



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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

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

San Diego State-Hawai'i Postgame Quotes

November 5, 2016

SDSU head coach Rocky Long

On if the team is playing to its full potential:

"I think you have to go every game in the same context of just this game. I thought we played well tonight, thought we played well most of the time. I didn't think we ran the ball very well in the second quarter; we had a lot of turnovers on defense and controlled the ball most of the game on offense. We scored a lot of points, but I have to say this, that's not the Hawai'i team I saw on film. Hawai'i is probably the second-most improved team in our league next to Wyoming and they didn't play like themselves tonight. I have a theory why because last week they're playing at home and had a chance to go in and tie the score with about three minutes left to go in the game and they're inside the 10-yard line and then they get stopped on 4th-and-1. Psychologically, that's a very hard thing for a team to overcome and I think what you saw they were still — the effect of that loss was still bugging them. That team is much, much better than they played tonight. Much better. Their coach is doing a hell of a job. But we played good. We played alright."

On how the team has improved since last season:

"I think at the end of last season, we were one of the top 25 teams in the country and right now I think that we're trying to prove to everybody that we are still one of the top 25 teams. We were voted one of the top 25 teams last year at the end of the year, but I thought that we were. I think that we're as good as some of them in the top 25 right now."

On the team's interceptions tonight:

"I thought we played fast tonight. I thought that we kept the game plan very, very simple. Our players did a nice job of recognizing patterns and jumping routes so we got our hands on a lot of football. You know, we knocked three or four away. We might have had two or more interceptions. One of the interceptions bounced off the receiver and should've been a complete pass, but it bounced off the receiver and we scored a touchdown on it. I thought the defense played fast tonight and they reacted well to the plays and that's why you get interceptions. I didn't think the pressure on the quarterback was extraordinary. I mean, there were people in his face and he had to throw it on time, but he wasn't getting hit."

On freshman cornerback Ron Smith:

"I thought that it was really nice that early in the game he was able to make a big-time play. I'm sure that gave him confidence and I'm sure that he will be a better player for it. In the fourth quarter we put a lot of new guys in there and guess what, they get half the reps of practice and there were some times he couldn't even get lined up. Any kind of experience that they get is good and now Ron Smith has had to play for two weeks now and he's gonna get better. Just by the experience factor he'll get better."

On the deciding factor for Smith's start tonight:

"We compete in practice. Whenever there is a position where there's not a guaranteed starter, a guy that we know is the best guy that has the experience, they compete in practice and whoever plays best in practice gets the start. Now, to be honest with you, he was on a short leash. If he wasn't playing good he was coming out and somebody else was going in to see if he could play better, but he played better in practice this week. That's why he got the start."

On the status of junior cornerback Kalan Montgomery:

"His ankle and his knee still bothers him a little bit, but you saw the other guy that was in too was Kyree Woods who was a true freshman. He played the last couple series out there. He was in the competition too. We considered if he was gonna be the starter or not."

On potentially clinching the top spot in the Mountain West:

"We haven't clinched it. As far as I know we haven't clinched it yet. We clinched a tie? The part about clinching the West Division is we get to play in the championship game. We haven't done anything yet, but if New Mexico will beat Nevada-Reno tonight then we can start thinking about who we're gonna play in the championship game. The number one goal in our program is to win the conference championship."

On potentially clinching the top spot in the Mountain West relatively early this season:

"I don't know if we've clinched it yet. Next week might be the game that decides who clinches, if we clinch it or not. We're playing Nevada-Reno so next week we might be able to do it ourselves, clinch it ourselves. I'll tell you what is nice though, two weeks ago we qualified for a bowl game. I've never been on a team that qualified that early to go to a bowl game and around here I guess we're spoiled. I guess we're so used to going to bowl games that it's not a big deal anymore. I'll tell you what, our team and I think it's a big deal."

On sophomore quarterback Christian Chapman:

"I was happy and not-so-happy at the same time. I thought he did a nice job of throwing the ball. I thought that our play-action pass allowed us to score some touchdowns and open up the running game a little bit, especially in the second-half. But I saw a dropped pass. I saw too much pressure on the quarterback when we were trying to do a drop-back scheme I thought that there was too much pressure on the quarterback. He got hit and fumbled. I don't know why yet. I'll watch the film. If someone missed an assignment or they just ran a stunt that we couldn't pick up, and if they ran a stunt that we couldn't pick up that's the coach's fault. If it's because someone blew an assignment, that's the player's fault. I don't know which one it was but he got hit and he fumbled so I thought he played OK, but I think for us to win the conference championship then he'd maybe do better things than that. We're going to have to be more consistent at throwing footballs."

