

# San Diego State University Football Media Conference

Sunday, November 19, 2017

## Rocky Long Press Conference



COACH LONG: I thought that we came out a little rusty, a little ragged, especially on defense in the first half. I thought the secondary in the first half played horribly. I thought they played a lot better in the second half. I thought the offense was moving the ball pretty good but was hurting themselves with penalties. That kept them from having maybe a better night than they did.

But winning nine games, on course to win ten and hopefully maybe 11, that's going to put us in the elite class of college football. I don't know how many last year -- I don't know how many teams last year had 11 wins. There was only six in the entire country. I'm guessing if we win ten, we'll be in the Top 15.

And if you do that three years in a row, or four years in a row, something like that, that's pretty good stuff. That's a big-time program that you're getting to watch, whether you believe it or not.

And then the last thing I'll say is that's one of the best performances, if not the best performance, I've ever witnessed on a football field by Rashaad penny. I might have seen a couple that were close, but my goodness, I'm trying to see what he rushed for. He rushed for 222 yards, returned a kickoff for a touchdown, set a school record, returned a punt for a touchdown and he had a 60-, 70-yarder called back.

Now there's some guys helping with him with that. There's the guys blocking on the kick returns and there's some big guys and receivers blocking for him in the running game. But you don't see many players as good as Rashaad, and you don't very often get to see him a lot.

But that was by far his best game for us. If anybody was still awake back east, they ought to watch and find out he's one of the best five players in the country. I mean, I've seen a lot of really good players. They don't do things like he did. How many running backs in the country are in the Top-10 in rushing return punts? Tell me. How many of them return kickoffs?

### **Q. It was only the second time -- the guy down on three.**

COACH LONG: We even tried to let him throw a pass.

But instead he ran for a touchdown.

### **Q. You were smiling after that one.**

COACH LONG: I was. I didn't want to see him throw that left-handed pass. I've seen him throw it in practice. He's okay when there's nobody around him but there's a lot of people around him at that time. He did the smart thing. Just tuck under and out-run them to the end zone. That was smart.

### **Q. When did you decide to have him start returning punts?**

COACH LONG: Him and Quest have been the two best guys catching punts in practice ever since we started in the fall. We wanted to do it and wanted to do it but we thought he was going to be getting too many carries the other way and we didn't want to take a chance of getting him beat up.

Now we're at the end of the season, so we thought it was a real good idea to give him a chance to prove to everybody he's also a pretty good punt returner and maybe some of those guys back east would actually realize it's a real good football player out here on the West Coast. I don't plan on them doing that but I sure wish they would.

### **Q. Kind of hard to ignore, this one?**

COACH LONG: Well, they ignored one last year, too. And they have been -- I saw the list of the six or seven on ESPN today. I saw the list of the six or seven guys that are the best players in the country; I didn't see Rashaad's name on there.

I mean, you know, because you've watched them all this time. I know because I've watched them but they are not going to give him the credit he deserves.

### **Q. Don't you think that this is one of those performances where because it's a single game, the astonishing yardage around, they have to?**

COACH LONG: Let's hope so. I'll be positive tonight. Let's hope so; they do. I'll try not to be realistic. I'll be positive.

### **Q. Would it help if you're playing the next game at mid day?**

COACH LONG: I don't know. I don't know how many people are going to be watching on Friday. Going to be

quite a few because they will still be full from Thanksgiving and stuff? Maybe quite a few people will be watching.

**Q. The punt return aside, only 22 carries.**

COACH LONG: A lot of them were long ones, though.

**Q. I guess the question being: Did you go into the game going, man, we're getting this guy.**

COACH LONG: No. We don't ever go into a game for any personal reasons. We did last year for the Bowl game. If we have some personal reasons in the Bowl game, since the Bowl game is a reward, we might do something in the Bowl game. But we never do a regular-season game and a conference game like that. We go in to win. But we win a lot better when he has a good night.

**Q. Does nothing he does surprise you now?**

COACH LONG: No. Because I've seen him do it in practice. We've curtailed his number of things he does because we want to get him through the season.

We want to get him through the season healthy because he helps us win and he's got a bright future ahead of him. I think his future at the next level is a lot to do we has not been our No. 1 running back for the last couple years, so he has not taken near as many hits as some of those other guys have that they are going to draft.

So we are trying to -- he's helping us win. We're trying to get him to the end of the season, but we're also trying to get him to take care of him for the rest of his life, too.

**Q. Just the early disappointment of the day with Fresno State, feelings about that as far as --**

COACH LONG: Congratulations to them. I mean, they deserve it. They won the games they needed to do and they beat us.

