



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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San Diego State Football Press Conference Quotes Tuesday, Sept. 4, 2018

Head Coach Rocky Long

Opening statement:

"Well, it's another week. We look forward to play another game. I hope everybody that is interested realizes how good they (Sacramento State) are. They're a very talented explosive football team that last year and the first game this year has shown they can play the game really, really well. It reminds me of a couple of years ago when we played Eastern Illinois (in 2013) and (Jimmy) Garoppolo was their quarterback. They came in here and exposed us and they were a much better football team than anybody expected, including our players, and they won the game convincingly, too. It wasn't that close. So our boys better be ready to play because it will be a very competitive football game."

On what he learned about the team after the season-opening game at Stanford:

"I don't think we played as well as we expected to play. I thought we would play better. On the positive side, I thought that we played better at the line of scrimmage than I thought we would. I thought we would be a little outmanned on the defensive line by their offensive line and a little outmanned on our offensive line by their defensive line, and that was not the case. We held our own and sometimes we were the better line of scrimmage. But we made way too many mistakes on both sides of the ball. Then we had a little trouble covering one of their receivers."

On getting the point across to the team about how good Sacramento State is and not taking them lightly:

"It's not difficult to communicate it to them at all. It's already been communicated many, many times and will be for the next three days, too. It's whether they're listening and understanding, that is the problem. If you can tell me exactly the way to make that age group understand and react to it and be right 100 percent of the time, we can make a lot of money."

On whether he uses the 2013 loss to Eastern Illinois as an example:

"We already have used that as an example. Whether that relates to them or not, none of them were here."

On if he was more encouraged by stopping Bryce Love at Stanford or concerned with pass coverage:

"No, I think that's a 50-50 deal. I think it was positive we played the run well, then it was a negative that we didn't play pass defense better than we did."

On comparing Aztec placekicker John Baron to John Sullivan, one of his former kickers at New Mexico:

"That's so long ago. I have a hard time comparing them, but I think John Sullivan ended up an All-American (in 2007). If John Baron has the same kind of year this year that he had last year, he should be an All-American, too."

On what are the biggest things that could be done with the pass defense between the first and second weeks:

"There are a lot of things that you could do and bunch of them that we're not going to do. You can completely change the structure of your defense and have an ability to make sure you cover receivers and then they're going to rush for 500 yards. So we're going to play our defense the best way we can play our defense and hope that the defensive backs make more plays than they did last week."

On getting fired up for a home game as opposed to starting off on the road:

"I don't have any trouble getting fired up for every game. I think most of the time, but not always, you play better at home because your team is more comfortable. The routines are pretty much the same every time you play at home as opposed to every road routine ends up being different. I think it's natural that an athlete performs he has friends and family watching him. I think that makes most athletes perform at a better rate, so it's always better to be at home. And it's nice that this is our first home game."

On who he thinks will step up in the secondary this week:

"I don't see anyone in particular. I think the whole secondary, you know we're saying this, needs to improve our pass defense. But don't forget one of the reasons we played good run defense was the run support that they gave. We ask our DBs to be total football players. If all we asked them to do was cover receivers, we would have cover the receivers. But then we would watch the guy win the Heisman Trophy in the first week of the season. We have to be overall football players, and they played well in one spot and they didn't play so well in the other spot. They just got to get better."

On if he learned anything else about the team after the Stanford game:

"I thought we were a very physical football team. If you remember some of the other things I said, I said the youngest part of our defense was the secondary and that's the quickest way to lose a game. You all forgot I said that. I said it about 20 times. You never hope it happens. But young DBs have to play in live action to get better. They don't get better in practice. They have to see everybody moving around at a faster pace and they have to react to the ball in a stressful situation that is skill-wise the toughest position to play on defense. Skill-wise. People talk about playing double coverage or playing zone. Well guess what, you can't double cover, there's other receivers out there, too. You can't play zone, but every one of those passes that were completed were against zone coverage. Because, guess what, after 10 yards it's all one-on-one situations whether you're playing zone or not. If you're playing a three-deep zone, all you have to do is occupy the free safety and both corners are man-to-man. If you're playing a two-deep zone, all you have to do is run four verticals down the field and all four DBs are in man-to-man past 10 yards."

Senior offensive tackle Ryan Pope

On the offensive line play in the Stanford game:

"We made some holes. It's never good enough, but the physicality was there. It was just the little things. It was more so assignments and little things like that. The physicality of the game, we dominated them. I agree."

On what the players learned from last Friday's season opener:

"Consistency is for sure something that needs to be worked on. It's being changed in practice as we speak."

On if it's possible the team came away from the loss with some kind of confidence:

"I would just say it gives us some things to work on, just gives us some things to focus up on. We have a feeling that we are going to be a good team. We just need to hone in on, like I said, the consistency and just bringing it to practice every day, and bringing it to the game."

On what the offensive line needs to do to improve on the pass block:

"I would say hands for sure. Getting our feet in front of the rush and just knowing our leverages, our land marks. Knowing how deep the quarterback is on every play we have. It's the little things. It's strictly technique; it's nothing wrong with the physical. It's just technique and just knowing where he is and just keeping him as clean as possible."

On the difficulty of getting into a rhythm for pass blocking:

"It's all mental. It's all mental. Rhythm is a big thing, but at the end of the day, whatever they call, you run it to the best of your ability. Just got to handle business that way."

On the level of excitement to play the home opener this weekend:

"It's high. Every week, we get a new chance to go out and demonstrate just how hard we worked in this offseason, and just impose our will on our opponents."

