



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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San Diego State Football Press Conference Sept. 21, 2021

Head Coach Brady Hoke

Opening Statement:

"Saturday was an exciting win for us as a program. We probably made it a little more exciting that we all wanted it with five minutes left in the fourth quarter, but (I'm) really proud of our team. (I'm) really proud of how we went out and represented. I thought defensively we did a nice job stopping the run. We had 15 hits on the quarterback. I think on third down we did a nice job with three sacks and eight TFLs. Those negative players are something that we're always trying to get. The one thing we need to do a better job is we've got to create more opportunities. We've got to create more turnovers. Offensively scoring 33 points; we rushed for 204 yards, which was huge for us. I thought the third quarter we really played well. We had a nice tempo going. We had a critical fumble which we can't have. I thought when we did get into the overtimes and the two-point plays, the work that (offensive coordinator) Jeff (Hecklinski) has done prior to (the game) really paid off. The kicking game, (Jordan) Byrd doing a great job. He was blocked up well but did a great job on the kickoff return. We had some negative with being offsides on a blocked punt, which would have been another score, and then we gave up an 80-yard punt return. We've got to go back to work with everything. We've got to play better for 60 minutes and we haven't done that. That's our goal so we've got to get ourselves back to it. We did it yesterday and need to do it for the rest of the week."

On Towson's offense:

"Number one is their power run game and their backs. It's not just one guy. They've got some guys who are big, they're physical. They're big up front. From an offensive standpoint they're physical and they remind me in a lot of ways offensively of Wyoming when you look at running the power and the different sets bringing in a jumbo offensive lineman as a tight end in a position to gain the line of scrimmage. They are a physical football team. People need to realize they played a really good football team last week. There aren't a whole lot of schools that want to say 'hey, I want to play North Dakota State.' That doesn't happen. I thought even though that score probably isn't indicative of the total game. I think they are a physical football team (and) they are a well-coached football team. Their quarterbacks are similar but we've got a lot of respect, and as we start working more today we've got to play better football than we did the other night."

On SDSU's young cornerbacks Noah Tumblin and Noah Avinger:

"We thought in the spring that Noah (Tumblin) would be a guy that would battle for that corner position. I don't think Noah realizes how talented he is and I say that being very honest. I think if his intensity level can keep coming up I think he can be a significant corner that somebody will have to contend with. I really like (Noah) Avinger where he's put himself. He's a highly recruited guy but I like what both of those guys bring to the table and having that competition is really good."

On if there is a target number of penalties to get down to for the Aztecs or is it more situational:

"I think it's more the situational penalties. I'll give you an example. On the (Utah) punt we ended up blocking it and scoring a touchdown. Well that's a dumb penalty. Any pre-snap penalties are really dumb penalties and you can't have them. Part of it is the guys are playing hard and all that but there's got to be some composure and some discipline that we have to have."

Senior defensive tackle Jonah Tavai

On the effort that the defensive line brings to each play:

"That is a good question because a lot of people ask me that. When we come in here, effort is number one over everything. We talk about red zone, we talk about will over skill because a 4.4 40 (yard-dash) is only going to get you so far in that zone. But the effort, just playing through the whistle, getting to the ball, that's what makes us different. A lot of the times we play undersized. For myself I am a heavier guy but the (roster) gives me a bit of props on the 6-foot (height). Our defensive ends aren't the heaviest. But our goal is to play harder and play longer than those across the ball from us. It's made the difference in a lot of games for us."

On what it meant to limit Utah to so few yards rushing:

"They had a good offensive line and some good running backs, but our defense here we strive on stopping the run. Forcing them to go third-and-long and passing situations because we trust our guys in the back. When we talk about the run game, including the front 7. The defensive line, the linebackers, we want to stop the run and that's just what it comes down to."

On if there was any conversation within the defense when Aztec (safety) Patrick McMorris was ejected for targeting:

"We obviously love having Pat (McMorris) out there. He's a good player and intellectual as well. But when things like that happen we trusted that Kyron White was going to come in and do his job. Obviously when you come in you're going to make mistakes but he did well. Made some plays, critical plays for us too down in the third and fourth quarter."

Senior offensive tackle Zachary Thomas

On preparing the same way for each opponent:

"As a team captain I'm just making sure we are treating this game the same as every other because every game is just as important as the last no matter if it's FCS, FBS, Pac-12, Mountain West, whatever it may be. Every game has the same importance."

On his evaluation of how the offensive line has progressed so far:

"I think we've come a long way. We have (Brandon) Crenshaw-Dickson, who didn't start any games prior to this season. I think he's done a great job so far filling the role and I think he's going to continue to become a great player. We have Chris Martinez, who played a little bit last season. He's been doing good. Alama (Uluave) has stepped up. He's taken a big leadership role on the offensive line. And then (William) Dunkle and I are a little more seasoned. I think we are rolling just fine."

On being named to the Pro Football Focus National Team of the Week:

"It's super satisfying. I'm happy to see I got rated. I couldn't do it without the rest of my offensive line and my running backs, so big shout out to them."

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