So I think that it's a well-deserved honor for them. That's the way it works in this business. If you want to be sure that you're going to be in the Championship Game, you've got to win every game. We haven't ever done that. And you want me to say -- how many did it last year? Not one.

**Q. The package with Ryan Agnew, that was a time where the game was still pretty tight.**

COACH LONG: Yeah, we wanted it to be that way. We didn't want it to be mop-up duty. He's been doing a really good job in practice and he has some skills different than Christian. And since he's been playing really well in practice and you never know when you're going to need your backup quarterback, the offense put

a package in specifically for him that we wanted him to run at crunch time. Maybe not in the fourth quarter at crunch time but we wanted him to run it when the game was still being very competitive and still in doubt.

It didn't look quite as good as it did in practice.

**Q. What was part of the two -- lining up against you guys --**

COACH LONG: No, I don't know. You can give him credit for that, but he missed the read. They tackled him for a loss because he have given it to the running back and then he runs a quarterback draw and the elite blocker misses his block. So it didn't look as good, so give them credit for playing good.

**Q. How much concern do you still have for the secondary at this point in the season?**

COACH LONG: I think that we got lulled to sleep with the bye week because our scout team receivers aren't anything close to what Nevada's receivers are. So our guys got used to sitting on patterns and being able to run with our scout team guys and all of a sudden they got out there, especially in the first half, and those guys were a whole lot faster than they have seen in a long time.

That's one of those bye-week deals that hurt you, really hurts you, because they are not used to the speed of things. It was no contest. They were just running by us like we were standing still. Well, they didn't run by us near as often in the second half because we got used to the speed.



**Rashaad Penny**  
**Ronley Lakalaka**  
**Christian Chapman**  
Press Conference

**Q. A night that you probably will remember for your entire life?**

RASHAAD PENNY: I mean, it don't feel real. You've got all these amazing guys around you every day and then amazing coaches telling you that you can do certain things and you finally just have to believe in it, and that's what I did tonight. I believe in it. I believe in myself. I believe in these guys.

When you do things like this, it just feels so real because you don't know what's going on. I feel like when I'm running the ball, I'm about to get tackled, but I don't know, it's amazing. But I think these guys and the coaches and this staff, everybody that believes in me, just led me to do this.

**Q. The kick and the punt, did you see it open up? - at what point did you think you have a chance?**

RASHAAD PENNY: When you have amazing -- when you have a bye week, and then you get to practice special teams; and we've been struggling in kickoff return area, so we've been practicing kickoff returns for a long time.

So I mean, that bye week gave us justice (ph with the punt return -- when I heard I was up for punt return, I was like, man, I think I can do something with it, and then I got it. Amazing blocking, and then you've got to beat the wedge, and all the guys (ph) are the wedge, so I think that should be pretty easy for a skill guy.

**Q. When did you know you were going to go out for punt return?**

RASHAAD PENNY: I found out in the bye week towards the end. I was already catching punts in practice every day. I just was waiting on a shot. I mean, Quest is an amazing, amazing punt returner just getting us yards, but it's like, they wanted a home run hitter. I was like, I think it was honestly -- I don't know what was going on. They put me back there and I don't know, I just looked at it like it was a kickoff return.

**Q. You broke Marshall Faulk's record -- what's it**

**like to have your name mentioned in company like that?**

RASHAAD PENNY: Marshall Faulk, you can't say much about it. It's a blessing, but then again, it's these guys. Can't do nothing without Chapman handing me the ball or the wedge guys blocking for me or the offensive line. I thank God. I think they should be more excited than me. I'm just taking it slowly. It's just the opportunities that I get and I'm going to take advantage of it. I just want to help this team win and just contribute and do everything I have to do.

**Q. What was the feeling like getting the punt return, getting guys right in your face when you catch it, put your head down --**

RASHAAD PENNY: I was told all week that I'm bigger than these guys and they don't want to tackle me. I was like, I'm not going to go in and fair catch a ball anymore. That's the mindset I had at punt return.

I mean, I'm not about to fair catch anything. They done a good job blocking, and then I just see the hole open up. I mean, when you see something like that, you just take it as a kickoff return on a run play.

**Q. From your perspective, what was it like?**

CHRISTIAN CHAPMAN: It's amazing to be part of. His name is going to be etched in history. I feel everybody everybody on this team feels they were a part of it. We take pride in it. It's just as much us as it is him.

We know for the rest of our lives that he broke those records, but we were all part of it. We were all there to see it. It's a good feeling all around.

