

# AZTEC FOOTBALL

SDSU Athletic Media Relations Office ♦ 5500 Campanile Drive ♦ San Diego, CA 92182 ♦ (619) 594-5547



## Head Coach Rocky Long

Signing Day Press Conference Quotes ♦ February 2, 2011

### Opening Statement:

"Every coach in America is going to say how excited and how happy they are with their recruiting class, because if you don't say that your fans think that you didn't do a good job. The thing about this class is that when the coaching change happened, we had 17 or 18 commitments, and after the coaching change and the transition period every one of the commitments was questioning whether they wanted to stay committed or not—which is normal in that kind of situation. I thought that the coaches that stayed—Brian Sipe, LeCharles McDaniel and Tony White— did an unbelievable job. The three of them did the job that nine assistant coaches normally do. They contacted our committed guys, made them feel good about their commitment to the program—which means they committed to the program and not to a coach—and most of them felt better about their commitments than after our initial contact. All the way down to the end there was four or five of those guys who were getting hit (by other coaches) on the very last weekend. Two of them had seven coaches in their school and at their house last Friday, trying to convince them that they ought to change their mind. In addition to that, we added four or five commitments after the coaching change.

"I think that how quick the change was made gave us a chance to keep a very athletic class together. If you go down this list, we are excited that we kept five of the local guys close to home, and all of them are multi-sport athletes. We have four offensive linemen there and every one of them is about athletic ability, and not just the size that they were recruited for to begin with. They will be giants some day. Two of the four play basketball and start on their basketball teams. We have a couple of those skill guys who are fast—I mean, they are 10.6, 10.7, 100-meter guys.

"But the biggest thing about this whole class is that we recruited athletes who can play several positions. If you look at the defensive backs, both those DBs were running backs. If you look at the wide receivers, they either played safety, corner or some of them even played linebacker on defense. All the big guys played both ways on offense and defense. The tight ends played both ways; not only are they good receivers but they are good blockers and they played defensive end on the defensive side. So the best thing about this class is that it's very athletic."

### On the fact that the coaching change didn't affect the decisions of recruits:

"Most of those kids committed to the program; I think that's why they stayed with the program. Now, a couple of those kids we actually got to commit after the coaching change, but I think they are committing to a school and an athletic program. I don't think they are committing to any coach. Sometimes the coach is important, but to be honest with you, the position coach is more important than who the head coach is, because the position coaches spend the most time with (the players.) A lot of our position coaches weren't in place at the time (of signing.) Some of (the players) I actively recruited. When I was an assistant coach I recruited seven of these guys, so I would have been really embarrassed if those seven didn't stay with their commitments. I think all of them committed to San Diego State. They committed to the package we have here, they committed to the school, they committed to the community and then they committed to the football program. I don't think they committed to any coach."

### On if any of the recruits have a good chance of having an immediate impact on next year's team:

"All of them and none of them. Now I know that sounds like I'm skirting the issue here, but I'm experienced enough at this job (to know) that you never point out certain ones. If you do, those guys don't turn out very good and the ones you forget to mention turn out to be the starters. Every one of those kids will be given a chance early in camp to prove that they can play as freshmen. If they are not going to play a lot they are going to be redshirted. If they're going to be in the two-deep and help our team be better they'll be playing as true freshmen, and every one of them has the same chance. Now, in reality, the closer you get to the line of scrimmage the harder it is for freshmen to play. Most linemen always redshirt. Whereas, a skill guy who plays wide receiver or running back, athletic ability maybe means as much as strength and maturity. The closer you get to the line of scrimmage, the more you have to be a man."

### On recruiting versatile athletes:

"That was a philosophy that was here with the former staff and a philosophy that will continue. The game is getting faster, more athletic. The big brutes that just knock each other down are going by the wayside. It is becoming a much more athletic game, so you recruit athletes more than you recruit big brutes. That's a philosophy that most teams that want to be good adhere to. We're going to take athletes before anything else, even in the offensive line where you really have to have some bulk and size to perform well. On the line we are going to take athletes that have the potential to be big, not just big guys because we need big guys. We'll make sure we have a 275 pound athlete out there instead of a 350 pound slug. When you look at the kids in high school, none of them are gigantic, but come back three years from now and they will be giants that will be able to move their feet, change direction and run. If you watch them on film they are finishers, too. When they bury you, they bury you and enjoy it. We are not going to recruit any linemen that don't do that, either. Guys that look pretty and stand there in their uniform can play for someone else."

