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San Diego State Football Press Conference September 26, 2017

SDSU head coach Rocky Long

On the upcoming matchup against Northern Illinois:

"We have our hands full this week with a team that is coming off a bye week, so they're well rested and probably healed up. They're coming off a big win, beating Nebraska at Nebraska. Obviously, we played them last year and they're a very talented, very well-coached football team that knows how to play the game. So I expect them to come in here with a lot of energy because they're fresh, with a lot of confidence since they just beat Nebraska and I think it's going to be a heck of a game."

On what to tell the players when you are a two-touchdown favorite:

"I didn't know we were that kind of favorite and hopefully they don't either because then they are looking at the wrong thing. We go about it the same every week. It doesn't matter if we're the favorite or the underdog, we go about it the same every week. We try to keep everything routine and we try to put the emphasis where it's needed on every game."

On what stands out about Northern Illinois:

"Well, against Nebraska, they jumped out ahead by two interceptions that they returned for touchdowns but they played well enough that Nebraska couldn't come back and win the game and they also took the ball late in the game to score the winning touchdown against a very good Nebraska defense. But more than that, we know them pretty well because we played them last year. They're big and strong up front and they're very, very talented and skilled at the positions they need to be talented and skilled at and there's a reason they're one of the non-Power Five schools with the best record and not long ago they played in the Orange Bowl. It's a very good program that's run by a very good coaching staff and they've got talented players, that's why they're good."

On if senior running back Rashaad Penny's name being in the Heisman conversation puts pressure on the team:

"No, I think everybody enjoys the notoriety that Rashaad is getting and Rashaad handles it really, really well. He's a team guy and I don't think it makes any difference to our team. It might at the end; If he's still in the hunt at the end it might make a difference."

On the lack of a Heisman campaign for Rashaad Penny:

"Well, last year we thought we had a legitimate candidate because of past performance. This year we didn't have a legitimate candidate because he was the backup running back last year so why would you have a pre-arranged campaign for him? And it seems to work better since we didn't do it. We thought he was going to be that good, obviously, but if you don't have a record to show that he was that good in the past, there's no reason to pre-hype him and it seems to be working better that we didn't pre-hype him."

On game delays during games the last two weeks:

"Well, I don't think that the first one was a break for us. I think the first one against Stanford was a deterrent. At the moment, we had all the momentum. We were driving the ball, we had all the momentum, and the lights go out. That's a bad luck deal if you ask me. Now, it turned out okay. But if you have a drive, you hate to see a drive stopped with that kind of momentum. Then last week, we benefitted from a lightning strike. That was a benefit to us. I think it really helped us. So does that mean that the next one is going to go against us again? I don't know what's going to happen this week. But I don't think we benefitted from both of those. I think we benefitted from the lightning last week. I think it helped us come out of our doldrums and we played better, but hopefully we won't have any more of those this year."

On what the team did during the lightning delay against Air Force:

"At the break, the first 15 to 20 minutes were spent making adjustments like we would at halftime. Other than that, we sat around in the locker room with updates and every couple minutes they'd come in and say 'it'll be another 30 minutes, it'll be another 30 minutes, it'll be another 30 minutes.' We were actually surprised that we got out as soon as we did because we were told it's going to be about an hour and 35 minutes about half an hour into the deal, so the rest of the time we just relaxed. Now, I think that the weather had something to do with the start of the game. I think the weather was more suited to their style of play than our style of play. When we struggle running the ball, we have to be able to use play action pass. They do not. They hardly ever throw it. Well, with the weather like it was, we could not throw it and we probably couldn't have caught it if we got it there anyway. But that's not the reason we struggled early in the game. The reason we struggled early in the game was Air Force was outplaying us. They were more physical, they were tougher, they were more intense, they were better coached and the lightning strike allowed us to make some adjustments and get back on our feet and be good enough to win the game."

On junior safety Parker Baldwin:

"He had a great game last week but he's a very good player that we put into position to make plays. He basically was a six- or seven-yard deep middle linebacker last week against the wishbone and your middle linebacker ought to make a lot of tackles. But he's a good player. Last year he had to go in as a rookie when Na'im McGee got hurt and ever since that time he's gotten better and better and better. He's a quality football player now and he's in a position that should make a lot of plays. The free safety position or the middle safety position in our defense should make a lot of plays and he's been playing really well this year. I think he has natural instincts where he knows where the ball is and he goes and gets it and he's not afraid. People ask me all the time, 'what makes a good tackler?' and it's a good athlete that's not afraid to hit somebody. It has nothing to do with technique or what you teach. If you're a really good athlete and you're afraid, you're going to be a lousy tackler. If you're a really tough guy that loves to hit people but you're not a good athlete, guess what? You're going to miss tackles. But if you're a good athlete and not afraid, you're going to make tackles and that's what he is. He's a good athlete and he's not afraid so he makes a lot of tackles."

