

San Diego State University Football Media Conference

Friday, November 24, 2017

Rocky Long

Press Conference

SDSU - 35, New Mexico - 10

Q. Describe the past four years coaching Rashaad Penny?

COACH LONG: Well, as the head coach, I'm not his position coach, so Coach Horton knows him a whole lot better than I do.

What I know about him, he's a very talented young man that was raised right by his parents and his family and he's a good guy, not only he's a talented football player, but he's a good guy, good teammate.

He does well in school. He's never a problem. And he's the best thing about anybody on our team is when they're team guys first. I mean, he's as good as any running back in the country. I don't care what they say. He's as good as any of them. And he doesn't probably it's not going to get the recognition he deserves because he's one of us. But I don't think that in the back of his mind I don't think it bothers him very much because he likes being one of us. And he would have done the same thing if he had gone to SC or someplace like that, he would have done the same thing and he would be in the Heisman Trophy ballot.

Q. Talk about back to back years, 2,000 yard rushers?

COACH LONG: I heard that was a record or something. We're not in this for records. Well, except for one; we're in this for winning games. It's a pretty unique program when you can win double digit wins year after year after year.

What that means is you have a lot of really good kids and a lot of really good players in your program. You don't win without good players. And we've been lucky to have a lot of really good players in our program and a lot of really good kids that have been raised right, so we don't have much trouble with them.

And then I have an unbelievable coaching staff that not only recruits those guys, they get the best out of them, the most out of them. So, I mean there's a lot of reasons you win games -- number one it's the players, and number two it's the organization.

Q. (Inaudible)?

COACH LONG: I think it might help in recruiting running backs. But outwardly, no. I've come to the conclusion that before you're considered nationally you have to be like we've been the last three or four years, you have to be like that about 10 years. And then if you're like that for 10 years then they actually recognize you. And then you don't have to be that good anymore because it lasts for another 10 years. There's another school in our league that has that right now.

Q. (Question about Rashaad)?

COACH LONG: I wish I would have been brave enough to predict it on Tuesday. I mean, he's a good player, but he's going to have a day like that because the rest of the team was upset, not because he was upset because of the rest of the team was upset. So you never know if they're able to do it or not, but they went out there to make a statement, and make sure he had a good day.

And that's because he's a good guy. He's a good guy and he's a team guy. If he was an ego guy and a me guy, they wouldn't have cared. They would have just gone about their business, they wouldn't have cared. They were more upset than he was, by far.

Q. On all the long runs that Penny broke today --

COACH LONG: There were probably about six more that maybe he could have broke because he got tripped, yeah.

Q. Did he kind of take note of just how wide open the holes he had to run through, and does it kind of excite you for the future?

COACH LONG: Yeah, I think the offensive line has improved as the season has gone along. They have their ups and downs like everybody does. They'll be better next year, and the year after that they'll be the best offensive line on the West Coast, I think.

Q. Did you try or did Tony Rosales try --

COACH LONG: He's not ready. He can't do it. We're trying to get so that he can get well for the bowl game so he can go out the right way. Like all the seniors did today. They'll remember this the rest of their lives, their last game at home, and it's always a much better memory when you win.

Q. Any prediction what bowl game you're going to be in?

COACH LONG: I have no idea. We want to play the very best competition we can play no matter where it is. We want to play the best competition we can play. That's going to be up to a lot of other people besides us.

Q. With all the records that Rashaad has either set or tied both school-wise and NCAA, granted you have one more game left, as a head coach which one stands out for you?

COACH LONG: I don't know. I thought what I saw last week was pretty amazing. Not only did he have a great day rushing the football and had a 70-yarder called back so he would have had over 300 yards rushing, he ran a kickoff back for a touchdown. And the very first punt he's returned in a live action for a game he turned that for a touchdown, too. That was pretty amazing. I'll have -- it will be a long time before I forget that performance.

