



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### San Diego State Press Conference Quotes Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2019

#### Head Coach Rocky Long

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

"We get back at it this week. We're playing a team that is as talented as we are that has as much incentive to win the game as we do. They still have a chance to win the West Division of our conference. There one game away from bowl eligibility. So it should be a highly competitive football game.

##### **On the incentive of both teams coming into the game:**

"I think both of us have the same motivation factors."

##### **On Jesse Matthews being nominated for the Burlsworth Trophy (for top walk-on):**

"Walk-ons seem to have a lot of incentive. We've had several of them around here that have started for us and (have) earned scholarships for us. I think he's probably the biggest surprise on our team this year. I think going into the season we had no idea that he would be as productive as he is or as good as he is, and he has been a real strong receiving guy that has made big-time plays in big-time situations and helped us win several games. I think going into the season we didn't expect that and that's a big time surprise. But now we expect him to do those kind of things."

##### **On when he saw that Jesse Matthews could be a contributor:**

"I think during training camp. He had a great training camp and during training camp a lot of ones go against once and he did well against our starting DBs. So I think we thought he had a chance to be a pretty good player in training camp, but didn't have any idea that he would have the success that he's had so far this year."

##### **On not playing and moving up in the national rankings:**

"It's always nice to be ranked but it's really funny that you don't play and you get to move up. That's an interesting deal. So I just as soon not play this week and move up again, eventually move up into the top 10, right?"

##### **On which Nevada game he is studying the most:**

"We're studying them all since we had an extra week. We got to watch them all. We don't always get to see everything they do on film. And they're like everybody else. They're just like us. There are days they're really, really good and there are days they struggle. Same as we do. I mean right from the start. They're one of the teams in our league that beat a Power 5 team when they beat Purdue on a last-second field goal. They beat Purdue. The one that's the closest to just being played is when they beat San Jose (State). And we had watched a lot of San Jose and San Jose's one of those teams that is getting better and better and better, and Nevada beat San Jose. So you look at the games where they played well, obviously because you expect them to play well against you. They played well against us last year and beat us."

**On if it would make a difference if the Group of 5 schools started their own playoff:**

"I don't know if it would make a difference or not. I have no idea. Obviously, the resources are much, much better for the Power 5 schools than they are in the Group of 5 schools. But speaking from our point of view, we just assume play them whether they have all the advantages or not. We like the challenge of playing them. We don't think they are any better than we are. They have fancier stuff. They have 15 uniforms, we have one. Those kind of things, but we like playing them. I don't think it's necessarily time that we have our own division in our home playoff system. I think it's all going to work out in the end anyway.

"I think that TV is going to decide. With a playoff system, TV is (going to decide) since most of the revenue that they get comes from TV, and we don't get the same kind of revenue today. TV is eventually going to mandate an extended playoff system."

**On how he would assess the team at this point of the season:**

"I'm at the point now that I know we can be better than we are. We're inconsistent in a lot of areas and I think that we can be a really, really good football team, but we aren't yet. And we've got four more games to become a really good football team. And if we become a really good football team, then we have a chance to win the championship if we keep playing like we've been playing. It's hit and miss whether we can win enough games to get in the championship game."

**On if there is any discussion about playing in a New Year's 6 game:**

"There is no discussion about that."

**That never comes up?**

"Nope. That takes care of itself too. You don't have to talk about it."

**On how the bye week helped the team work on technique:**

"Yesterday, they seemed like they had a little more juice, a little more energy. They seemed a little quicker, a little faster. Where I saw most of it was on the scout team. At this time of year the scout team starts getting worn down and they seem to be slow. You can't get the real look that you get for a game from your scout team because they're kind of beat up a little bit and they're tired of being the scout team. The scout team was fast yesterday. Either that or our guys that were going to play in the game were slow because the scout team receivers were running by our DBs, which kind of makes you a little bit nervous. But I think the scout team benefited more than anybody else from the time off."

**On scheduling home-and-home games with Power 5 teams:**

"I think we've done a good job around here. Not selling ourselves, not going to play those Power 5 schools just for a paycheck. We've done a nice job around here making sure that the Power 5 schools that we play are home-and-home, which makes it fair instead of the other way around where they give you a big paycheck, so you have to go get beat up at their place."

**On why the other Mountain West schools don't schedule many home-and-home games with Power 5 teams:**

"I think all the non-Power 5 guys all need the money. So everybody makes a choice on whether they're going to go for the money or not. I think that's a thing where we were strong enough around here and figured we could do it without selling out, making those guys who want to play us at least come play us here one of the two times. There's a couple out there that I'd like to play home-and-home that still won't do it. Maybe we'll get them sooner or later."

**On Juwan Washington's health:**

"He practiced all day yesterday. He looked pretty good and he was asked after practice how he felt. He said it felt good. I think he's going to be all right for Saturday."

## **Senior tight end Parker Houston**

### **On if he watched other games on TV to gauge competition in his time off last week:**

"Yeah, Coach Long always asks his seniors when we come back for that Monday morning meeting. He always kind of asks us who watched what games. So we talk about what went on around college football, what went around the Mountain West and just kind of things you look out for. See how teams did, kind of scout them out yourself in a sense."

### **On if it's nice to go to bed and wake up on a bye week with a higher national ranking (went from No. 24 to No. 25):**

"We must've kicked the bye week's butt. What did we win by? A point? I mean, it's cool. It's good for the cosmetics but it really doesn't matter if we don't win these next few games. Our goal is to take it one week at a time and just focus on whoever's next."