On the offensive line:

"Even though we're 4-0, our offensive line is still a work in progress. I think they're improving every week, I think they're going to be really good here pretty soon and the future is bright for those guys because most of those guys are really young guys. When you develop an offensive line, run blocking is easier to teach than pass blocking. Pass blocking is a strange situation for an offensive lineman. Offensive linemen are usually aggressive guys so if they come off the ball and they have somebody to block, they usually do a pretty good job of that. Offensive protection, they have to give ground and absorb blows and move their feet. That's against their personality and that's a very tough technique to teach, so pass protection is a lot slower in developing than run blocking is. I don't think they are (further along than I thought they would be). We struggled running the ball Saturday against a team that moved around a lot. The week before they played better against a better defensive line but it was a defensive line that

didn't stunt and move and blitz as much. Last week they played against a smaller and quicker group that blitzed and stunted and all that kind of stuff and they struggled with it."

SDSU senior tight end David Wells

On how he's getting in position to score more touchdowns:

"It's all play calling. Everything goes through (SDSU offensive coordinator) Coach (Jeff) Horton. He makes all of the play calls and I think he does a great job at what he does. I've gotten pretty lucky the last few games that my number has been called and I can't be thankful enough to all of the other guys on offense. I don't think I'd be in this position without (senior running back) Rashaad (Penny) or (junior quarterback Christian) Chapman, the o-line or any of the other tight ends, too. A lot of guys go unspoken on our offense, especially the o-line, and (sophomore tight end) Parker Houston is out there every single play. He's battling and he doesn't get a lot of recognition that he should. A lot of the guys on the team do a great job and it's nice to get into the end zone every now and then."

On his touchdown against Air Force:

"That ball felt like it was in the air for about three minutes, just looking at it. They bid on the play fake and, wide open, it's one of those things where you just tell yourself, 'you've got to make this play'. The conditions were bad. We had to toss away the gloves at halftime because they were soaking wet, so you just had to go out there and make a play, especially at a time like that when the game is on the line."

On how the increase in Rashaad Penny's national profile puts pressure on the team:

"I wouldn't say it's more pressure than usual. We're around Rashaad every day. We know how good he is. Really, we put pressure on ourselves each play to make sure we're doing the correct thing every single down. The coaches are always on us making sure we're doing the right thing and I don't think it's just because he's gotten the national recognition that we're starting to step up. I think it's just for these young guys and everybody else on the offense is starting to click and figure out what we're actually supposed to be doing and we're advancing on that every single time we play. It just keeps getting better and better every single time we play."

On the historical milestones the team has hit this year:

"We're really just focused on being 1-0 each week. All of that stuff just comes with it. It's really cool to see that stuff happening. You don't really know about all of that stuff happening during the week when you're going, especially when you're just trying to prepare for practice and you're just trying to get mentally ready because there's a lot of stuff we have to learn throughout the week to get ready for each team. Just to be 1-0 each week, that's our goal. After the game is when we see all of the different things. It's like, 'That's pretty cool that we accomplished this goal of ours that we've never really had before.' Every week, the goal is just to win and that's really all we're thinking about."

SDSU junior safety Parker Baldwin

On adjustments the Aztecs made during the game at Air Force:

"I think more than anything, we started playing tougher and started hunkering down. If you watch the first few plays, our ends got double-teamed and driven very far back and the problem was that they just weren't getting low enough. After we had the break, Coach (Long) came in and talked to us and he said, 'We're not playing tough enough on defense. We need to man up because they can't keep running the dive for five yards. That's what they run through. You've got to stop the option from the inside out.' And luckily, we toughened up and everyone started to play a lot harder after the break. We changed play calls a little bit but for the most part, we ran the exact same stuff we ran before the break."

On how the increase in Rashaad Penny's national profile puts pressure on the team:

"Rashaad cares about the national recognition stuff but he's a team guy. He just wants to win games and I think that's how all of us on this team are; We just want to win games. As long as we're winning, everyone is going to be happy."

On playing at middle linebacker against Air Force:

"It was a fun experience, that's for sure, especially being in the middle of that triple option, a bunch of guys coming, trying to cut you and everything else and it was a fun experience. I get to do it a little bit throughout some games but in that game in particular, I got the opportunity to do it the whole game. It was a really fun experience being in there and I was in there with one of my best friends, (junior linebacker) Ronley (Lakalaka). Ronley and I are roommates. We had a good time being in the box together and making plays. It was a good opportunity being down there. Hopefully I'll have more chances in the future playing linebacker. In high school, I played receiver, I played safety, I played linebacker, so it kind of did remind me of that. My senior year, I played middle linebacker almost the whole time so it reminded me a lot of that. It was just fun and for me, it was one of those games, especially when it was raining, that reminded me of backyard football, just get to the ball and make the play."

On if being 4-0 puts a target on their backs:

"I think it's definitely motivation. We were talking about it the other day. (Being in the) Top 25, it's recognition but at the same time, it is a target. It's like a warrant for your arrest. Everyone is coming for you. Northern Illinois is definitely going to want to knock us off, especially after they knocked off Nebraska two weeks ago, and they're coming off a bye week, too, so they're going to have a lot of motivation coming in here. They're a really good, athletic, physical team and we can't overlook anyone on our schedule because you know any given Saturday, anything can happen."

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