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San Diego State Football Press Conference
Sept. 14, 2021

Head Coach Brady Hoke

Opening statement:

"We have a tough opponent (on Saturday). We have to play a whole heck of a lot better as football team this week than we did last week. Our improvement from week one to week two was good, not great, but we have got to play better across the board. We know we can't have eight penalties because that is not smart football and that is not a smart football team. We have a lot of fundamentals we need to correct across the board, and that is what we spent Monday improving on. The opponent (Utah) speaks for themselves. They are a physical football team and (Utah head coach) Kyle (Whittingham) has done a great job. We have to get ready."

On program's success against the Pac-12 in the past five years:

"We've won 10 games (four of the past six years). We have been a very good football team. It is going out there, trying to prepare to win every game and sometimes you do, sometimes you don't."

On if he sees values in piling up wins against the Pac-12 (6-2 since 2016):

"I don't know what kind of value people put in it. For us, it is trying to do what we set out every year to do, and number one, that is to win the (MW) conference championship. Secondly, to do that and play as good of football as we can for (all of) the men on our football team. Even for the guys who give us scout team during the week, even those guys, we appreciate the work they put in. We have to play San Diego State Aztec warrior football."

On his team's success defensively on third down against Arizona and if that trend needs to continue against Utah:

"You want to get the opponent's offense off the field. We play really good defense when we are watching from the sidelines and our offense is out there. We want to get our offense back out there. It has always been a part of how we win football games, doing a great job in the third down situation."

On playing a team coming off a game against BYU the week before (in both Arizona and Utah) and if there are advantages to that:

"There are some common things when you look at BYU from a defensive standpoint and what they play, when you look at their framework and the structure of their defense. The same thing can be said when you look at their (BYU) offense. You look for those similarities. When I was the defensive line coach at Michigan, the first tape I always wanted to see was Iowa's defense against (their upcoming) opponent because of how Iowa played defense. You take value in that way and then you get ready to play."

On his thoughts on Jordon Brookshire's preparation for Arizona:

"(Offensive coordinator) Jeff (Hecklinski) and Jordon (Brookshire) have a really good relationship and that helps. The way Jordon has gone after his preparation, I think he has taken it to a higher level. It is a little bit more detailed (than before), his understanding of the (offensive) system itself, now being in the system for 15-to-16 months. That has really helped him."

On (head coach) Kyle Whittingham's success during his tenure at Utah:

"Playing Utah when they were in the Mountain West when I was here first, I always respected Kyle and how he is a defensive minded guy and watching their defense and his defense, you know the physicalness you will get from their front on both sides. With (offensive coordinator) (Andy) Ludwig there, he has insight into what we do from a defensive perspective. It is a ballgame where we have to be a little different in some ways, but we have to do what we do best as well."

On the importance of playing in front of a large crowd:

"If we can get Aztec Nation there... we have the greatest fans in the country. With the black out, if we can get (a full crowd) them there, that would be great."

On if the increase in penalties from the Aztecs can be sourced from their edgy preparation for football games:

"We talk about it all the time—we have to prepare with an edge and we have to play with an edge. We are not going to have the best athletes out there week in and week out, so we have to do what we do best. At the same time, you can play with an edge, but when you start to hurt your football team, you have to look internally and say 'hey, I have to be smarter than that'. Eight penalties, that is not smart football. Whether it is pre-snap, the personal fouls, or whatever it is, that is not smart football. I told the team on Monday that we need to have some composure about us, we have got to have some discipline about us, still play on the edge, but do not hurt the football team."

On (Utah quarterback) Charlie Brewer:

"He throws the ball well and has a nice rotation on it (the ball). He does a great job. When you watch him set his feet and throw it, you can tell he has a lot of experience. He is athletic enough to extend the pocket and make some things happen and he has a strong arm. He has really good touch."

Junior safety Cedarious Barfield**On the performance of the SDSU secondary at Arizona:**

"I would say (it was) just a lot of work throughout the whole week. The secondary performed very well due to our front six - our d-line, our linebackers. Everyone knows they're very talented. They're a veteran group so they helped us out with a lot of pressure and just being able to get the ball out quicker than maybe the quarterback wanted to or just to have them to scramble around to buy time to let us get our technique right, just be in the position we needed to be. Overall it was a great group effort."