Senior defensive lineman Anthony Luke

On the offensive line play in the Stanford game:

"Yeah, I think we dominated the line of scrimmage, most definitely, in the game. We practiced that a lot. We wanted to be more dominant on the line of scrimmage, so I think we definitely won that battle up front."

On what the players learned from last Friday's season opener:

"I learned that first game jitters are real. As a defense, we started pretty good. I just learned that we have to keep it going all four quarters, not just show up in the first half. We need to show up all four quarters in every game this year."

On if the defense was more motivated by fact that it was a big road game or by Bryce Love and his performance last year:

"I think it was both, honestly. We knew Bryce Love, Heisman candidate, coming into the game, so we wanted to stop him. We knew what he did last year to us. That was a big motivation also."

On if there are ever any first home game jitters as opposed to the first game jitters they felt last week:

"No. They're out. They're out the door. I wish I didn't have jitters on the first play of the game; I could have gotten that interception. It's all good, next time. I always have a thing I say, 'My next play is my best play,' so just look forward to what's next."

On if it's possible the team came away from the loss with some kind of confidence:

"We don't like to think about the names of schools we play. Each game is its own game. No matter who we go into the game against, we don't care about number 13th-ranked in the nation Stanford, this year or last year—it's just another game to us. This game coming up is going to be the same thing. It's just another game to us. We don't care who they are. It's their lineup against us. We're going to have the same confidence. We didn't lose any confidence from last week. I actually think the defense

is actually more pumped. We came out at practice yesterday with a lot of fire. We had a great practice yesterday. We are pretty pumped.”

On who has emerged as leaders on defense after losing some veterans after last season:

“Tariq (Thompson), most definitely, Parker Baldwin, Kyahva (Tezino). I would say Ronley Lakalaka. Most definitely big captains. We have a lot of younger guys, too, on the defense. Most definitely I would say Parker Baldwin would be our big talker on the defense. He gets us motivated pretty good.”

Director of Athletics John David Wicker

Opening Statement:

“I appreciate everyone coming out today, an opportunity to talk with you all a little bit. It’s game week for the home opener vs. Sacramento State. KGB Skyshow is always a great event in San Diego. So excited for our fans and community to get their first live in-person look at the Aztecs. Obviously, we didn’t get the result we wanted last week, but I think we saw that we have a very good football team and all the confidence in the world in Rocky (Long) and the staff that they will have ready to play on Saturday.

On Thursday’s pep rally:

“We’re also excited about the fact on Thursday we’ll have a kickoff event for the home season on campus. At 12:30, we’ll have a pep rally in front of Hepner Hall. It’s a pep rally to celebrate the first home game, with the band, cheer and football all taking part. But it’s also an opportunity to kick off the I Am SDSU campaign. You may have seen the commercials during the game Friday night if you were watching. The I Am SDSU campaign is really a celebration of all San Diego State means to the community as a whole, not just an athletic piece or a research piece or an education piece, but everything that we bring to the community. The commercial highlighted our research both in the lab and along the San Diego River, our great nursing and arts programs and notable alumni such as Jerry Sanders, Ralph Rubio, Harold Brown and Tony Gwynn Jr. I highlighted the over \$500 million worth of construction in the last five years on campus and then, of course, our athletic programs. So on Thursday in front of Hepner Hall, you can come and hear new president (Adela) de la Torre speak, along with Chris Thomas our (Associated Students) president, Steve Fisher and the football team will be there with the band and cheerleaders. You’ll also be one of the first to get one of our I Am SDSU branded scarves that we’ll be handing out on campus and then at points later in the fall.”

On the timing of this new campaign:

“One of the things we’ve come to realize over the past probably six to 12 months is how important San Diego State truly is to the community of San Diego: \$5.67 billion worth of economic impact, over 60 percent of our living alumni live here and all the jobs we create and are responsible for in San Diego, then the educational component that we are creating great nurses, great researchers, phenomenal student-athletes. So we really want to celebrate that with all that’s going on in San Diego today.”

On what he sees the public’s vision of the Mission Valley site plan being:

“We’ve been very intentional in talking, obviously, about SDSU Mission Valley. Our vision for the property, once we get the opportunity to purchase it for fair market value from the city, and that it’s more than the stadium. It’s a river park that is great for the Mission Valley community, but it’s going to be something that the entire San Diego community can use. The opportunity to expand campus over time. We will begin our buildout of that area immediately, and there will be some pieces of campus that will go down. This is a 120-year plan we’re looking at—SDSU is actually at 121 years, so a 121-year plan. Addressing the residential needs. 4,600 residential units that will not only be market rate, but we’re also looking, we’re going to build on-site affordable. We’re going to have housing for upper division and graduate students, which right now, with our new sophomore live-on requirement, we’re struggling to find housing for those students that want to live on campus beyond their sophomore

year. Then we'll look at it as an opportunity to help attract the faculty and staff we want to bring to San Diego as we look to increase—I think last year, we had \$135 million in research monies that we generated through grants and other—and we want to increase that. We want to be a top-50 research institution and that will be something that will happen in Mission Valley over time as well. Last, but certainly important to me, a 35,000-seat stadium that's a community-minded stadium. It's great for Aztec football, but it's going to work for soccer, whether that's an international or domestic league. It's going to be great for concerts, dirt shows, all the other different events you might see there."

On how he sees the on-field performance of the football team impacting the vote:

"Obviously, the community is watching. Eight straight bowl games. After what I saw on Friday night, I think we're going to be really good this year. That generates a lot of excitement in San Diego. I think your alumni that are out there are proud of your football team, your institution doing so well, and then it's something the community can rally around as well. We are the premier football team in San Diego now."

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