### **On how he feels about playing some of the top teams in the country:**

"I think it'd be a lot of fun just to see how you can stack up against, you know, 4-star 5-star recruits and things along the lines of that. But it would be interesting to get a Group of 5 team in the college football playoff and New Year's 6 bowl games. I think we do just fine as well."

### **On discussion about being a part of the College Football Playoff rankings:**

"Zero. There's no focus on that. I mean you said it. We got the hashtag win 22. Next year hopefully win 23, but that's the one goal we have. In order to get to that opportunity we've got to take it one week at a time. College football playoffs aren't until the beginning of January, that's a few weeks away. So we've got to take this week, next week and then the week after that. We've got to keep rolling. It'd be like an added bonus to our conference championship just to be even included in that."

### **On if being ranked in the CFP is a dream or a distraction:**

"We build the program on beating conference opponents and winning the conference championship. I'm sure a lot of guys dream about the opportunity to play in it and how cool it would be for the exposure for our program and for the Mountain West, but you know, in the end, the conference championships our college football playoff. Once we do that step consistently, then we can start talking about the college football playoff."

### **On playing his hometown school this weekend:**

"It's a lot of fun. You get to play against guys you went against in high school and things along the lines of that. When I was getting recruited and the whole coaching staff changed, it used to be a lot more personal for me to kind of show them, 'Yeah I did belong there, but I'm glad I found a better school'. But with the coaching staff change, it's just another conference game for me. Its opportunity to play against some guys I played against in high school. It's an opportunity to see a lot of family and friends come down for the game. That's kind of what it is."

### **On the seniors helping the young guys after last year's loss at Nevada:**

"It's one thing to look back at it and say yeah we lost. But I think the seniors being the guys who've been here the longest, the guys who have experienced the most. For some of the young guys to see that for them to just kind of shrug it off and look forward from last year's game to this year. I think it's a big, big thing for the young guys to see that the seniors don't care what happened last year. It's all about what's going to happen this year and within the coming weeks."

### **On Jesse Matthews being nominated for the Burlsworth Trophy (for top walk-on):**

"Yeah, that's awesome. Especially coming into the year not on the watch list, you know the impact he's made with our team, the impact he's made around the country. For him to just be nominated for that - that's really cool for Jesse. I hope it opens up more opportunities for him here scholarship wise. But the kid works so hard and he's one of the quieter - I'm pretty loud and obnoxious, but hanging out with Jesse is kind of tough for me. He's one of the more quiet kids. Getting Jesse to talk, getting Jesse to smile is pretty fun, but it's because he's always just so focused on his job and what his route is or what his blocking assignment is. He just works really hard for this program and it's good to see him getting that national recognition he deserves."

## **Senior defensive lineman Myles Cheatum**

### **On if he feels rested:**

"Oh yeah, I think coach did a good job of maintenance on our bodies and I definitely feel well rested."

### **On if he watched other games on TV to gauge competition in his time off last week:**

"I think it's definitely cool to watch the other teams play that you don't get to see play because they play the same time usually on Saturdays. Seeing some of the schematics and things that they do, getting the different updates on your phone and stuff like that is definitely fun to watch. Especially outside of our conference and things that are going on around the country."

### **On if it's nice to go to bed and wake up on a bye week with a higher national ranking (went from No. 24 to No. 25):**

"Did we?"

*(Pause for Parker Houston to answer)*

"And that's all it's really about is taking care of business at the end of the day. If we don't do what we have to do, none of that stuff matters. It would have been all for nothing. Just keeping our heads down and grinding every single day trying to take care of business."

### **On if he thinks San Diego State has reached a level where teams don't want to play them:**

"Oh, no, not at all. I think teams see us and they see a great opportunity. I think they definitely circle the calendar when they see us. I think they kind of relish the opportunity to get a shot at us because of the reputation that we have and the prestige our program carries with it."

### **On discussion about being a part of the College Football Playoff rankings:**

"Like I said earlier, if you don't take care of business today, tomorrow and then the following weeks and days. It's all for nothing and that would just be an empty conversation."

### **On if the goal of winning a conference championship is the main thing:**

"Definitely. Just keeping the main thing, the main thing. That's all we're worried about right now. We set a goal, let's achieve that first and then we'll move on to the next one."

### **On is last year's loss at Nevada is on SDSU's mind:**

"(It was) disappointing for sure. We set out to win every game. That's why we show up, that's why we prepare the way we do. Last year's game was last year's game. You can't really go back and change anything, can't dwell on it, you have to move forward. Prepare for this next opportunity that we have. I was definitely stunned at the time but I'm definitely going into this week with a clear mind."

### **On the seniors helping the young guys after last year's loss at Nevada:**

"Preparation, making sure that we set the tone every single day coming out to practice with the mentality that you can't rest on your laurels. You have to get better every single day. That's one thing that our coaches preach is championship teams get better every week. You put a better performance on the field week after week. I think that's the job of all the seniors is to take that message and put it on display every single day by the way we work and everyone else will follow."

### **On Jesse Matthews being nominated for the Burlsworth Trophy (for top walk-on):**

"I'm definitely proud of Jesse. I don't remember exactly how long ago it was, but his locker is right next to Kyahva Tezino's (No. 45 and No. 44) and I asked him, 'How come the guy next to you doesn't say much?' So one day we were all in the cold tub and I was like 'Jesse, what's up, man, like what's going on?' Like, you know, try to get to know him a little bit and then he gets on the field and he's the exact opposite. He's a lion - big heart, plays big, bigger than he is - and I'm just glad that he's able to display what what he can do, especially a guy from the San Diego area. I'm sure that's real special for him being able to kind of put on for his home city in that way."

**-SDSU-**