

**September 1, 2009**



San Diego State Weekly News Conference:

## **SDSU HEAD COACH BRADY HOKE**

**COACH HOKE:** Obviously we are excited. Any time you get to the week of your first test, what you're going to be like as a team and where you're at as a team, it's exciting. It's a great opportunity obviously. Playing UCLA up in the Rose Bowl, and I think our preparation up to this point has been good. We are excited. It's game week. There's a lot of excitement in our players and a lot of excitement on the staff.

**Q. It is game week but there is the possibility that this game might not be played or postponed. How much do you let that, the wildfires, not let that distract your players?**

**COACH HOKE:** We won't be distracted. You know, we are going to prepare to play Saturday at 4:45 on the 5th, because that's the only thing we can control is our preparation and how we get ready, knowing your opponent, and then doing a good job of really staying together as a team and working together to get started.

**Q. What input do you have on that decision?**

**COACH HOKE:** I would think none. I've got enough going on with 115 boys to keep me busy. And that really shouldn't be my decision. My job is to coach this football team and mentor these kids, so you know, we really feel for those families that are being affected by the fires and feel for those first responders who are out there and thinking of them and keep them all in our prayers with the job they are doing.

**Q. You are responsible for these 115 --**

**COACH HOKE:** Yeah, I think there are people who are probably a lot smarter than I am how to figure that out. It's something that, you know, I'm sure that we'll deal with and deal with as

we get closer to it, and depending on what the future holds.

**Q. Did Jeff give you any specifics of a plan if it can't go forward?**

**COACH HOKE:** I know they have talked but I haven't talked to Jeff about it. Again, we are getting ready to play a game. He'll do a good job of dealing with that part of it, and I'll do what we need to do as a team.

**Q. What would be your glass half-full approach if this game was postponed to December, how would you look at that?**

**COACH HOKE:** Well, glass half-full, I don't operate that way. Whatever decisions are made are going to be decisions that are made, and again, I'm not the one who is going to make those decisions, and whatever comes to us in the future, we'll prepare.

**Q. Who is out of this game physically?**

**COACH HOKE:** Atiyah (Henderson) is out and (Romeo) Horn is out, as far as guys who are physically not able to perform. And Jimmy Miller probably is out. He's had a little bit of a stinger problem that's kind of flared up about every third day. So they are trying to take a good look at him.

**Q. What about Davion Mauldin?**

**COACH HOKE:** No, Davion will play. Davion has practiced really well the last three days, and I give that kid a lot of credit, because he's shown a great deal of pride in being a senior on this team; and toughness, because he had a scope, it's probably 12, 13 days ago. And there's been guys I've seen before who have been out for a month and then there are guys who have comeback like he has, you know, in ten to 12 days.

**Q. Is there any part of your football philosophy that you will not implement because of the personnel that you have?**

**COACH HOKE:** I think there's obviously

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some things, and you know, and I'm going to really talk about it from a defensive perspective, if man coverage isn't going the way we'd like for it to, then we'd play more zone blitz probably and different kinds of zones to create some confusion that way.

But we are going to go in there and play our style of football on both sides of the ball, and that's establishing a running game offensively and attacking on the defensive part.

**Q. Have you made any concessions in that regard?**

COACH HOKE: No. No. We're full steam ahead.

**Q. And the quarterback is relatively new, as a defensive-minded coach, how do you attack him?**

COACH HOKE: I think he's kind of an unknown to all of us, because you know, when he got hurt in high school and missed that season, and then redshirt obviously a year ago, so not seeing him on film. I know they are very happy with his progress, and I think Coach Neuheisel knows something about quarterbacks and Norm Childs. So we are going into this thing thinking he's pretty good and he's got an awfully good mental perspective of the game. So we are going to do what we do and to some degree, we are going to worry more about San Diego State than we are UCLA.

**Q. What do you like about having UCLA right out of the gate?**

COACH HOKE: I think it helps prepare you for the conference. I think playing in the Rose Bowl, it's got to be exciting for your players. It's a great place for a football game as we all know, and who have been there, but it's a great atmosphere.