On possible letdowns from the team:

"That's a great question because it bothers me at night, every night that our players will be satisfied and not prepare the same way every week. I'm counting on the maturity of our senior class to not let that happen. It didn't happen last year and hopefully the maturity in our senior class won't let that happen because the seniors, in their mind, they have bigger and better things to do than just that. If we want to do bigger and better things, then what we've done in the past every game has got to be just as important as the last game. You've heard me say this a bunch of times. They'll only believe what they want to believe. No matter what I say, they will believe what they want to believe. It has to come from within. It has to come from the other players and that's why our seniors are the leaders. You've gotta count on their maturity for that to happen."

On communicating with the seniors on the team:

"We meet with them everyday we practice. We talk about it. We talk about it almost daily. My sense is that they're a very mature, motivated group. We might get beat, but it won't be because we're not ready to play."

On drawing on losses of some players:

"I can't explain that except that we did some things that we don't normally do like snap the ball over a punter's head and stuff like that."

On the team's defense tonight:

"I thought they did a very nice job of protecting the quarterback so we didn't blitz nearly as much and we played more coverage. We probably played more zone-coverage to intercept the ball more. We didn't sack the quarterback much until the very end, but we're gonna have to ask the other team what the percentage is. I guess 50 percent of the time we're blitzing. Well, tonight we did. I bet you we probably blitzed a total of 10 times the whole night because we blitzed early on and they picked it up pretty good and the quarterback threw the ball on the money. Then we went to zone-coverage and he didn't throw on the money, he was throwing it to us. It was much easier to keep playing zone. They played it very well. I'd much rather blitz the quarterback and hit the quarterback if I had my preference."

On playing non-starters at the end of the game:

"In the fourth quarter we played not all non-starters because we have one position where we're short on players. We had a starter from another position play in that position. Ten of the 11 guys out there hardly ever play and three of them, this is probably the first time they've played extensively and it was nice to preserve the shutout. In fact, one of the freshmen ran a corner blitz to sack the quarterback, a true freshman. In this day and age, it's a big deal to shut anybody out so it's kind of cool."

On the younger players preserving the shutout:

"Well, I heard a whole bunch of the veteran guys trying to coach them from the sidelines. So while they were moving down the field, we didn't have to say anything because every one of the veterans was trying to coach his position from the sideline. The veterans obviously wanted a shutout, right? I think after we sacked the quarterback the whole starting defense was out there celebrating with the guys that were on the field."

SDSU sophomore linebacker Ronley Lakalaka

On the purpose of the traditional Hawaiian necklace he was wearing:

"It's for my family, to show them respect for coming out and watching us play. It was nice of them to come out here, and having this lei on shows their love, where I came from, and my roots. I never forget where I came from."

On the origins of the necklace and where he had it made:

"It was made by my grandma. She does a lot of work with leis, lavalavas, and other stuff like blankets, in order for us to stay warm and together. She just gave me it right after the game."

On how many family members attended the game:

"I would say about 60. I had to get a lot of tickets, which was very difficult to do with it being homecoming."

On if he was looking forward to tackling his brother (Hawai'i running back Steven Lakalaka):

"Yeah, I was definitely looking forward to it. It took a lot of pressure off of me after I got that first tackle. I got more and more confident that I could get in there and make plays."

On if he said anything to his brother afterward:

"No, I didn't say much."

On what he saw when he made the interception:

"We had a field blitz along with a zone. There was a play in the beginning of the game where we messed up on that same play, where they threw a bender behind our linebackers. (Linebackers) coach (Zach) Arnett did a great job telling us what we needed to do to see that, so myself, (senior linebacker) Calvin Munson and (junior linebacker) Ryan Dunn did a great job at adjusting and seeing what was given to the quarterback."

On how good the Aztecs are currently playing:

"We're playing very well right now but we're not satisfied. We have a great defense because we feed off of each other and game after game we get better. It all starts at practice with preparation, and (head) coach (Rocky) Long does a great job at getting us lined up and ready to get physical with the other team."

On if he felt bad for how poorly his brother's team played:

"Of course. It's always a soft moment when you're playing against your brother, but at the same time we're two competitive people that want to get after each other, so it was nice being able to do so."

On if this was the last opportunity for him to play against his brother:

"Yeah, this game was probably the last time, sadly."

SDSU sophomore quarterback Christian Chapman

On first two touchdown passes of the game:

"The play to (junior wide receiver) Quest (Truxton) was the exact same play against Utah State. The exact same thing happened, it's kind of crazy how that happened. I went out and Quest just scrambled down the sideline, and he got free and I stood up for him. He made the play again. Good by him to be able to react on the scramble drill. It has been working well for us."