**Q. How did that steady you guys? It was a little uneven early on in the game.**

CHRISTIAN CHAPMAN: I feel like as we were going and making adjustments, seeing what they were doing, we're not sure how they were going it come out. We adjusted right and I think the game plan from there on just kind of clicked.

The run game got going and the passing was looking good and we had our one-on-one matchups and we just took advantage of those. As the game went on, we just kept pounding the ball and he broke a big one.

**Q. Fresno State winning earlier today, is that**

**something you talked about as a team before today's game?**

CHRISTIAN CHAPMAN: Yeah, we were all watching closely. That game, it had great impact on our game and our season. It's difficult. We really want to go to the championship. Every year we want to go to the championship, and that happened.

But there's still ballgames to play. We have got to finish this thing off right. We're trying to finish in the double digits this year. So we've got to finish. We've got New Mexico next week and we've got to beat them and hopefully get a good Bowl game.

But I mean, getting ten wins in a season is still a great season. The championship's not there, but there's still some things out there we want to get and we're going to keep pushing towards it.

**Q. Can you speak to the emotion of the game, too?**

RONLEY LAKALAKA: Yeah, just we've struggled defensively on the pass and just really, we didn't come in emotionally ready or mentally ready.

And so going against the No. 1 offense in the conference, we have got to come ready to play because they want a piece of us because we're the champs these past few years.

Just being there for our guys and our DBs, just making sure that we stop the pass and the run, actually, really helped us today.

**Q. How much does it juice this defense to watch Rashaad do what he's doing on offense?**

RONLEY LAKALAKA: It really helps a lot actually because he puts punt on the board and it puts less pressure off of us. So just going in there with more confidence actually; Rashaad gave us more confidence because the score is the way it is. So he really gets us juiced up, yeah.

**Q. Were you blown away by how continues to run away from people? All the carries he had, all he did on that last run, guys trying to run him down, he's got that little extra. Is it amazing to watch how easy it looks sometimes for him?**

CHRISTIAN CHAPMAN: Yeah, he's got that "It" factor. You know, you see him do it week-in, week-out, and then he just continues to do it. You're just like, wow. He's just gifted; physical abilities, athletic ability is out the window, and I think he had his best game tonight. From the special teams and the offense -- I'm just glad he's on my team. He's a great player and he's going to go down in history here.

**Q. How do you as a defense adjust when there's so**

**much throwing on the ball and kind of go away from the run game?**

RONLEY LAKALAKA: Just really getting a good pass rush with our D-Linemen and our linebackers. Getting the DBs help, because if we put pressure on the quarterback, it makes the quarterback throw it much quicker, and so it makes it a lot quicker reaction for the DBs.

We just want to get the pressure off the DBs by getting a good pass rush. So going into the No. 1 offense in the conference, we knew what we were going against and so we just came in there and made adjustments.

**Q. You took a step to the sidelines when Ryan went in?**

CHRISTIAN CHAPMAN: That was actually a package we put in this week. Trying to do a little bit of option stuff, read option a little bit. Kind of got it in practice. Practicing well, a little thing to go in there with.

This is a week with the bye week, you have to learn more things to try to do new things, and that was our goal in practice this week. That's what that was all about.

**Q. Talking earlier about watching the game earlier -- the championships are what you guys talked about the last few years, so what is the disappointment level of not reaching the Championship Game?**

RONLEY LAKALAKA: Of course it's going to be disappointing but at the same time, we just want to finish the season right. We want to go into double-digits. We want to win our ten games. We're looking forward to next week with New Mexico.

But you know, it's mostly draining (ph) for us, of course, but we just have to go out there and play for our fans out here that come and watch us play. And so that's what we have to get back for.

CHRISTIAN CHAPMAN: And our seniors, Senior Night, a lot of those boys came in with -- I did; so it means a lot to play with guys like Rashaad, like Micah, like all those boys. It's going to be a big day and I'm excited for it.

**Q. Seemed like tensions were running high. How was that going, the feeling between the two teams tonight?**

RONLEY LAKALAKA: We've just got to be emotionally ready for the game. We weren't emotionally ready for the game.

We didn't know what we were going to expect from the other team because they are coming in with a losing

record and they are going against us, and so we have to be mentally stronger and physically stronger.

**Q. During the pregame --**

CHRISTIAN CHAPMAN: Yeah, that's football. We're talking, competing, we're making plays, they're making plays, going back and forth. But the thing we need to not do is getting unnecessary penalties that are killing drives. We need to stop that because I think we could have had more points on the board. We could play better if that wasn't not the case. We need to just stop that and play football with our play.





