



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### **Postgame Football Quotes – San Diego State at Arizona State Saturday, Sept. 9, 2017 – Sun Devil Stadium – Tempe, Ariz.**

#### **SDSU head coach Rocky Long**

##### **On which of Rashaad Penny's touchdowns was most impressive:**

"I don't think anyone was more impressive than any other one. Just seeing what we knew all along. We think he is one of the best running backs in the country. He had a great year last year, but didn't carry it as much because the guy in front of him set the all time NCAA record for rushing. What you are seeing you are just seeing more of him. The kick return he has great field for that plus the kick off return team did unbelievable job blocking them and he just out-ran them."

##### **On how much the lead helped with the play calling in the second half:**

"It didn't help much. They were going to air it out anyway because they can't run it. It is not because they have players, it is the style of offense they run. It is very difficult for a spread offense to consistently run the ball. They had some wildcat stuff that worked really good because now you have an extra blocker. Take the quarterback out there and put him out there at wide receiver and you end up with an extra blocker and now you have a 2 back field set. Can run the ball better with 2 backs in the back field. That is just a difference in schemes and a lot people running the spread now. We are one of the few that don't and the spread is very difficult to stop. Probably more difficult to stop that we run on offense."

##### **On if he thinks the defensive backs were prepared well today:**

"I was a little disappointed that we had all those off side penalties on the defensive line and disappointed on how we played on four of the five of the deep throws."

##### **On how he would explain Rashaad Penny's speed:**

"He has great football speed. I am not trying to be a smart ass up here. A 40 time means nothing in football. It is how you carry your pads how fast you are with pads on. He is very fast when he has pads on and a ball in his hand. He is very fast. There are few people that can catch it. So football speed wise, he is really fast. We don't time him in 40s because I don't want to know. They either play fast or don't play fast. You have a guy that can run 4:03 and people wondering why I don't put him on the field to play. A guy that goes 4:08 and don't put him on the field because he ran 4:08, but is the best player on the team. So we don't time 40s."

##### **On what goes through his mind when Rashaad Penny busts through a play:**

"I am very happy. If you want to know what makes a coach relax a little bit, it is when they drive the ball and take six minutes off the clock and we get points. That makes a coach feel really good. Not that him breaking a long one doesn't make you feel good, but it means you are going right back out on defense and they are going to throw it 70 times."

**On how much of the game was design and how much was it just trying to be in sync:**

"Some of it is by design, but as always players win and players lose. Coaches can lose a game for you by not giving the players a proper change to play well, by giving them a lousy scheme compared to who they are playing against. Most coaches at this level don't do that, they give them a pretty good scheme. Players win and lose. Players won tonight. We probably have that in our scheme and they executed it. There were other things that went really good and didn't go for any yards. But on the board it works every time."

**On how impressed he was with the offensive line:**

"They were better than they were last week. We have young guys in our offensive line that are very talented. They are big strong and very athletic, but they are very young in technique work and make assignment errors. They are lucky that they have a running back as good as Rashaad Penny behind them because there were several times not blocking and Rashaad ran right by them."

**On what he thinks the country might think or know of Rashad Penny if he was at Clemson or Ohio State or Oklahoma:**

"It is the same problem we had last year with DJ (Donnel) Pumphrey. DJ Pumphrey should have won the Doak Walker Award without a doubt. If you would have taken a vote with just coaches, he would have won it. But that is not the way it works. So Rashaad Penny is going to be one of the best four or five running backs in the country and has no chance on winning the award."

**SDSU senior running back Rashaad Penny**

**On the game:**

"It was a team effort, in all three phases of the team. Offense, defense, special teams. Our coach gives us the plays and we go out there and execute. We broke [ASU] down we did what were supposed to do tonight. I kind of said it was like the Mayweather v. McGregor fight, Mayweather was waiting until McGregor tired out, and they finally cracked him, we did that tonight. It's exciting."

**On his TDs and if they surprised him at all:**

"I just go out there and play football. I just go out there and help my team win games. Whatever happens, happens. That's my slogan. I get the plays because of the guys that were blocking for me. I'm so excited, I don't know what to say."

**On their team confidence:**

"The confidence level went up. Just because were in the Mountain West I feel like everyone else has an advantage over us. Tonight we proved it with our young team that we definitely stepped up. I'm so excited for these young guys, we knew it was going to be a big crowd. We came out and we played."

**On specifics of his quote that ASU hasn't seen a team like SDSU:**

"Ground and pound. Pound them. I don't know when the last time they saw Stanford was, but they do the same thing. They really didn't get pounded last time like they did tonight but they did a heck of a job. They stayed in the game and they stayed composed on defensive but our offensive line came through when we needed them."

