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**San Diego State Football Quotes**  
**Dignity Health Sports Park**  
**Aug. 22, 2021**

**Head Coach Brady Hoke**

**Opening statement:**

"It was good to get up (to Dignity Health Sports Park). We have a lot of young players where this would be their first time coming up and some young players from a year ago that may be dressing (this year). Getting them up here, getting used to the locker rooms, training rooms, where we tape, it was good to get up here. We had about 75-to-80 plays. There was some good physicalness. I was impressed with both sides to some degree. That's a good thing. I'd rather be impressed with both sides. In the kicking game we got a lot of work done. We've got some dynamic guys who can return kicks for us and I was happy to see the effort that they all put in. Thirteen days from now (is our first game), we're pretty excited. We'll have fans in the stands and New Mexico State, we're excited about it. The other thing we did is we didn't turn the ball over today (1s and 2s) and that's a good thing."

**On how important today's scrimmage was in terms of determining open competitions among position groups:**

"There are a lot of guys running with 2s and 3s, and some getting reps at 1s. We talked about this being huge for us, coming up here and being in this environment. Our athletic staff did a great job trying to make it as much as a game atmosphere so our guys will be ready for that. I think we did a nice job of getting guys in, working guys with different groups. Our first defensive line went I think 13 plays together and it was good to see that. It was good to see what the younger guys can do right now."

**On the quarterbacks being comfortable throwing it to wide receiver Elijah Kothe:**

"Since I came back here in 2019, Elijah has always been a guy who has earned your respect by watching how he practices. He is an unbelievable competitor. I can remember in 2019 some of the catches that he made in some of those critical points in different games. I think the quarterbacks feel like (the coaching staff does) he's a guy you can count on."

**On getting a chance to work on special teams in a scrimmage:**

"Every day we are working on two special teams. (Today) it was a little more game like. For players it's getting on the mat and getting together. The hard thing is you have two different mats going, but (special teams coordinator) Doug Deakin does a good job of organizing. Getting in that atmosphere, the 1s-on-1s live part of it is really good."

**On the Aztec offense being dangerous with multiple sets:**

"The key to it is putting your playmakers in those positions. That's the one thing (offensive coordinator) Jeff (Hecklinski) and I have talked a lot about. It's great and we love the different formations that will test some people, but at the same time we want to make sure the playmakers are in those positions to make plays."

**On if anything jumped out with the quarterback play today:**

"Number one I need to go through the film, and Jeff (Hecklinks) and I will go through it. There are a lot of things I'm looking at. It's now always the quarterback. I felt (Jordan) Brookshire a little bit. There were some things he did well. As we go forward this week obviously we'll have some answers."

**On the play of true freshman quarterback Will Haskell:**

"I think Will is very talented. That's one reason we really wanted to make sure he was going to be an Aztec."

**On when he will decide the starting quarterback for New Mexico State:**

"I think (the middle of the week) is where we'd like to get to (naming a starter) and at the same time I'd feel comfortable if it went a little longer than that."

**On the play of the young running backs:**

"(Associate head coach/running backs coach) Jeff Horton is stealing because he has so many good backs in that room. When you look at all of them the way they just get out there and play. I'll give a lot of credit to the older guys how they've brought those (young) guys in and done a great job for us. (Jaylon) Armstead really had some good runs and showed something. It's kind of interesting because earlier in camp we were a little concerned (with Armstead). We talked to him a little bit and he came out there and did a nice job."

**On if (true freshman) Cam Davis could get into that running back mix as well:**

"That's a lot of touches for a lot of different guys. The one thing I know is he can run with the football. He's quick. He's got good vision. He's a good return guy and he's got great speed."

**On of anyone stood out on defense:**

"Our front four as they should - Caden (McDonald), Cameron (Thomas), (Keshawn) Banks and Jonah (Tavai). Those guys as much as anyone show up."

**Senior linebacker Caden McDonald****On how important it was to get up to Dignity Health Sports Park and get acclimated to playing here again:**

"It was really important. It was good to go through the routine of pregame stuff and be in the atmosphere of the stadium. We had music playing before the game. Running out of the tunnel with all the stuff going on. Just getting those jitters out, getting comfortable of being in the stadium. Getting used to traveling up here because it's not just around the corner like it used to be. I think it's really important to get that under our belt before the season."

**On how the defense played:**

"I think we did well as a whole. I love our defense. I love being a part of it. I thought everyone played really well but there's also room to improve on in all aspects. Like I always say any yards given up is bad for our defense. We need to improve on that but I'm ready to start out the first game strong with our defense. Also the offense looked very good this scrimmage."

**On what the defense can do to improve:**

"I think we need to fly around to the ball more and just play Aztec defense."

**On preparing to come up to Dignity Health Sports Park:**

"It was nothing too crazy. We go through our normal pre-game meal. Then it's just a two-hour bus ride to get up here rather than a 15-minute ride to get to the stadium. That's the only thing that changes is the distance to get to the stadium. Everything else is the same."

**On coaching the young guys after he only played a few snaps:**

"I tried to encourage my teammates over on the defensive sideline. I watch the guys at my position and when they come off the field try to coach them up. Just the little things. Some assignments. I try to be a leader on the sidelines, even when I'm not playing. Even if I only get a certain amount of snaps, my role is to lead that team and encourage my teammates when they are out on the field."

**On the San Diego State offense today:**

"They looked really good. We've seen a lot of different stuff today that we haven't seen all camp. They moved the ball very well. They have a whole staple of running backs. Every one of them could be a starter. There all legit players. It's good to have them on our team. The quarterbacks all played well and the offensive line was solid. I'm real excited for our offense this year. They are going to do really big things this season."

**On the play of the defensive line:**

"It's such a blessing to have Cameron (Thomas), Keshawn (Banks) and Jonah (Tavai) up front. Those dudes work their tail off and take double teams from our linebackers day in and day out. Without those front three the defense doesn't run like it usually does. They get it done all the time. They don't get as much credit as they deserve. The other linebackers as well. One of us are taking up blocks while the other guy gets a sack. It doesn't matter who gets a sack, all six of us (up front) are pumped up."

**Junior offensive lineman William Dunkle**

**On playing more of a leadership role this year up front:**

"With Brandon Crenshaw-Dickson playing next to me and a little bit of Desmond Bessent it's definitely a new challenge but I like it a lot. I've never been in a position to be a leader and bring the younger guys along. I've always been the young guy. This year it feels good to develop my leadership skills and help them come along as well."

**On how the offensive line has progressed the last year:**

"I think we've gelled together great over this camp and the spring. I think we're a little sick of hitting our defensive line and our own defense. We want to hit somebody else, but we've gelled together."

**On how the offense looked today:**

"The offense looked great. All three of the quarterbacks came out here today and did their thing. Each of them bring different things to the table so I was just excited to see them do their thing. Our offense was really good. Every single one of our running backs are great. Our offensive line did great. Our wide receivers were blocking and doing their thing as well. We just wanted to come out and play football today."

**On the Aztec defense:**

"They looked great. It was nice to go out there in full pads and actually play football. Going against that front three - Jonah (Tavai), Keshawn (Banks) and Cameron (Thomas) - and even all the linebackers too. They have a lot of experience and it's fun going against them every day."

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