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

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San Diego State Football Press Conference

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SDSU head coach Rocky Long

On the season:

"Coaches and players are doing everything they can to try to rectify any of the issues or problems that we've had in order for us to continue on this season and finish off with a few wins."

On what has happened the last two games:

"It has nothing to do with scheme. People are outplaying us and out-executing us. What they are doing on defense is no different than what we've seen all year long. They are moving their defensive linemen and linebackers more than they have in the past and they are stunting a little bit more than they have in the past, but other than that, the scheme and where they line up and those types of things are exactly the same."

On what he was expecting from the young offensive line this season:

"I think they are not performing as well right now because of the twisting and stunting of the defensive linemen but mostly because they are beat up. It is hard for players to play hard or at as high a level when they are not 100 percent [healthy] and it is really difficult for a young player to play at a high level if he is not 100 percent [healthy] because he has never had to do it before and he is trying to learn how to do it now. Four of our five linemen that are playing in the game have ankles or hands or legs or shoulders, something that is not 100 percent [healthy]. Some of them have two or three things that are not one hundred percent [healthy]. It is not structurally obvious because we x-ray them and MRI them to make sure it is nothing that will harm them forever, but most of them are playing hurt and that is something that they have never had to do before. That is a learned activity."

On how the offensive line's play has affected SDSU junior quarterback Christian Chapman:

"Well, I don't think it hurts you mentally at all. I think it hurts how you are able to perform if you are unable to sit back there and take your time. I think he probably feels a little pressure to do things more on his own than he probably should at times but everything is affected. I was asked since we're struggling running the ball if we should try to throw it more. Well, last week we tried to throw it 37 times. Out of about 64 to 65 total plays, we tried to throw the ball 37 times. That is a lot of passes. Obviously, he didn't throw it 37 times because he got hit and scrambled and dumped it off a couple times. So there were 37 attempts to throw the ball, right at 50 percent or a little above 50 percent. So it is not like we're not trying to throw the ball, people are stopping the run, we're just not doing it very well. There is a difference between what you do and how well you do it. If it is a matter of effort and want to, sometimes you can fix that. But it is not a matter of effort or want to; Our players are playing extremely hard. They want to play well, they are just not playing well. Guess what? That happens. Everybody in this room has bad

days or bad weeks or bad months. Every time you have a bad day, the difference is nobody is telling you how bad you are or how lousy you are. 'I can't believe you are down in the dumps today. Isn't it a beautiful day?' Well, something happened in your life that made you feel bad. Well, we've got some players that aren't playing very well. How about that?"

On Hawai'i's defense:

"I think they are big and strong up front, very similar to the last two teams we've played. They haven't shown a tendency to slant or stunt very much but I promise you we're going to see it because that has been effective against us the last couple of weeks. They have struggled as far as number of points they have given up and that kind of thing, they have struggled that way. But for us to be successful, our formula is run the ball. Play action pass and our running game has not been up to snuff the last couple of weeks so our passing game has not been able to make up for it."

On keeping SDSU freshman center Keith Ismael's confidence up:

"I think personally he probably knows he belongs here but whether he thinks he is ready to play or not, I don't know. It is very difficult to keep anybody's confidence up. Anybody in any line of business, when things don't go well, their confidence struggles. When you are a young athlete and things don't go well, your confidence really struggles. And obviously we try to be positive with them and we try to work on their technique. We practice all the time to try and allow for them to become better players and have more success, but let's be honest here: unless you have success, you don't build confidence."

On the team's overall confidence right now:

"I think it is very shaky. I think that was proven in the game Saturday. I think our confidence level is very shaky. You saw us start out with a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of effort and a lot of physicality and we drove the ball straight down the field against a very good defense. And then we fumbled the ball and all of a sudden we could not do that anymore. And guess what, they were playing the same defense then as they were later in the game."

On if the last two weeks were surprising given the six straight wins to start the season:

"It would surprise me if we had a veteran football team. It does not surprise me because we have a very young football team and some very young players playing in some key positions. The most important thing in any offense or defense is the line of scrimmage is at least a stalemate, the two teams are 50-50 in the line of scrimmage. Well, the last two weeks they have not been so the other guys do not have the same kind of opportunity they would normally have to show what they have or what they can do."

On what Chapman should run given that the offensive line couldn't protect him:

"Well, he threw some three step drops and completed a few of those. In our offense, we're right back in the same issue and if you look at teams in our league – no matter how they line up, they are all copying the same formula. If you are not able to run the ball, it's not one-on-one out there because you have corners and safeties over the top and you can't throw three step drops, you can't throw quick passes because they take all the passing lanes away. If you are able to run the ball pretty well, that means they have to bring safeties into the box and now it's one-on-one out there so you can throw quick throws and all that. Play action pass only works if you are able to run the ball, so when you go to a drop back scheme it takes much longer for those patterns to develop. You have to see the receivers get into windows – either anticipate them coming into windows in coverage or wait for them to settle into a window in the coverage – and that takes more time than he has been getting."

On if a lack of time gets into Chapman's mind:

"I completely thought that before I watched the film because you can't see the coverage well from the sidelines, but I think there were times when he is holding the ball and does not throw it when he should. I went in to watch the film expecting myself to be

right, [but] I was wrong. Out of 37 throws, there were two times that he should have thrown the ball that he did not throw it. That is not very many for a quarterback, one happened to be the very first play of the game that should have been a 90-yard touchdown but he did not throw it. Now it has to be a good throw and they have to catch it. He had a couple [passes] dropped and all that stuff. It has to be a good throw and the receiver has to catch it, but if he throws that one we've got a wide receiver that is 10 yards behind everybody on the very first play of the game."