**On how he felt tonight after serving as a backup to Donnel Pumphrey prior to this year:**

"Because I feel like everyone knows what I can do as a feature back and tonight kind of proved it to a lot of people. Especially against a Pac-12, Power 5 team. I mean UC Davis was a great team but I feel like with this ASU game, it was probably a game

where a lot of people took notice. I have been in this waiting game for three years and couldn't wait to get my opportunity tonight as a featured back. I am thankful and grateful these coaches gave me the chance. I look up to DJ (Donnel Pumphrey). I texted DJ last night for advice. Last week, he told me he needed a big game and ended up having a big game. So I told him DJ, I need to have a big game. He just sent me advice and I love getting advice from him. All the running backs pump me up when things aren't going right. They motivated me. I just got to give it up to my teammates tonight because they really pushed me."

#### **On what his plan was during the run:**

"I mean definitely, with those guys coming up perusing the outside was open. Sometimes I get in trouble for trying to go to the outside all the time. You have to take what you can get and that's something I got today. The offensive line was amazing just making holes for me. We played great as a team overall."

#### **On if he looked at himself on the video board during his first long run:**

"I always look at the video board. We always talk about how we get caught from behind. I always look at the video board, that's just something we do. Once I saw nobody was running after me, I kind of slowed down. It's just exciting, I don't even know what to say."

#### **On the importance of his third-quarter touchdown:**

"I felt like they thought they had us on the ropes. We practice that play all the time and kind of knew it was coming. It's crazy because the offensive coaches are masterminds. Our offensive coordinator said if that cornerback drops back and the free safety goes over the top of the middle, run it to the backside and nobody will be there. Chad (Woolsey) made a heck of a play just getting the ball to me. After that, it was all up to me and I felt like DJ. Like I said, we game-planned all week everything we saw today. Hats off to everyone, to the coaching staff, to the players. It was a great win. I can't wait to see where it goes."

### **Arizona State head coach Todd Graham**

#### **Opening Statement:**

"You have to give them credit. They busted the one run there. Defensively, we're getting to the downs we want to, but then we're giving up third and 20 and third and 15. We have to play better and coach better. That was a very poor effort. With special teams, I've never experienced that. We gave up a kickoff return for a touchdown. We shanked two punts out-of-bounds. 10-yard punts killed us. We probably gave up 13 points – at least – on special teams. That was very uncharacteristic because we've been very good on special teams. We got (Michael) Sleep-Dalton who punts with both feet. Obviously, that was a disaster tonight. We just have to do better. We beat ourselves. We have to give them credit, but when you turn the football over, get holding penalties and get sacked, I thought the whole time we would come back and win. Our guys showed heart, but it didn't count on the score board. We have to do better than that."

"Kalen (Ballage) got dinged up, so he wasn't available. We have got to run the ball better than that. We had no running game. We had to rely on the big play. We gave up too many negatives. Right now, we are not playing very well. We didn't play very well on offense and we played atrocious on special teams. At times, we showed heart on defense, but we just gave up too many conversions on third down and long."

### **Arizona State redshirt junior quarterback Manny Wilkins**

#### **On how he felt following his team's final touchdown of the game:**

"I was ready to go win the football game. I thought we had a real opportunity. I feel like I did a bad job of managing the game"

late and I didn't give us a good opportunity. We had one fourth down that I threw the ball too high to N'Keal (Harry) that if I could've put it on his body and we could've scored then we would have taken the lead. I thought that if we would have had the opportunity to get up on them, they're not a team that plays well from behind just based off the offense that they run so if would have been able to get up on them then it would have been a different ball game. So I have to be able to put more points on the board and that lies on my hands.

**On if he thinks Arizona State has established an offensive identity:**

"We just take it week by week. We game plan. We go out there with certain cases where we're in certain formations based off the personnel that they have. It's just about going out there and executing the game plan, and that's not what we did tonight."

**On how the team regroups defensively to get ready for Texas Tech:**

"The season isn't over. That's a 'your season's over' question. We just go to the next game and play ball. That's what we're here to do. Sometimes you're going to lose a game. It's going to happen, so you just have to go to the next game and that's it."

**Arizona State senior nose tackle Tashon Smallwood**

**On how the team regroups defensively to get ready for Texas Tech:**

"We know that they're an A-rate team. They go fast. We played them last year so we kind of have some things figured out, but we know they're going to pass the ball so we have to have a good pass rush and take that pressure off the secondary, and we just have to execute."

**-SDSU-**