And I think being as close as the two schools are proximity-wise, I think there will be a lot of San Diego State people who will be there and cheering those kids on.

**Q. Do you like playing a BCS opponent right out of the gate or do you prefer a couple of cupcakes?**

COACH HOKE: You know what, it doesn't -- BCS, cupcakes or whatever, we are going to play the schedule and we are going to be excited about it. The fields are the same length as we are practicing on and all those things.

So it's something that we are excited about.

**Q. Veteran player, who surprised you most, and youngest player, who surprised you?**

COACH HOKE: You know, that's a good question. I think a veteran player who surprised me personally the most, you know, is really Andrew Preston. He's a guy that played some a year ago and really think he's done a good job. And it could be a whole linebacker theme, because I think Luke (Laolagi) and I think Jerry (Milling) and Logan Ketchum and Preston and Miles Burris, I think all of those kids and Marcus Yarbrough, are all guys that as a former linebacker who now could be a defensive tackle, I think they play linebacker the way I would like to see them play it.

**Q. And the youngest player?**

COACH HOKE: I think Leon McFadden is a guy who is a talented guy. I think Anthony (Miller) and Walter (Kazee) and Ronny (Hillman) are all talented guys. I think those guys are all guys that we feel good about.

**Q. With that linebacking core, how do you feel that they have adapted to the new system, the new defense?**

COACH HOKE: I think in a lot of ways, it fits their skills, and I think we've got two outside backers and a Mike what we call a mike backer, I think we are the guys lined up, Miles (Burris) is one of those outside guys who can play on or off the line of scrimmage. He's a strong kid, has good hands, so it kind of fits his skill level; where Luke (Laolagi) has very good instincts inside, Marcus (Yarbrough) does, of being an inside linebacker. So I think the defense itself really fits the traits that they have and characteristics as linebackers.

**Q. How do you feel about your left side of your offensive line getting their first test?**

COACH HOKE: Well, you know, I've been a head coach and started two freshmen tackles and a freshman center at Iowa, Auburn and Boston College, so it feels about the same.

It will be a growing experience, and you know, we are never going to play perfect, no one ever has, but I think it will be great growth for us and great learning experience. I've got a lot of confidence in those guys. Tommie Draheim has grown a lot and grown up a lot, and Mike (Matamua), you know, obviously missing spring

hurt him a little bit, but I think he's done a nice job in playing the role of catch-up during the summer and how fall camp has been.

**Q. How do you react to the issues of Michigan this week and monitoring compliance in that regard?**

COACH HOKE: Well, you know, I think I'm not going to react to what happened to Michigan, because it's nothing I have anything to do with. I think we do a good job here of making sure that we are handling things with the NCAA and the compliance in a positive way.

It's something that is -- we have got good support here in that area, and we have got coaches who understand that area, also.

**Q. Pretty specific time requirements, how do you monitor that? Do you have to put up a stopwatch?**

COACH HOKE: Not necessarily a stopwatch, but I can promise you the 20-hour rule during the season, we haven't been close to that 20 hours.

**Q. Is that 20 hours on the field?**

COACH HOKE: You've got to look at it some different ways, because it includes some things, it doesn't include warmup. Maybe it could be written a little better than it is, but you know, like most things, when you start getting the law involved to some degree, for the layman, it's a little tough. And that's why we have compliance people who do a good job.

**Q. How many hours would you estimate?**

COACH HOKE: Oh, we'll be 18 probably. Maybe, 18 and a half, somewhere in there.

**Q. What's your favorite part of this week?**

COACH HOKE: It's game week man, it's fun. First game is always fun. They are all fun. Game day is fun.

So I'm excited to see and we are excited to see how we will react as a team.

**Q. Any jitters?**

COACH HOKE: No, it's too much fun.

**Q. In the event the game is played, with the smoke -- what will you do as a coach to compensate for that?**

COACH HOKE: You know, that's probably a really good question. I don't know, because I've never been in that situation and I'm sure our trainer and doctor will have a heck of a lot better answers than I would.