Q. The play of Tariq today as lot of tackles and two picks, what's the upside given --

COACH LONG: I thought Tariq played average. I mean, you didn't see the other things he didn't do well. But he has a knack -- for a freshman, he has a knack for being in the right place most of the time.

There were a couple other times that they had some big gains where maybe he was supposed to be there. I'm not saying that, though, because I haven't watched the film yet. But I make pretty good guesses from the sideline. I can make a pretty good guess. But he made some nice plays. He's really played well for a true freshman.

I don't know without him I don't know what we would have done in the secondary, because the other one that was competing with him, missed the whole year because of an injury he had to have operated on.

So I don't know what we would have done without Tariq playing over his head. He didn't play like a freshman. He's played much better than a true freshman normally plays.

Q. And obviously really big for the future?

COACH LONG: I think he's going to be an outstanding player if this is any indication as a freshman he'll be an outstanding player. Let's not pat him on the back too hard now being a freshman and he's already heard about the ones he didn't do well.

Q. Were you referring to Darren Hall and what's his status?

COACH LONG: Darren Hall, we haven't played him because we're trying to redshirt him. He hasn't played yet.

I was talking about Trenton Thompson. Darren Hall, we're trying to save his year. Even though he would have to go in, if we got two or three guys hurt, he'd have to go in.

Q. Compared to before when the season began to now has the team exceeded your expectations where does this fall?

COACH LONG: In fact, I had that discussion with my family the other day, the other night. Going into this season, to be very honest with you, I thought we were going to be disappointed if we didn't make a bowl game, but I didn't think that getting in a bowl game was a sure thing. And we were our own worst enemies by winning the first six, because then all of a sudden everybody thought we were better than we really were. But we do have kids that will fight and we do have kids that will come back and we do have kids that want to win and they -- we've got a pretty good feeling about winning too. They know how to win. The best part it hurts them when we lose. There's a lot of schools around that they celebrate those wins, but it doesn't hurt them very bad when they lose.

Q. (Inaudible)?

COACH LONG: I don't know, because the DBs are out there in the open. They're much easier to see when they mess up. I think since Kyahva has been playing, he's been playing really, really well, which is good for the future, too, because that gives us more depth at linebacker. And we've had some problems at linebacker with injuries and some other things. So if he hadn't stepped up we wouldn't have been near as good on defense as statistically we are.

Q. What about having Tyler Morris starting, was it his performance, or because of senior night?

COACH LONG: It was mostly because he deserved it because he's a senior, and he's been in our program and has gone through some gruesome injuries and is healthy this year and has been a really good player on special teams for us this year. He deserved to start since this was his last home game.

Q. What's the situation with Lakalaka?

COACH LONG: He'll be back for the bowl game. Unless there's something else, there's some other problems.

Q. Was he in attendance?

COACH LONG: Yeah, he was in attendance.

Q. On the field?

COACH LONG: No, he was not on the field.

Q. He's not injured?

COACH LONG: No, he's not. He has a slight shoulder injury but that's not why he didn't play.

Q. Can you speak to why he --

COACH LONG: Yeah, team rules.

Q. What words did you have for Rashaad either before or after the game with this being senior night?

COACH LONG: I'm boring. Before the game, I shake all the seniors' hands and tell them good luck.

After the game, I made him come in the middle of the circle in the locker room and he started us off on what to say after the game. I forget what he said. It wasn't earth shattering, but the players, they enjoy when he talks to them.

Q. Anything in the senior meetings this week that you did special with them?

COACH LONG: No, they're all the same in the senior meetings. In fact, there's no holds-barred in there and they can say whatever they want to say to whoever they want to say it. And it's a very democratic society to a point. It's very democratic when they're discussing things. It's very democratic until I put a stop to it.

Q. Did they discuss the awards in senior meetings?

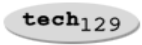
COACH LONG: Oh, yeah, that's why I know they were so upset. And I was supposed to explain to them why Rashaad was being disrespected like that. And I have no answer. I mean, I tried to tell them the way the world is and the reality of the world that didn't appease them one bit.

