



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### NEWS RELEASE

#### **SDSU Football Poinsettia Bowl Press Conference Quotes**

##### **Coach Rocky Long**

##### **Opening statement:**

Well first let me say how excited we are to be here. When we got to the point that we were bowl eligible, we were hoping we were going to get to stay here at home for a lot of reasons. Two years ago we got to play in this game I wasn't the head coach at the time, but we got to play in the game. And like (BYU coach) Bronco (Mendenhall) has, I've been lucky to be in several bowl games. And the way we're treated here and the whole bowl experience is as good or better than any bowl game I've ever been at.

Like Bronco said, San Diego is a wonderful place, why would you want to go any place else? But more than that, if you remember, two years ago, it was the rain game. So we didn't even get to do half the activities that were planned for us, but our team had a great time and we were treated so nice and so well leading up to the game that our team wanted to come back. And when that happened, our team was so excited about being able to play here, I think everybody was overjoyed we got to play in this game. The other factor is we get to play BYU.

BYU is a great football team, a great program, they have a great coach. All you have to do is watch them play. They have a talented football team, but that's not what's impressive. You watch them play, they play with great energy, they play with great enthusiasm. Bronco was nice to say we're a physical team. Well guess what? They're a physical team too. That might be because we're both defensive guys. We're both head coaches and we love defense and maybe that's where that comes from, I don't know. There's not many close friends in coaching, and I consider Bronco one of my close friends. We have some skeletons in our closet together we're not going to talk about, and we're just going to be really nice to each other. Bronco and I have been on the same sideline and had various successes. We've been on opposite sidelines and he's had a whole lot more success than I have in those situations.

So I think our team is excited about playing. They know it's going to be a very physical football game. And if you're one of those people that like how football used to be played, it will be one of those games where there's going to be 22 kids on the field at one time flying around and trying to get after one another. For me, that's the way the game is supposed to be played and it's a lot of fun to be involved in a game like that. We're happy to be here, we're excited about the game, we're going to enjoy the lead up into the game and we'll go out there and see what happens.

##### **Coach, what did you see in coach Mendenhall when you first hired him?**

That is a very good question because that might even bring out some of those skeletons (laughs). Bronco from day 1 is a very detailed guy, relates with the players very well, gets the very most out of the players. Will work long hours to make things right, but at the same time coaches with great enthusiasm, great energy and his team emulates his personality. When he was our defensive coordinator at New Mexico, it was a sad day when he went to BYU because BYU was one of the good

teams in the league at that time and they just got better when they got him. And the smartest move they made was to make him the head coach when the possibility came. To be honest with you, I was hoping they wouldn't. But they did, we're here and we'll see how it goes (laughs).

**Coach how much of your philosophy and football principals do you see in this year's BYU team?**

Other than being very physical and playing hard, I don't think we have the same philosophies. We're a little bit different on offense, we're a lot different on defense and I think that shows what a great coach Bronco is. He went to BYU and saw they weren't the same kind of players we were running with at New Mexico at the time. And I didn't know how he determined that. He just told me today, he went and looked at all the pros from BYU, and they were all front-seven guys. So as all smart coaches do, he made the adjustment to use that as his strength, and that's why they're so good on defense.

**BYU coach Bronco Mendenhall**

On behalf of BYU, we feel honored to be here. It's been 20 years since BYU has been to San Diego for a Bowl Game. Not necessarily this is the same era or the same format, but it's good to be back. We're glad to be invited and I think we'll have a great following. And certainly, I think it's going to be an exciting, and a really tough and physical football game against a really good team. Rocky (Long), I worked with for six years – five at New Mexico and maybe not a full year at Oregon State – but a lot of what I learned coaching-wise and especially on the defensive side has come from him. And so it's a unique chance to have a chance to play against kind of a mentor and a friend, and I would say, a really good football team.

**What kind of boss was Rocky (Long)?**

Really good. Here's the thing I learned the most when our current staff asked me about my time with Rocky. We were in situations where we were having to do a lot with not as much as the teams we were playing. So at Oregon State – I played there and then coached there – and they hadn't had a winning season in something like over 20 years. And yet, Rocky had really high expectations of the players he coached regardless of what was thought what they could do or couldn't do.

And so I learned a lot about setting expectations, and he set really clear expectations for coaches as well. Asked a lot, demanded a lot, but also the results showed quite a bit. At New Mexico, we won I think three games, then four, then five, then six, then seven, and the year I left I think they won eight. And every one of those, it took a Herculean effort to get one more win. But it was worth it. So I learned a lot about kind of overcoming adversity and not really accepting what the outside world says you can or can't do based on circumstance.