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San Diego State Football Press Conference

August 30, 2016

SDSU football head coach Rocky Long

Opening Statement:

"I'm pretty sure we're excited about playing on Saturday. We're pretty healthy. We've only had one serious injury during camp to a backup offensive lineman so we're healthy going into the game. All of the players have continued to get better. I think that we anticipate playing well. My biggest concern is whether our team knows enough about New Hampshire. I'm not talking about schemes, I mean in terms of tradition and winning. They have a really coach that's been there for 18 years. He's got an unbelievable record. He's been to 12 straight playoffs, he has several really good players and they have a good tradition and they're used to winning. My biggest concern is that, if we don't take things seriously, or we don't know enough about them and their tradition and how good they really are, we could be in trouble come game day. But our team has performed well and it seems like they have a good attitude and I expect them to play well on Saturday night."

On what impresses him about Christian Chapman:

"I think his maturity level. Last year, when he got thrown in there, you're always concerned about a redshirt freshman being your starting quarterback and he performed much better than we anticipated he would and he just took off from there. Last year, we protected him pretty good with the things we knew he could do well and made sure he didn't do anything he wasn't comfortable doing. That's not the case anymore. He took the reins through spring practice and the offseason and all of that. He understands the whole offense. There's no restrictions on what we can or want to do with him. He seems to embrace it. He never seems nervous or uptight. He seems confident in his ability. I think he understands the offense much better than when he was thrown in there last year. In fact, we didn't give him the option to change plays last year. We called plays that you should be able to block on defense. There were some plays that might've been better if we would've gone the other way or something like that but we didn't give him those options. Now, he has those options."

On New Hampshire:

"They do very similar things on defense that we do. They play four d-linemen and we only play three, but we line up in a four down look all the time. They play five defensive backs the whole time, as we do, and very few people in the country do that no matter what the other team's defense is doing, so we're very similar there. We're complete opposites on offense. We're going to line up with a tight end or two tight ends, or we're going to line up in the I formation, or we're going run the ball and use the play action pass. Well, they're going to spread you from sideline to sideline, they're going to snap the ball every 15 to 18 seconds, the quarterback is going back to throw 60 or 70 times in a game. Now, this quarterback they named the starter is a scrambler. He'll pull it down and run really quickly instead of throwing it. He's going to go back and throw it 60 or 70 times but he might scramble and run with it 15 or 20. (Current San Francisco 49ers head coach) Chip Kelly was there before he went to Oregon and then went to the NFL and he's one of the first guys to put that offense into the college game. They've been running the same offense for a long, long time so they're really good at it and they know how to counteract anything you do on defense."

On opening the season against an FCS opponent:

"I think my concern is whether they're going to be a mature football team and perform no matter who we play because every time I hear one of them interviewed, no one asks them about New Hampshire. All they ask them about is the next one. Not only is it out there nationally but everybody locally is saying the same thing to them. There's only one class left that remembers Eastern Illinois (in 2013), who came out here and we should've won. They had to travel a long way, we were playing at home, we were a better team and they beat us and the only ones that

remember that are our senior class. Young people of this age believe what they want to believe and if they don't have the right attitude about it, we're going to be in trouble. Obviously, as a coach, you give them all of the reasons why they should be ready to go and why they should be this and why they should be that but if they want to believe that this game will be easy, we'll be in trouble."

On the strong alumni contribution to the program:

"The more recent alumni don't come back very often because they're all trying to start careers but you get a lot of text messages and you get a lot of word from them. When they're in town, they wander up there and bust in on meetings, like we still care. I think the guys over the last five or six years feel very good about where the program has been. They feel excited about being a part of it and they want to be a part of it as long as they can. What's changed dramatically is that the guys from the old era that weren't comfortable being a part of it feel comfortable and proud of it and feel like they're a part of it, too."

On if he uses the loss to Eastern Illinois in 2013 as motivation for the team:

"I've mentioned it once but I don't make a big deal out of it. To be honest with you, if you're a competitive athlete, you want to win no matter who you play. If you have some maturity, you're going to get ready to play no matter who it is because you realize that the other guy wants to win, too. They've won a lot of games in their history and I promise you that they're going to walk on to that field and expect to win, just like our team is going to walk on to the field and expect to win. That's what makes athletics so competitive and what makes it so much fun to be a part of and so much fun to watch. You think those New Hampshire guys are coming out here and are going to just let us win? That's a joke. They're coming out here to shock the world and beat us. Anybody that presents that deal that the game is easy has never played and has never coached."