Q. Did you think something like this might send a message later on down the road for the people of Doak Walker or any other awards that, hey --

COACH LONG: I think it will be forgotten. I think by this time next year, it will be completely forgotten. I hate to be honest.

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San Diego State University Football Media Conference

Friday, November 24, 2017

Rashaad Penny

Nick Bawden

Press Conference

SDSU - 35, New Mexico - 10

Q. I know you still have one more game left, but just seemed like yesterday you were doing your thing to go there, excels I don't remember stadium?

RASHAAD PENNY: That's like four years ago. That was a high school, that was amazing. I really thought coming in here I wanted to be a player that contributed to this offense and do whatever it takes to win. But playing a big key role in this offense is amazing. I can't thank this guy so much offensive line and offensive coordinator for putting me in the right situations and doing everything they can to just let me spring free and not just run. But, yeah, it's amazing.

Q. Four years ago when you stepped foot on campus, what was the one thing you wanted to accomplish by the time you ended your career here?

RASHAAD PENNY: Just to win as many games. I hate losing. Just win games and see where it goes from there. But when you put yourself into a program that you think is going to be so (inaudible) and down the line in the future you have challenges, big things will happen.

And this program, we turned a lot of things around. Behind Coach Long it's simple. Stop the run and we run the ball. And that's something we've been -- we've been that way for the last three years to even just win ten games and can't thank them enough.

Q. You've always been such a humble guy, putting others in front of you. But just talk about being overwhelmed, in a positive way, with all, even being in the same sentence as Heisman, Doak Walker and all the other awards and then the school and NCAA records that you've either tied or broken.

RASHAAD PENNY: Can't do that without great coaching or great guys around you. And honestly don't even look at them words like that because I'm not big on them. I'm in a group of five. I say that every time because it's true. They're going to overlook me. They're going to overlook anybody in this group of five league.

It's just something that you have to deal with. And it's motivation basically for a lot of group of five players to go out there and prove to everybody that you can play. Because that's how I feel it is. I feel you just can't play on a higher level. Really can't just -- I really can't say much, that's how it is.

Q. What did it mean to go over 2,000 yards today?

RASHAAD PENNY: I wasn't even thinking about it. I was just running like I always do out in the field behind my guy, Nick, and a big offensive linemen. And it's a blessing, though. I think everybody who has been a part of it and it was fun. And I got one more left. So I can't wait?

Q. Couple teammates wondered if you might be running angry this week. Was that any factor?

RASHAAD PENNY: I mean no, because -- just go out there and play the same way I've been playing for the last, how many, 12 games? Yeah, 12 games I played. Just go out there and have fun and try to win. That's the whole motto. And whatever happens after the game happens.

Q. What will you miss the most about playing in this stadium?

RASHAAD PENNY: Man, these fans are great. I mean, they're not with you when you're in your lows, but they're with you when you're at your highs. But, man, they showed the support this season. It was amazing.

They have truly lifted us in a lot of different ways and we're so thankful for them. But miss the most is these guys, just being around them and stepping out on the field Saturday night. It's going to be different waking up next week not playing on a Saturday night. But that's just how things work. But I'm going to miss these guys so much because I've been through a lot with them for the last past four years.

Q. Nick, what was it like to play with this guy?

NICK BAWDEN: It's incredible. The way this guy comes up, comes out at practice every day, shows up. He's a great leader. He works his tail off every single day no matter what. If he's in a bad mood, you'll never know. It's just an honor to be in front of this guy and blocking for him. Just everybody on our offense loves blocking for him because he's such a great guy. It's easy to see. It's easy to say. There's no lies there. Just a great dude all around.

Q. Being so humble, are you ever in a bad mood?

RASHAAD PENNY: No I don't know.