**Q. Have you talked to them about that?**

COACH HOKE: Briefly. Not a whole lot yet. We haven't got in-depth with it.

**Q. How many freshmen do you think are going to play?**

COACH HOKE: I think you could have as many as six to at least amount of three, minimum of three.

**Q. And who would they be?**

COACH HOKE: Well, I think the three running backs, and I think you've got (Leon) McFadden would be a guy, Preston King is a guy we keep looking at and talking about. So somewhere in there.

**Q. To your knowledge, do you know what the situation is --**

COACH HOKE: I have not been that involved in it. I'm sure, you know, as they assess the situation, again, the football game is the least important about the whole thing that's going on up there.

We'll let the experts handle that.

**Q. Has there been any discussion of moving the game down here?**

COACH HOKE: Not that I know of. Not that I know of.

**Q. Getting back to you're excited to see where your team is at right now and it's game week and it's fun, what are your expectations of this team going into this game?**

COACH HOKE: That we play with a great deal of effort and toughness and we play with a great deal of discipline and we play with a great deal of accountability to each other.

**Q. What's the toughest first game you ever played?**

COACH HOKE: Probably Iowa City.

**Q. How did that turn out?**

COACH HOKE: Not very good, as I

remember. Yeah, it wasn't very good. It was tough.

**Q. How do you keep your kids in the game mentally?**

COACH HOKE: Well, hopefully on what you've done since January and what you do in your conditioning and what you do in the weight room, they are challenged with adversity and those kind of things and how you've prepared them. We do a lot of competition work against each other, and how you prepare them with those things.

You know, there's consequences for winning and losing. We want to be a team that doesn't like to lose. Understanding those consequences; and staying together. Whatever happens after game one, win or lose, you know, we've got to lean forward and take another step, because we play again.

**Q. Do you anticipate any memories from the 1997 season to come back to you?**

COACH HOKE: Probably not. It's been a long time ago and it's a great venue and I think we played up there in '99 or 2000. Again, it didn't go so well for Michigan, but it's a great venue and it's a beautiful stadium with beautiful surroundings.

**Q. Are you a big believer in playing tons of guys on offense and defense and working a lot of guys into the game?**

COACH HOKE: We'll play a lot of guys on defense, I can tell you that.

**Q. How many?**

COACH HOKE: Oh, shoot, I think we'll probably 22, 23 guys defensively.

Offensively, I think if we maybe had a little more depth up front offensively, but you may see some more guys. But I think at skill positions, you'll see some other guys, Jon Toledo and some other guys that haven't played as much in some degree. You know, you'll see them more and more.

**Q. Will we see Ryan (Lindley) throwing the ball as much as he did last year? Last year was basically -- inaudible.**

COACH HOKE: I hope it's a balance. We want to be a balance as an offense and everyone says that but I think within the scheme and within the offense, running the ball is going to be critical.

**Q. Do you feel like you got everything accomplished that you wanted to on the offense and defense and change of culture?**

COACH HOKE: Well, I think our players have done a very good job of responding to the different things we have asked of them, and so I thought we had a very good camp and I thought we had a very physical camp. I thought that that's an important part of our football and it has to be that way.

So I think we got a lot done, a lot accomplished. Do you ever dot all the I's and cross all the T's? I don't know. That kind of what keeps you awake at night to be honest with you is where you're at, and did we forget to work kickoff after safety or kickoff return after safety. So we have various checklists to make sure we are doing things the right way.

At 4:45 on Saturday, we'll find out.

**Q. You mentioned earlier in the year that the depth chart would be in flux during the year; to what degree is the competition still ongoing?**

COACH HOKE: You know, and I've said that since day one, there's competition every day. That competition just isn't out on the practice field. It's how you show up in-season lifting, it's how you show up through that astronomy class on campus. It covers everything, how you -- choices you're making out on campus and in this community. There's going to be competition to do things the way that -- the expectation, so that we as a program have the character and have the accountability to each other that we need to have.