



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

5500 CAMPANILE DRIVE, SAN DIEGO, CA 92182 | (619) 594-5547

GOAZTECS.COM | @GOAZTECS | @AZTECSPR | #GOAZTECS

### San Diego State Football Press Conference Quotes

October 18, 2016

#### SDSU head coach Rocky Long

##### **Opening Statement:**

"We look forward to the game on Friday night. I know a lot of our coaches have great respect for (SJSU head) Coach (Ron) Caragher. I think there are four guys on their staff I've coached with in a couple different settings and I have great respect for their coaching ability. They have a talented football team that seemed to hit their stride last week. They played as good as they played all year on defense, did a great job of running the football and they have a quarterback that causes problems particularly with his ability to stay alive and keep the ball moving and he made a couple nice plays to win the game. They won the turnover battle. I think they're well-coached and I think they have talented players that finally hit their stride last week."

##### **On if his players hit their stride last week:**

"I think we're getting a little bit better every week. I think some of the guys we were counting on to get better have and some of the veterans have hit their stride where maybe they didn't play as well early in the season as they are now."

##### **On how he feels about those who say the team needs to be winning by a greater margin:**

"I don't have a take on it. It's like a lot of things in my life; I don't have control over what people think about it or what they say about it so I try not to worry about it. I don't think the players worry about it at all. They're so into social media and they like all of that stuff but nothing has real importance. It's just the next thing to think about. I don't think they worry about any of that stuff. I think they like to win and to our players, it doesn't matter if it's by three or 23. They don't like to lose; I'm glad that's the case. I think they look at it completely differently than old people. In the days I started coaching, you were always worried about your players saying something that would fire up the other team and you were always looking for something the other team said to fire up your team. Now, they know each other and they talk smack back and forth to each other all week long and it means nothing. Nothing at all. It makes no difference because after the game, they'll go over and hug each other. The game has changed."

##### **On the close scores in Mountain West games:**

"I think we go into every game thinking it'll be close and competitive. That's how we prepare for the game, that's how we expect the game, that's how we call the game. Other people that we are playing now are using a similar formula that we have used for the last five years, which is: run the ball, keep the ball away from the other team's offense, don't make mistakes and keep the game close. As long as you can keep it close, you have a chance to win at the end. Half, or maybe more than half of our league is doing exactly the same thing now. The last two games we've played, they're lined up in the spread but they're not using spread offenses. They're trying to run the ball and use play action pass and keep the ball away from our offense and run the clock and keep the game close. I think it's pretty smart. The scores are probably not as high in other leagues where they throw it 70 times. You come into a game where they average 40 throws a game and they throw 23 against us? What's that tell you? They're trying to run the ball and control the football and control the clock. As long as someone doesn't make a lot of mistakes with fumbles and interceptions, the game is going to be close every time because the talent level is very equal."

##### **On his team's receivers against Fresno State:**

"I think the week before they got open quite a bit and they got thrown to. Last week, they struggled to get open and in man-to-man coverage. The opponent did a great job of covering them man-to-man. We throw some to the tight ends because they were able to get open. It's not a part of the game plan. Obviously, the part of the game plan is if they put too many guys up there, we want to burn them on a play action pass. If you can't do that, you have to be more patient on offense and live with four or five yard gains running the ball instead of big chunks you can get in the passing game if some receivers can beat somebody in one-on-one situations. Also, you've got to give the guys that were covering credit. They covered them really well."

### **On fullback Nick Bawden's transition from quarterback to fullback:**

"I think it's not surprising and you love that sort of thing when it happens. Most quarterbacks, when you call them into your offense and say, 'guess what? You're not going to be our quarterback anymore more so we'll help you transfer or we'll move you to another position,' and he says, 'well, give me a day or two to think about it' and he comes back two days later and says, 'okay, I want to stay. What position am I playing?' And you say, 'fullback' and he says, 'okay,' in this day and age, those are fun things to have happen. He probably could've gone somewhere else to be a quarterback. I think he likes the school, I think he had a lot of really good friends on the team and he didn't see any reason to leave. He was 225 pounds and really strong in the weight room. We thought that he had the body type to do it. The biggest question was if mentally, he could become that guy."

"Since that time, he's gotten bigger, stronger and has changed his personality dramatically. He is not a quarterback anymore; he is a fullback. Every game, he gets better. He is the best guy we have right now at targeting those guys no matter what stunts and things they throw up in front of us, he ends up blocking the right guy. He's starting to look a lot more like the last two fullbacks we've had. He doesn't just go find the right the guy and get into him a little bit. Now, he's trying to knock him down and knock him over. He has a personality of a fullback now. That's a tough transition, I bet. I've never had to do it but I don't think I've ever seen anybody else do it, from quarterback to fullback. He's very valuable to our running game and our tailbacks will tell you that."