NICK BAWDEN: I don't think so.

RASHAAD PENNY: I'm always smiling. Even when I fumble, it's not a good thing, but I smile because you got another play, another opportunity. It's a turnover but you just can't look back on things, can't let things affect you.

It's just all about how you overcome adversity. And that's what I've been taught here with these guys. When I have these great teammates on the side, trust me, I'm always smiling.

Q. Nick, so much made of Doak Walker and things like that, and people say it doesn't bother Rashad. It's easy to say, but how do you see him handling that?

NICK BAWDEN: It makes me mad. It makes me mad for him because I know he won't get mad about it. But I'll get mad for him about it. But he deserves that award. It's absurd that he's not even in the conversation. He deserves that award or the Heisman.

The way this kid has done everything -- kick returns, punt returns, offense, catching the ball -- he can do it all. It's really incredible to watch him every day. It's really an honor to be with him be on the side.

Q. Why not get mad about it, Rashaad? What about you keeps you from getting mad about it?

RASHAAD PENNY: I got these guys. I got this coaching staff. They believe in me. They all know that I'm probably the number one back in the country. And they know I'm a Heisman winner.

NICK BAWDEN: Yeah, we do.

RASHAAD PENNY: When I have these guys around me that lift me up like that, there's no reason to even think about it.

When I seen the list, I was, like, that's another motivational step. You just can't get mad. I'm enjoying this feeling. I love ten wins over a Doak Walker award.

Q. You made a lot of sacrifices here to be in the position you are in and play the way you've played it, what's the pride level for you?

NICK BAWDEN: I wouldn't call them sacrifices. I'm having so much fun doing what I'm doing now. I can't imagine still being at quarterback, honestly. I don't know what that would be like.

I get to play real football now. No offense to Chapman. Chapman is one of the toughest guys on the team. I get to go around and hit people, man. I have so much fun doing that.

Blocking for guys like him and Pumph the past couple of years have been a blessing. Couldn't be in a better position now.

Q. Funny to sit here, look at you, imagine you were ever a quarterback. Same for you?

NICK BAWDEN: That was a long time ago. Yes.

RASHAAD PENNY: That's crazy.

Q. What was your motivation after two losses, you guys finished with four wins, from the outside it's like what were these guys playing for, but obviously you guys were playing for something?

NICK BAWDEN: Yeah, definitely. It starts with our coaching staff. They never let us get down. They told us these losses happen but we've got to come back.

We had four games left in our schedule and we were just going to take them one week at a time. And it didn't matter that we didn't have any rest or anything. It was just you gotta go now and started with that Monday we got back. And like I said, it starts with the coaches, just trickles on down through the seniors and through the rest of the players and gotta lead one after the other.

Q. You guys are the ones who have to play, though, and I've seen teams quit when things don't go well. Why not this team?

NICK BAWDEN: I can say it starts with our head guy, Coach Long and Coach Hall, no quitting on anybody on our team. And that starts with our offseason training. It's I think unlike anybody else. And I think that gives us a

head up on our competition for sure. So that helped out.

Q. What does it say about the team, that doesn't happen, quitting or getting down?

RASHAAD PENNY: When you have Coach Long, you can't quit. Unless you've been called soft.

NICK BAWDEN: You don't want that. That's the worse thing you can be.

RASHAAD PENNY: Worst thing. But we can only control what we can control and that's just taking one week at a time. Those are two key losses. I mean, it affected us, but it's just like winning.

We've got to put it behind us. Like right now we've got a bowl game to think about now. There's no celebrating for us. We want 11 wins instead of 10. That's how it is. It's just like winning, get over and go to the next.

Q. After seeing Elijah go through his senior night a few years ago at Idaho, did he give you any words of advice or wisdom before today?

RASHAAD PENNY: No, I mean that's what my family just tell me the same thing every day that's just play the way I play. We've got a big group message and texts me every Saturday: Play the way you play and just have fun.