On Truxton's big game:

"He is football smart. He knows when plays break down you got to come back to the quarterback. You have to be on the same pass level. If I have eyes on the field and I see him, I can give him the ball. He is a heavy football player. He is good and I trust him, that is why I give him the ball."

On who keeps the team focused:

"I would say the seniors and the coaches. They put a lot of emphasis on now; it is one game at a time. I think earlier in the season we got big headed a little bit, and it bit us in the butt. Now we are just thinking one game at a time, and that will take care of the rest."

On being the better team:

"It is definitely a lot of attitude; it is how you approach the week. I think now we have an identity. We are a threat; we are big and physical. That is what we like to be known for, and that is hopefully what we can continue to show you this season."

SDSU freshman cornerback Ron Smith**On SDSU's success as a team:**

"I think us just going to practice as often as we do and making sure we come in with a lot of energy is the key. We come in with a lot of energy every week and we game plan the right way so everything's really been picking up for us."

On his first career pick six:

"I just had to make sure that I got back because I saw somebody coming out. I was kind of bating him to see if they were going to throw it over and then I saw the ball in the air and just had to make a play. I was excited. When I got the ball, at that moment I knew I was ready to go. I'm happy I made that play."

On his first time starting:

"I think it helps that I've been playing special teams all year, so I didn't have as many nerves. I got in last week and then here and there, but after about the first or second drive I was pretty comfortable on the field."

On stopping Hawai'i's offense:

"There was definitely a lot of chatter from the sideline and from the guys on the field to make sure that they didn't get in. That's just us wanting to compete and making sure that we ended off the game right. We definitely talked about it a lot and I'm proud of the guys for holding it down."

On the newcomers playing:

"I think it's very important that they all got in. It sets up for the future and we also get to see how guys play and are able to give people some reps so they can get more comfortable out there. Being comfortable is a big thing in this game, so I'm just happy that we were able to put people in there and see people make these plays you guys have been seeing."

On who keeps the team focused in the locker room:

"It's helpful that we come into every week with the same mindset, setting the same goal to make big plays on offense and keep the offense on the other side out of the end zone. We just have that mantra every time we go out there. The coaches preach it, the seniors preach it, and we just feed off of them and make the plays."

On being the better team:

"I think the main thing is preparation. We've been preparing the right way by getting in film and making sure that we can be the best team on the field. We come in with the mindset that we're going to play well, and as competitors we always want to be the best people out on the field. We just come in, respect our opponents and make sure that when we come to play, we also come to compete and we go out there and do our jobs."

Hawai'i head coach Nick Rolovich**Opening Statement:**

"This team has a lot of resilience in it; I don't know if there's anything else we could have messed up today. Our defense gave us some chances; we didn't do much offensively. That's one of the best defenses in the country and when you help them out with turnovers and especially pick sixes, you put yourself in a hole and we just couldn't climb out of it. Credit to (San Diego State head coach Rocky) Long and that staff. You talk about a guy whose team played very well and

the first thing he says is, 'I apologize for the score getting out of hand.' We did that a bunch to ourselves, but that's a good football coach and that's the kind of people you want to be around."

On San Diego State's effectiveness on defense:

"They are very confident, they are very good tacklers, they all have very good ball skills, they anticipate well, and they cause a lot of issues with their movement up front. They get some penetration, which gets things not started smoothly; they have a lot of different looks and they play hard. I think our guys played hard also, but (San Diego State is) playing hard and understand their scheme and (they) play within their scheme very well."

Thoughts on San Diego State running back Donnel Pumphrey and the team as a whole:

"Pumphrey is as good as advertised and so is that whole team, and so is Rocky Long and that whole staff. They've done it the right way. After the game, it was unbelievable what they said about our team. They just beat us 55-0 and they said 'you guys are so much better. I know today wasn't the day, but you guys are playing better.' This game needs good people and this place has good people at it."

Hawai'i sophomore quarterback Dru Brown

On San Diego State's defense as one of the best in the country:

"They proved that; they played pretty well. They did a lot of good things; they disguised well, they played hard, they rally to the ball and it's impressive. That being said, I don't think we played nowhere near where we can play."

On comparing the San Diego State defense to the University of Michigan defense Hawai'i played on Sept. 3:

"Defensively, they did a good job. Just like Michigan, they do a lot of similar things when it comes to disguise."

Hawai'i senior running back Steven Lakalaka

On San Diego State's defensive effectiveness:

"They played great football today; credit to them. We made a lot of mistakes; a lot of turnovers."

On playing against his brother, San Diego State sophomore linebacker Ronely Lakalaka:

"It was fun, but as time goes on he was just another player across the field. He did a pretty good job today. That's my brother, I love him."