### **On telling people earlier this season that running back Donnel Pumphrey would be in the slot in the NFL:**

"What I said before is what the pro scouts were telling me. I don't assume that just because I'm a football coach I know what it's like in the NFL because I don't know what it's like in the NFL. The pro scouts that were coming by looking at him, they obviously think he's an NFL player and before the season started, they said he was going to make his name in the NFL as being a third down back slipping out of the backfield or he'd be out in the slot. Well, here in about the last two weeks, I'm starting to get a change of attitude by them that they've watched him over this season and think that maybe he really is a tailback, no matter how small he is. So what I told you is what they were telling me because they know their game a whole lot better than I know their game. Here lately, they're starting to talk a different tune. Obviously, we think he can run between the tackles because we do it all the time. They're still having a hard time getting over how little he is."

### **SDSU junior fullback Nick Bawden**

#### **On how he felt about someone else playing quarterback at Fresno State, where his college quarterback career started:**

"I was just glad to be back at the stadium and get a little bit of revenge on those guys. I had no bad thoughts about it. I thought Christian played great and it was awesome to see him play in that. I was playing fullback so everything worked out."

#### **On how he felt when he was first told he'd be changing positions:**

"At first, it brought me down because I had played quarterback since my freshman year of high school and that was my dream. In life, dreams change and things change and you've just got to take advantage of the opportunities you're given. He gave me a few days to talk it over with my parents and see what the pros and cons were, to visualize what I wanted to do. I loved how the program was on the rise here and I wanted to be a part of it. I love everything the coaches preach around here and I've taken that to heart about trying to be a team player for San Diego State football. I was thankful that Coach Long was giving me an opportunity to play another position here. When he told me it was fullback, I was kind of surprised at first because it's a pretty physical position, coming from quarterback. But I've tried to take as much coaching as I can since switching positions and do as much research as I can so I can try to be the best player I can for this team."

#### **On SDSU's presence on social media before a game:**

"We have a team rule that we don't talk about our team or other teams and it kind of keeps our head out of that because it's really easy to get caught up in that and really easy to lose focus in your preparation for the game that week so we don't have any guys who are up there talking about anybody else or our team and I think that's really smart and a great way to do it. It is a huge distraction and it is a new age thing that is kind of taking the world by storm especially in sports. College kids can be irresponsible with it. We just talk about it on the field with our play."

### **SDSU junior defensive end Dakota Turner**

#### **On what changed defensively from the beginning of the season:**

"Coach Long mentioned it after our second win, that we can't be satisfied. No matter what we do on the field, there are always going to be small mistakes, big mistakes and we have to learn from them every week and we have to approach it as trying to be better every week no matter what we do or how we perform. We have to go out there and can't be satisfied with how we performed last week."

#### **On if he interacts with opponents he knows on social media before the game:**

"I'll see some guys from back home on the other team and it's more, after the game, we'll talk. Before the game, I don't even like talking to them. I just keep my focus and I'll talk to them after the game and take pictures and whatnot but before the game, I keep my head clear and keep away from all distractions."

**On how he feels about people who say the team isn't playing up to its potential:**

"We don't really pay attention to what they say about that. We're just there to win the game. We're there to play as hard as we can for four quarters and not give up on any plays. If the score isn't what the fans want, we're working as hard as we can to put as many points as we can up on the board. We're just there to get the win and go on to the next week."

**SDSU redshirt sophomore quarterback Christian Chapman**

**On what he sees watching film on San José State:**

"They're similar to Fresno State; they run the same defense a little bit. We don't know what kind of game plan they'll put against us yet. They haven't played an offense like us this year, one that runs the ball like we do, so we'll see what they do. They might try to do what Fresno did a little bit and play off their DBs and then just come off the run."

**On passing when the opposition is stacking the line against him:**

"That's usually what we try to do: take our shots when they're trying to stack the box. That's something Fresno State did that was pretty good is they weren't allowing those shots. They were giving us the short game but they weren't giving us the deep balls like we usually get and then they were just playing the run."

**On Friday night games:**

"I like them. They remind you of high school a little bit. You get to play on Friday and relax on Saturday and watch college football and just enjoy the day."

**On Nick Bawden transitioning from quarterback to fullback:**

"It shows the selflessness of guys we have on this team, that they'd switch positions and still stick to the team. We have a few guys that have done that; (Daniel) Brunskill went from tight end to lineman. It's just the selflessness these guys have. They want to make the team better. It shows a lot about their character and what they're willing to do for the team. I don't think fullback would be my position. I would say I'd switch wide receiver but I think Coach would have something to say about that."

**On the receivers from the UNLV game to the Fresno State game:**

"That's a weird thing that happened. We tried to get our receivers the ball but it's something that didn't happen. We were able to get the tight ends the ball. They limited us in our passing game so we stuck to the running game because we were doing great with that. Whatever we have to win, I'll throw six balls if we have to win, I'll throw 30 if we have to win. Anything we have to do to help this team win."

**On the advantage of having Nick Bawden come out of the backfield:**

"When these defenses want to play coverage, you've got to have those check downs and getting it to guys like him, we're able to make the play and get 10 yards, get that down and continue these drives. Just thankful we have him and we'll continue to do that."

**On if they've thought about becoming bowl eligible by beating San José State:**

"It's been brought up. We know this is the game to get bowl eligible. It's a goal in our mind, of course, and it's something we're looking forward to. We're looking forward to getting another win at home and be bowl eligible and get that out of the way and move forward and work our way up to a championship."