Q. What was going on through your mind when you were going through the helmet?

RASHAAD PENNY: It's definitely emotional because you want to stay here forever. It's like you can't leave these guys. I mean, you've got people in the locker room who is funny. You've got people in the locker room always take things serious, and you never have that bond again. And things are happening in that locker room with them teammates. It's surreal because you don't want to leave it.

But your time has to end some day. And it's not going to end yet because I've still got a few weeks left in the locker room but I've got to enjoy my time.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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San Diego State University Football Media Conference

Friday, November 24, 2017

Trey Lomax

Kameron Kelly

Press Conference

Q. Did it end the way you wanted it to?

TREY LOMAX: Definitely. Not that last drive so much, the interception at the end, I got a little lazy in coverage. But definitely the way we wanted to end the season.

Q. You didn't accomplish everything that you set out to do this season, but you finished with four great wins and you bounced back. How do you feel like you played the last month?

KAMERON KELLY: I mean, this is what we tried to do. When we went into that little slump, we just kind of talked to each other, like we can't let it get any worse than it's already gotten. We've got to keep just working hard. We've got to go out there and stop thinking so much.

I feel like we lost those two games because we were thinking about not losing instead of just going out there and playing to win. So we started doing that, and everything started picking back up.

Q. Is it really that simple?

TREY LOMAX: Yeah, I mean, for the most part. Once we lost those two games, we were kind of in that tough spot. So the next game was a big priority to bounce back, get a win, and get back on track. We still knew in the season we had a lot of things we could accomplish. We just wanted -- was it, the 11th game, 10th game, there are only a handful of teams that probably do that every year with still a bowl game to go. So that was big.

We knew guys still had a lot to play for, and I'm really happy with how we bounced back after the first two games and finished the season the way we did.

Q. Trey, when you have a bowl game still to play, do you get emotional in your last game in the stadium?

TREY LOMAX: I mean, it hit me a little bit today after we took the pictures with your family and you're walking through the helmet and they're announcing your name, your hometown, you go out there and you kind of take it in it's your last game playing in the stadium. It hit me a little bit then, but once the game got going, you kind of lose track of that. At the end though, you take it all in again.

It's surreal knowing it's your last time playing at home in front of all these fans and being with your teammates that you love. You fought and scratched with the last couple of years, blood, sweat and tears. It kind of hits you a little bit after that last whistle.

Q. Rashaad had another game over 200 yards, over 2,000 for the season. Given what happened with the start of the week with the Doak Walker, what did that mean to you guys?

KAMERON KELLY: Is it even really an award?

TREY LOMAX: What else did he have to do?

KAMERON KELLY: You're supposed to give it to the best running back, and we had the best running back, and he's not even a finalist. I don't know. People are politicking. There's nothing we could really do besides just keep handing him the ball and showing the world that he should have been a finalist. That's all we can do.

I know he's not really worried about it. As big of a deal as everybody else makes about it, he could care-a-less. He just wants to score touchdowns and run the ball and win, honestly. I feel like if he didn't have over a hundred yards today and we won, he wouldn't care just as long as we win out right on Senior Day. Because we have 17 seniors, and all of us have put the work in. It means just as much to us, or just as much to somebody who doesn't play for him to have those yards as it does to him.

Q. Trey, just wanted to ask you about Tariq. What do you see -- or both of you guys, you both played back-up with him. What do you guys see in him now? He starts the season with an interception. Ends the season with two, true freshman, what are you guys seeing?

KAMERON KELLY: I mean, he's definitely athletically gifted. I think the biggest reason we've been so

successful is he's so coachable. We're at practice, and he's like a sponge. Everything you tell him, he absorbs and he takes into consideration. He takes all the coaching from all the coaches. You know, he keeps his mouth shut, just goes about his business and works hard.