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## **On if he watches recruits play other sports:**

"Yes. I think that a multisport athlete is one that has much more potential than one that has been convinced that if you only play one sport, it will get you to the top. There may be some individual sports where that may be true because you have to be so skilled, but in football, a guy that plays multiple sports is going to be a much better player than a guy that's only played football."

## **On if last year's successful season allowed the team to have a better recruiting class:**

"It helped us to keep the guys in the fold that committed and maybe thought about changing their mind. It might have helped us get some of the new guys that hadn't committed before. We had 10 to 12 of the guys recruited at the end of the summer, and that was way before the season. Once again, they are committing to a philosophy, a program and a school."

## **On the star systems used by recruiting agencies:**

"The system of rating recruits is by guys trying to make money. I had a friend coaching at a smaller school, and he had a guy that was a two-star guy. Ten days before signing day, the player changed his mind and went to a top-10 program. All of a sudden, they changed him to a four-star guy. Does that tell you what I think about that system?"

## **On if there are any differences in the players he attracts because of the position he coaches:**

"I'm sure there are a bunch of differences. I don't know how to compare myself to (former Aztec head coach) Brady Hoke. I've been with him in a home, recruiting. Obviously we have different personalities, so our styles are different. Does that mean we're going to attract different players? No. We're recruiting athletes. If you coach a particular position, like if I remained the safeties coach, there's a chance you might get a few higher profile safeties because they think the head coach is going to be there position coach, which to a 17-year-old sounds really exciting. In reality, that doesn't make a difference, but in the recruiting process that makes a young man think 'I'm going to be coached by the head coach.' They might be better off being coached by someone else because the head coach has a whole bunch of other things to do than coaching his position."

## **On Inland Empire recruits:**

"We have had 13 guys from the Inland Empire sign in the last two years. There's a lot of reasons those kids want to come to San Diego State and there's a lot to sell here. When you're only two to three hours away from here, it's really inviting. For us, it's a really good recruiting area. In fact, there's a pocket inside the Inland Empire that plays as good as football as I've ever seen. I've recruited all over the nation and these guys in California play as good as anyone in the country. They make a better deal out of it in some of the other states."

## **On if San Diego is one of the aforementioned recruiting pockets:**

"Yes, I think so. You see the number of kids that sign out of the San Diego area every year in a lot of sports, not just football. You see them represented in the NFL, or some of them that are snowboarders. I mean, how is the greatest snowboarder in the world for San Diego? I haven't figured that one out yet, but I think that for the size of the population there are a lot of great athletes that come out of here in all sports. We're going to make an effort to keep as many of them here as we can. If we can continue to win games, more and more of them will stay. I don't know how many of them we had last year, but we had five this year, and all of them are good players that were recruited by other people, some of them by Pac-10 schools. When I got here, I heard you couldn't get a kid that was being recruited by a Pac-10 school, and that's baloney."

## **On if SDSU lost any recruits to Michigan:**

"No, not at all. I think that (the Michigan staff) handled it very professionally. They did not contact or recruit any kids that were committed. They did contact and recruit several kids that we were still recruiting that hadn't committed to anybody. That's as professional as you can get. There are a lot of head coaches in this world that would not have done it that way. I have been around them."

## **On if having a former SDSU coach in the Big Ten will put SDSU on the map for future recruiting:**

"I don't think so because the majority of our recruiting will come from different regions of the country. You can go to top-10 schools that say they recruit national, and then you look at their rosters and 80 to 90 percent of their rosters are local. If you look at a Big Ten school, 80 to 90 percent of their kids are from Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Minnesota, and Illinois. The majority of everyone's team is from where the most heavily populated city is near the school. They might get one or two kids from way off some place. When I was coaching at another place, we tried to do that because if you get recruit a guy from way far away and he has a bunch of stars behind his name, and he comes to your place, he may not be as good as the guy down the street but you get a whole lot more credit for it in the recruiting rankings. There are plenty of good football players here that we don't have to go look nationally. So, I would say that's not going to help us in recruiting, nor will it hurt us. There are very few head to head competitions during recruiting."