On how he will play the running backs:

"We'll do it the same as we did it last year. DJ (Pumphrey) will get most of the carries but we'll probably have two alternate running backs in there, probably two of them in there. Juwan Washington and Rashaad Penny will take turns being the other running back depending on the situation because they're two different types of runners."

SDSU Player Quotes

Senior linebacker Calvin Munson

On the Aztecs receiving a preseason ranking:

"I think it's cool that we're ranked. But at the same time, it's just a preseason ranking. We haven't done anything yet this season. We have done anything yet as a team. A lot of credit goes back to last year's team, which kind of put us in this spot this year. We had a lot of seniors last year and had great leadership, which has set the bar high for us this year. But we have to keep it going. If we lose this week, we're not ranked anymore. So we just have to work hard, take things one game at a time and try to maintain our ranking."

On building on the success of players in previous seasons:

"We try to learn from them because they all led by example. They were great leaders, they were great players on and off the field. We just try to follow in their footsteps on how they motivated us (as underclassmen) to get better. They set the bar high. Like I said before, we had a rough start last year, but they got us going and we finished the season (strong)."

On the loss to Eastern Illinois as a freshman in the 2013 opener:

"(Three) years ago, we lost to Eastern Illinois in our season opener. We kind of looked past them, getting ready for our games after that thinking we were just going to show up and blow them out. They came in here more prepared than we were and they beat us."

On the team maintaining its focus heading into Saturday's game:

"I think we worked very hard during this offseason and this camp. We just have to keep preparing as best as we can and give it our all. I have 100 percent confidence in our team that if we go out and play our (style of) football, we're going to be happy with the results. Like any other week, you have to go out there and play your best. You can't have a bad quarter or a bad snap. You just have to play the best you can."

On New Hampshire running back Dalton Crossan and facing the rest of the Wildcats offense:

"He's a really good runner. He runs hard, he breaks a lot of tackles, breaks a lot of arm tackles. They pass a lot. They do a lot of read-option with the spread, so we're kind of prepared for both. We have a couple of schemes for the run and a couple of schemes for the pass . . . We've been working hard. They have a good team. They have an explosive offense, so we're excited for the challenge."

Senior offensive lineman Nico Siragusa

On the team maintaining its focus heading into Saturday's game:

"This group of guys is really focused on (the concept of) 'one week at a time.' We know we can't look forward to Cal, we can't look forward to Northern Illinois, we can't look forward to anything. But to accomplish our goal, we have to go undefeated every week, which is win one game at a time. And this group of guys really understands (how) not to look forward to anything."

On the team's experience heading into Saturday's game:

"We have a bunch of seniors who know how to approach a game week and know how to approach a week-one game. The best thing that we can do is mentor the guys who are coming in to start for the first week and let them know that we understand that they're going to have some first-game jitters and not to worry about it. We have faith in them. We know they're good players and can start for us. That's where the (senior) leadership comes in."

On the legacy of recent Aztec offensive linemen:

Learning from (past) seniors like Bryce Quigley, Terry Poole, Pearce Slater and Darrell Greene, for the offensive line group, those are pretty big shoes to fill. But they helped the whole offensive line mature to where we are now. I have to give them credit for the past. They're one of the main reasons why we are here. Six years ago when they went to their first bowl game if those seniors did not start the winning tradition, then we wouldn't be sitting here talking about going undefeated. So it's not just last year's seniors, but also the ones from 2010 and 2011."

Sophomore quarterback Christian Chapman

On whether or not he has taken advantage of getting more time to work with the wide receivers during offseason and training camp as opposed to last year:

"Yeah, a lot during the offseason. Always one-on-ones with Mikah (Holder), Eric Judge and guys like that. Even after workouts, we'd go out and throw. In time, I'd get into offensive one-snaps with them, getting the reps and timing down. It's helped a lot. I feel like I know most of the receivers now and what their speeds are. It's helped a lot coming into this season."

On the biggest differences in practices between this season and last:

"Consistency, and I feel like I'm more comfortable with the offense, so I know where to go with the ball when I see a certain coverage instead of thinking for an extra second. I know if it's not there to check down or run."

On adjusting to the college game after practicing against the Aztec defense on a daily basis:

"I had to step back a little bit and take a look at what I was going against. We run some crazy stuff that I had never seen before. I just had to get used to it. But now I feel I have a pretty good idea of what we run and how to go against it. It just makes it a lot easier when you're going against those other teams."

On becoming more composed in the pocket:

"That's something that (quarterbacks) coach (Blane) Morgan kind of preaches. Just be composed in the pocket. We know our line is going to hold up for us. When you do have a chance to make a play on your feet to just go ahead and take it. Just be confident and stay in there. If it's not there, just run. Don't get all antsy or it will lead to negative plays."

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