On preparing for Utah this week:

"Utah, first of all they are a great group. They have a tremendous history. They're kind of like our team. They are very physical. They want to get after you. Charlie Brewer, we have a ton of respect for him coming from Baylor. He's a great quarterback. We're coming into this game knowing that they're going to try to attack (the secondary). Everyone knows we're a pretty young group so we'll just have to stay together, trust in our team, trust in our d-line, trust in our linebackers and just trust in each other. We're working very hard this week, going into the game with our mindset of we're ready to go."

On being in a program that consistently beats Pac-12 schools:

"Being here at San Diego State we don't even buy too much into the Power 5 or anything like that, we just try to hold onto our tradition. We have this saying at the end of our creed - past, present and future Aztec warriors. They've done a great job in the (recent) history. What we're trying to do now is hold that as present Aztecs, just keep it going and show future Aztecs that we can play with whoever we need to. Our motto is just playing hard and physical, and going in there with the right mentality."

On getting to play for some many great defensive coaches since arriving to SDSU:

"It's just a blessing to be honest. Coming in, seeing the guys before me and being able to just learn from them to see how physical it is. That was the main thing when I came in. The main focus for our defense is running to the ball. When you put on the film, you see that every guy, all 11, is to the ball. That's one thing we harp on. As a team we want to uphold what we've been doing. We don't want to let our team down or let the people we played with in the past down. We know that going into every game we want to play as hard as we can every snap, every second. Run as hard as we can, play as hard as we can as a team. Seeing our past defenders and how well they did, seeing them in the pros. You want to play up to their standards."

On what the sideline was like with the quick start on all sides of the ball in the first quarter:

"It was electric. First off, we have tons of respect for Arizona. They didn't lay down. They gave up a fight. It was electric with a lot of fans out there. We were hyped to be playing UofA. We wanted to go in there and start fast because the previous week (against New Mexico State) we started kind of slow. They were driving the ball. But we got that first three-and-out (against Arizona), our offense was rolling, our special teams, we were just clicking together. All three phases. That's one thing Coach Hoke talked to us about. We're going to need all three and that's what happened."

Senior tight end Daniel Bellinger

On the passing opportunities improving each game:

"It was really important, but like I've said in the past it's just about our team and our offense. (Offensive coordinator Jeff) Hecklinski made a great point yesterday. He said that we've only been 10 games deep as a whole offense and an offensive coaching staff. We really haven't even had a full season yet to come together and work together. We're finally getting some pieces together and it's exciting."

On his two big plays (73-yard catch and 25-yard touchdown catch) if they were basing that off the run:

"We had it schemed up all week. They were great designed plays by coach (Hecklinski). We practiced it all week, we practiced it all spring and all fall, and we finally got a chance to run it. It was executed great. We had great blocks by the receivers. Ethan Dedeaux had a great block and (Tyrell) Shavers on the outside had a great block. The overall scheme was set up by great plays before that, but the execution by the receivers and (quarterback Jordon) Brookshire really made the play."

On all the open field on his 73-yard catch and run:

"It was definitely exciting. I don't get many opportunities to run 73 yards down the field. It was exciting. I was trying to get to the end zone, giving it my all. I need to get a little more speed down the field. I can't just stiff arm them off, I have to shut them off the whole way. It was definitely something new to me and I just know I need to finish the run."

On the improvement for the offense from week one to week two:

"We came to practice every day. We were focused. We were locked in. We knew this team wasn't going to lay down. (Arizona) was going to be a good team. They were going to come out and attack us. We were going to come with them with everything we had like we do every single week. When we went out there we knew we had to be more physical at the line of attack. We had to be more physical at the line of scrimmage. I believe we did that. They put up a fight but we went out there and were the more physical team."

On what impressed him most about quarterback Jordon Brookshire:

"He had a lot of poise. He was in the pocket and did what we needed him to do. He did a great job. Me personally there was one play where he made a check and threw a touchdown pass to Ethan Dedeaux. It was a great play by him. It was great poise, great leadership throughout the whole game. When we went up it's easy to for us to just say we can relax now but he did a good job of keeping us in the game, keeping us on our toes and making sure that we finished the game."

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