



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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

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San Diego State Press Conference Quotes Monday, Dec. 2, 2019

Head Coach Rocky Long

Opening statement:

"Obviously it's good to be here coming off a win. It's always nice not having a game to play for a while and waiting to find out where we get to play our last game of the year. But overall, it's been a really good season. If you consider all the things that have happened during the season, it's been a really good season."

On ESPN bowl projections having SDSU playing Washington State:

"Where? Oh really? That's all right. Mike Leach and I are buddies. That'd be fun. But there's no use to speculate because every time I hear who we're playing and where we're playing it always seems to change on Sunday."

On if he tries to pick out where each team is going to go for the bowl game:

"No, but I think when you watch the number of bowl teams there are and the slots that are going to open, because there were eight teams this last weekend that had to win to get bowl eligible and four of them didn't. Maybe more than four. So there's some spots opened up that a 9-3 football team has a better chance of getting in (a bowl) than an 8-4 football team does. And usually that means you're taking a Power 5 slot and you get to play against a Power 5 team. Since we're 9-3 now, I think that we're one of those teams that might be considered for one of those slots, which is kind of fun and exciting to think about."

On if it's more important to play at Power 5 opponent or a game closer to San Diego?

"I don't know what is more important. I think our program is established now, so it's not truly important on who we play. For the health of the bowl system, which I believe in, I think it would be better to be close enough that a number of our fans could make the trip and be at the game, which would help us and the bowl at the same time."

On if it's important to play a big name opponent:

"I think we've already crossed that bridge. I don't think it matters if it's a bowl game or not. I mean you can say what you want, but for the first time in the history of the school we beat UCLA. You can say whatever you want (that) UCLA is not very good. Well the number of times (was 22 before first win) that the school has played UCLA there were times UCLA wasn't any good. And guess what? We're the first team to ever do that. We're the first team to beat BYU in the last 14 years? You can say that doesn't matter. The naysayers out there can say all those things don't matter. We're the only professional football team or college football team from the state of California that is going to be in its 10th postseason play. You can say that doesn't matter to if you want to be a naysayer, but guess what? That matters. That means we're really, really good and our program is really, really good. So it doesn't make any difference who we play in a bowl game. We've already established that our program is good."

On preparing for a bowl game:

"This is something else you can get criticized for. If there was a playoff system and we were one of the 16 teams in a playoff system, it would be a completely different mentality than going to a bowl game. They will get one sooner or later. They'll be a 16-team playoff system sooner or later. But if you were in the playoffs, it's a must-win situation if you want to continue. A bowl game is a chance for players to play for the fun of playing. It's a pat on the back for having a good season. It's a chance to play just for the pure love of the game and there's not a whole lot of pressure on winning. So we present it to our team like that. We prepare our team like that and hopefully they go out and play. Well at times they do, sometimes they don't, but I don't think it has anything to do with the approach. There is a huge emphasis on winning."

On if the team is preparing any differently after losing 27-0 in last year's bowl:

"No matter what your attitude is you prepare your team to try to win a game, because it's always more fun to win than the other way around."

On who has stood out on the defensive line this year:

"I can't pick one of them. I think overall the concern going into the season was that (the line) was going to be the weakness on the defense. I'm not saying it was stronger than the linebackers or the secondary, but the defensive line performed a lot better than anybody anticipated, maybe even us."

On what impact Brady Hoke has made on the defensive line and playing like a bunch of junkyard dogs:

"I think our defenses around her played like that for the last 10 or 11 years, but I think the biggest improvement was made in the defensive line. And I guess people forget what you say. I said Brady is the best defensive line coach I've ever been around. So I don't know why it's shocking to everybody that the defensive line played well. I mean I told you he was a great coach. Why is that shocking everybody that they played well?"

On the play of Carson Baker Saturday night in his first career start:

"I thought he did he did well for being a first-time starter and taking a snap for the first time in a college football game. From personal experience that's nerve-racking. When I did it, which was a 100 years ago, I came off the bench and was thrown in there. That's easy. (But) when you know all week long that you're going to be the starting quarterback and it's going to be the first time you ever take a snap in college football, I would guess that's hard to handle. He didn't show it leading up to the game and obviously he didn't show it in the game. I thought he played with confidence. I thought he played within himself. He made three or four really nice plays out there that gave us a chance to win the game. I thought for a first-time starter and being a redshirt freshman, he played well."

On if sometimes players show you something in a game that they didn't at practice:

"Sometimes they'll do something in a game that you don't see in practice, good and bad. I thought he played the game like he does at practice. He looked like he was at practice to me which is a good sign. It means he's playing within himself and means he has confidence."

On if he's more impressed with Carson Baker than he was in the spring and fall:

"That's because it's the first time we've actually seen him against somebody else's top defense. What you saw in spring practice and in fall Camp, he was always against the second defense, now he was with the second offense too. But you saw him against the second defense and all those sort of things. So you have never seen him at this level actually play against the other team's top defense, but it didn't seem to make much of a difference. He played like he did in practice when he wasn't going against the top defense."

On how Ryan Agnew is recovering from his injury:

"The prognosis is he'll be 100 percent and will start the bowl game. He's still sore. He came in yesterday and today, but he's still sore and he's not 100 percent right now. If we played today we wouldn't play him."

On any other injuries on the team:

"No. I mean they all should be healthy enough to play in the game. Now if you all know how we handle bowl games, the seniors they'll practice a little bit and then we'll start developing next year's team. That's the biggest advantage of going to a bowl game. Is that you get a few extra days of practice where you can develop the younger guys on your team for next year."

On what goes into bowl preparation:

"We'll know the opponent. I think they announced it on Saturday and then we'll start our normal week of preparation or actually it's about two and a half weeks of preparation for a bowl game. We'll start it then. This week all they're doing is lifting weights and conditioning, and hopefully concentrating on school as the semester is coming to an end. We're giving them more time to themselves so they can take care of their schoolwork and we don't want them to get out of condition. So we're lifting weights and conditioning this week. We're not meeting with them or seeing them whatsoever. Once we find out how many days of practice we have by what date the bowl game is, then we'll get into practice."

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