors, so you have to put them in those situations in practice and hopefully get them to concentrate better in the game and not get those kinds of penalties. Those are penalties that can be prevented. Some penalties are just on how, you can't prevent, it's just how the official happens to see them at the time. But an offensive lineman moving before the snap of the ball, you ought to be able to prevent that. That has to be done in practice and we've been doing that, we've been trying to do that in practice."

Senior quarterback Ryan Agnew**On what he is doing for Halloween:**

"Playing football. (We) probably have football practice that day. What day? I don't even know what day Halloween is on this year."

On if he echoes Coach Long's statement that the second half vs. San Jose State was SDSU's best football this year:

"I think it was a really good half of football. Obviously the defense played tremendous and got a turnover, offensively we ran it at will against San Jose (State). Our o-line played tremendous. All five running backs got in there and got touches, it was really good to see the run game come to life at that moment."

On what needs to be done offensively down the stretch this year compared to last:

"Yeah, kind of echo what Tariq said, just don't get complacent. You guys can see in our league we have many good football teams. UNLV is a football team that went into Vanderbilt and won. Then Vanderbilt goes in and beats a team like Missouri which everyone knows it a great team. There's talent all across the league. No matter what the records are, where you're playing, when you're playing you have to bring it for four quarters because anyone can beat anyone."

On being just outside the Top 25 and what would it mean to be in Top 25:

"It definitely means a lot to be recognized, especially on a national level because we feel like we play great football out here. Some people might not see it because some people are from Texas and it's like midnight or 1 a.m. when the game gets done. So, we just have to do what we have to do and if we do what we're supposed to do, then we will be recognized how we need to be recognized."

On correcting the offensive penalties that doomed drives at San Jose State:

"You know when you go on those long play drives, I mean think we were in a long 20-play drive, the more plays you run, the more chances you have for bad things to happen. You just have to hold your composure, you can't have those holding penalties, blocking in the back, false starts - that's just all will power and focus, all of those things that we preach. The only way to get better is just harp on it, keep talking about it during the week of practice that, 'we need to get better, we need to get better,' if you do it in practice, if you do it in preparation then you'll see it in the games. Just this week of practice you need to harp on no bad penalties and finish drives in the end zone. (I) love Matt Araiza, he's a great kicker, but we want to keep him on the sidelines, only (out there) for extra points though."

On going back and forth between turf and grass fields:

"Yeah, it doesn't really matter what surface you play on, it's an even kill for everybody and everyone is playing on the same surface. We've played on many turf fields, last week was turf against San Jose (State), and we play on grass at home. So we are kind of familiar with playing on grass and turf so it doesn't affect us too much or at all, we don't really think about it."

On if grass is better for the body:

"It's better on the body when you don't get hit. When you play football it doesn't matter what surface you're playing on, you have to go in for a physical four quarter fight and you're going to come out with some bumps and bruises, win or loss."

On more injuries on turf than on grass:

"I don't want to get all scientific but I think grass has more give to it than the turf. Your cleats kind of stick into it. So the grass is a little bit more forgiving, you see people kind of slide out of things rather than stick into it so that's probably the reason why."

Junior safety Tariq Thompson

On what are you doing for Halloween:

"It's on Thursday, right? Practice and sleep. Getting ready for the next game."

On if he echoes Coach Long's statement that the second half vs. San Jose State was SDSU's best football this year:

"I think defense could've played better, we don't like giving up points. Defensive backs, we felt like we didn't give our best performance. We want to shut them down, we don't want the opponent to get over 200 yards passing, let alone two touchdowns. So I feel like that's something we are upset about and we are trying to practice to get better at."

On being at a similar point in time now as last year when they struggled down the stretch:

"It's a completely different year, but that's always in the back of our minds. We can't get complacent, we are working hard and we have to make sure that we don't let that happen again. These next four games are the same games that we lost last year, so that's really important to us. We are taking it one day at a time, trying to get better."

On being just outside the Top 25 and what would it mean to be in Top 25:

"It's not really a big deal, because we know how good of a team we are and we have a lot more we need to prove and get better at. Being ranked is something that every team wants. But our goal is to win 22 so UNLV is our top priority right now."

On going back and forth between turf and grass fields:

"To be honest, it's all the same to me. I mean it may be a different surface but it's nothing that us players look into too much. We just want to win the game. Wherever we play, we can play in an arena, we just want to win the game. It doesn't matter."