So I think the reason he has that personality and the way he is at practice, the way he's so approachable and coachable by everybody, I think that's the big reason he's so successful. I'm really excited for him. He's a true freshman, so the sky's the ceiling for him. So, yeah.

Q. Have you guys kind of given him stuff through the year because he's a freshman?

KAMERON KELLY: No, when we first got here during camp, I remember me and Trey were talking about, if anyone's going to play, it's going to be him. I just felt like the future's in great hands because he reminds me of Rashaad his freshman year. Just the fact that he was so nice and so coachable, and the fact that he listens to everything. You can see it when you look in his eye and you're telling him about something or talking about the game. You can see the fire. He just wants to do whatever it is you're telling him.

He trusts everybody around him. He trusts the coaches. I think it's going to take him a long way. He's going to get better and better. He has a chance to be one of the best safeties in the country, so I'm ready to see that.

Q. What was it like seeing Tyler Morris get the start, considering what he's been through?

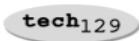
TREY LOMAX: He's been my roommate for the last three years. We had a house the last two years with a few of us, and me and him are roommates now in an apartment. I remember going through the walk-through and he was out there with the ones. I was talking to him, and I was like are you starting this week?

He was like, yeah. You could tell he was a little nervous, especially being senior night. I didn't know his parents were here and his sister was here.

I know it was special for him. I was happy for him. We talked to Calvin before the game, because all of us were pretty close over the years. Really happy for him. He played well tonight, and yeah, that was really fun to see.

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New Mexico Head Coach Bob Davie

On the game being a microcosm of New Mexico's season:

"It's kind of what the season was. Tease you a little bit with maybe a chance to do some things. We were kind of teased that we stopped them a few times then gave up a big play. Kind of teased there at the end when (quarterback) Tevaka (Tuioti) came in, but he threw two interceptions. We missed a field goal when we had a chance to make it an eight-point game. It's kind of what the season has been, you know. A missed field goal and interceptions. We did some things on defense at times, but you know just gave up the big play. Yeah, there were some of our guys who came in and did some things, but not enough.

On the long touchdown pass and the Lobos' inconsistency on offense:

“This isn’t the first time that Jay Griffin has got his hands on the ball and made people miss and everybody’s excited. What do we have that we can do consistently? Around here for years we knew we could line up and run the ball consistently. Now the running game doesn’t work, so now were going to go with Tevaka (Tuioti) and throw it around and get excited about that. But in the end, it’s not enough to beat anybody.”

On the team’s performance this season:

“I take responsibility for this. I told everyone in that locker room from our coaches to our players. It just never has felt right from the beginning and that starts with me. I take responsibility, but I also take responsibility moving forward, too.

On when he felt things didn’t seem right this season:

“I’m talking about the first game of the year, honestly. When we took the ball down and fumbled on the goal line against Abilene Christian. Then we turned it over in the first half against New Mexico State the second week and had to come roaring back. Then we go to Boise (State) and have two quarterbacks hurt ... I could just go through the whole season. It’s just been an up-and-down rollercoaster that never had any consistency and never really felt right.”

On San Diego State running back Rashaad Penny:

“We knew what he was coming in. It’s no surprise. We recruited him. But you know what? He’s in the right offense. He’s in the right place. They take advantage of him, and I give their offensive coordinator (Jeff) Horton a lot of credit. He’s a very unselfish guy ... He’s in a good place, Rashaad Penny. I know they’re appreciative of him, but he should be appreciative of them, too. They line up and run the ball and put him back on punts and kickoffs. He’s good, he’s good no doubt about it.”

Junior defensive lineman Cody Baker

On the prospects for next year:

“We always have our eye on the future. I think we have a bunch of young guys that are ready and see what it’s not supposed to be. We know what we have to do this offseason to be where we want to be and that’s go to another bowl game and fight for a Mountain West championship.”

On the game:

“I think we got some momentum in the game, but couldn’t get over the hump. I think it’s something that we’ll be able to work on and get back to next season.”