On the lack of turnovers SDSU's defense is causing:

"Two things. I don't think we're hitting with the same collision power as we have before this. You can relate it to how banged up and beat up we are and how many games we've played in a row but that's making excuses. I think we're struggling scoring. The other teams' offenses have gotten very conservative. The other night [against Fresno State], they ran for a bunch of yards but they also ran a bunch of times. I thought they dominated at the line of scrimmage. They did not. They had one long run and that's because of the defense I called. I called an all-out blitz and if there's a seam when you run a blitz, there's nobody there to tackle him. That long one was on the defense I called. If you take that long run out of there, they averaged less than four yards a carry. That doesn't mean that they dominated at the line of scrimmage against our defense. It just meant they ran the ball a whole bunch of times. Quarterbacks are not throwing it unless a receiver is wide open. When you're ahead and you're controlling the ball and they don't get as many snaps as they want to get, people take more chances on what plays they call and quarterbacks make more chances on what balls they throw. Since we're having trouble scoring, I think other offenses have gotten very conservative and they're not taking chances. I also think that we're playing as hard but I don't think we're hitting as hard. When we tackle, I don't think we're hitting as hard. The throws are quick throws. They're not giving us enough chances to get to the quarterback. The quarterback is getting rid of the ball before we can get there. I think it's a mentality that the offensive staff comes in here with. Guess what? It's the exact same formula that we've been winning with for the last three years. They're not dumb coaches out there. They see who's won the championship and they wonder why, so they watch how you did things and now they're copying us. That's a backhanded compliment, by the way. We have to execute better. It's a matter of players executing. At times, I think it's because we're not trying very hard but every time I go watch the film, that's not the case. We're trying hard. We're just not executing at the same level as we did earlier in the season. Some of that with the offensive line is because they're beat up and hurt. That doesn't excuse any other position for not executing well. If those guys were juniors and seniors, you wouldn't know it. Even if they were beat up, you wouldn't see any difference in them because older guys learn how to play with bumps and bruises, and guess what? That group is learning to play that way so the next two or three years, they'll be fine when they get the bumps and bruises. This is the first time this has happened in their lives and they're not handling it very well."

SDSU senior wide receiver Quest Truxton

On the team's mindset:

"Monday was a great way for us to come out and show we're not done yet. Two tough losses like that, you're kind of heartbroken but the only thing you can do is move forward. I think we're all coming together a little better. A lot of people made excuses for us about the Boise State loss. They said, 'This play made that happen and if this went the other way,' but last week, you can't make any excuses. We just didn't show up and it was really an awakening for us and I think we learned the most from that and we'll learn from it and come back stronger."

On if he thinks the team's 6-0 start was a factor in the team's recent struggles:

"Probably. When you come out 6-0, you get the love from everybody. You get the fan support way more and everybody hypes you up and it's hard to not get lost in that and forget what got you there and I think that's a big reason why we slipped a bit the past two weeks. We weren't working with that same edge to prove ourselves. This team has had a standard for handling our side

of the conference and I think some guys started expecting that would just happen, and we weren't working for it the same way we were working to prove ourselves against the early Pac-12 teams and we got lost in that a little bit."

On back-to-back losses:

"It's a first for me to have back-to-back losses, which is pretty embarrassing, and I'm sure it is for a lot of these guys. As a team, the ranking was nice to have but not a lot of guys have been ranked but you forget what that's all about and what brought you there. The biggest deal for us right now is getting back to who we are and what we're all about."

On how to rebound from the losses:

"You just do it for the guys next to you. You put your little dings and bruises aside because you know that your brothers are counting on you. That's the biggest thing I've drawn from, to play through stuff like that and I'm certain that the young guys will get there eventually but when you first get somewhere, you think, 'I don't have to do this because this is hurting,' or, 'I can't go as hard in practice because of this.' But you eventually learn over time that that doesn't cut it, and that doesn't win football games."

SDSU junior linebacker Ronley Lakalaka

On what it's like, as a Hawaii native, to be playing in Hawaii:

"I've done it before. It's nice to go back and see family and friends, to see them support our team and myself, getting to see them because I rarely see them during the year. I probably see my family three times during the year. It's nice to be back and see their faces. It's going to be bittersweet."

On if he was recruited by Hawai'i:

"I had an opportunity to go to Hawai'i. It just so happened that I had an opportunity to come here and I'm so glad I made the choice to come here. Most of [Hawai'i's team] I know from high school, from other schools, and there are about four members on their team from my high school so it's going to be fun. We're just going to have fun."

On the travel to and from Hawai'i:

"It's tough. We're both coming off games so it's no different from any other game. Traveling to any other place is going to be the same. Our mindset is to go in there and put up a fight."

On how back-to-back losses affect the team:

"We get complacent at times so with these two losses, it puts us at a level where we need to be humble. Coming into practice with a purpose to prepare and that's what I think we were missing. Quest said that something was missing so I think that we just got complacent and we just weren't ready."

On how to rebound from the losses:

"You just need to fight for your brothers next to you. The most important person is the player next to you. You're playing for them, for your family, for your coaches, for the fans. To be able to have the opportunity to play, you just want to take all of that opportunity and just play."