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### San Diego State Football-Nevada Postgame Quotes

November 18, 2017

#### Nevada Head Coach Jay Norvell

##### **On how the team played:**

"I was proud of most of our effort tonight. The kids came in and competed really hard. We let some things get away from us late, which was disappointing. In the most part I was really proud of our effort. We really had some kids do some things well. Brendon O'Leary-Orange had a really good game. Ty Gangi did some great things. You know, you're just going to have to bowl your back a little bit more against a player like Rashaad Penny. He's a good player. I knew he was a good player when we came in, and you just have to do more things well against him to be able to slow him down in a game like this."

##### **On Rashaad Penny's performance:**

"I was actually disappointed we kicked the ball to him a couple times, but he's a good player. He's strong. He's fast. They keep giving him the ball. I think he's a very good player. He deserves a lot of the accolades he gets."

##### **On why they kicked the ball to Rashaad Penny:**

"We tried to manage some of that, and we obviously didn't do a very good job of it. We went in to the game knowing that one of their best offensive plays is their kick return in their return game. It's just something you can't give them too many opportunities at it because eventually he's going to make a big play. He's showing that on film. That's what he does. He did it again tonight."

##### **On the two special team plays:**

"They were big plays. Our kids are fighting their tails off to get in position to be in striking distance to take a lead, and we give them a return like that. That's just really disappointing more than anything else. But those are the things you have to do to win games against good teams. We certainly didn't do that tonight."

##### **On focusing their offense on the passing game tonight:**

"We did. We felt like we would be able to throw the football on them, but also I felt like it was going to be important for us to run the ball. We didn't do a good enough job of that in the second half. We're going to have to do that. We're going to have to run the ball to keep people on us and be balanced. I said that going in to the game, and we didn't do a good enough job of that in the second half."

##### **On Brendon O'Leary-Orange's performance tonight:**

“Just a big, vertical threat for us. He plays very strong to the ball. We felt like there were some weaknesses we could exploit, and we did some of that. He really responded as a player. He’s a very good kid, strong kid. He wasn’t really playing as impactful earlier in the year, but certainly has done a really good job and obviously had his night tonight.”

**On if Rashaad Penny wasn’t playing:**

“It’s pretty easy to say, but that’s the way they play. They put it all on him and give him the ball almost every snap. Eventually he’s going to make a big play, so you have to do a good job of managing him. Obviously, we just didn’t do a good enough job. We actually probably did a good enough job offensively managing him. We didn’t manage him in the kicking game very well.”

**On playing UNLV next week:**

“We’re looking forward to it. We’re going to get through this game as fast as possible and get home. We’re going to try to get through the film tomorrow and get ready for the team down south.”

**Nevada quarterback Ty Gangi**

**On tonight’s game:**

“I’m disappointed that we didn’t win. I thought we had a good game plan going in and we spent a lot of time preparing and watching film during the week. They just made more plays than we did. We’ve got to continue to get better and continue to make more plays so we can put ourselves in a position to win.”

**On the kinds of plays they wanted to make tonight:**

“We knew we wanted to throw it a little bit, more this game than usual. We took advantage of some of those things and, like I said, they just made more plays than we did.”

**On getting close, but losing chances:**

“I try to keep the offense focused on what we can control and try not to worry about the score, just going down and executing and trying to score on every drive.”

**On the extra pressure this game:**

“We knew we had to go in and score. We know their offense likes to run the ball and take time of possession away. So we knew we had to take advantage of our possessions and try to make the most of them.”

**Nevada linebacker Austin Paulhus**

**On his thoughts about the game:**

“It was a hard-fought game. We knew that coming in and we knew they were going to run the ball. We just knew how to stop them and I thought it was a hard-fought game.”

**On how well the team defended the ball:**

“Our defense did really well and I am proud of everybody. We fought really hard and everyone put everything into it. I am really proud of everybody and how they did.”

**On Rashaad Penny’s impact on the game:**

“I think his return was really impactful. I think that was the most impact he had on the game.”

**On the importance of the return plays:**

"That was a huge moment in the game. If he did not pull that we do not know what would have happened. It was definitely huge."

**On if this was their best defensive game of the season:**

"We played really well and I was pleased with everybody. Everybody fought hard and we played really well on defense. We stopped them for the most part and we busted up a couple of plays. We knew he was a good player who was going to bust up a couple of plays, but most of the time we played well on defense."

**- SDSU -**