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San Diego State Football Press Conference Quotes

November 14, 2023

San Diego, Calif.

Head Coach Brady Hoke

Opening Statement:

"Thanks for coming. As you know I talked a lot last night about my future and retirement and after practice. I guess we had a really good sunset behind me. I didn't get to see that but that may be a really good omen you know? In all seriousness, I want to talk about our football team today and our seniors and take some questions about the retirement part of it. It's something that was coming, that it was time and I was glad to be able to have it be me making a choice and be able to do it. Our seniors are who I want to talk about, and we've got a football team that's going to go out like they did last night. They worked their ass off, they practiced hard for those people who were there. You can see that there was great energy, and we want to focus on them and this football team because that's what this is all about to begin with. So, I'm going to retire. It's something that my wife Laura and I are looking forward to. We've done this a long time. I'm proud of what we've done at each and every stop, and here at San Diego State in 2009 and coming back and having the only team that's had a 12 win season is something that we're really proud of in the circumstances that team played with, as far as San Diego State football, we will be in good hands, I can promise you that, because that's how things are done. Looking back at Colorado State, it was another tough one, obviously. We got behind the sticks early offensively in the first half and just couldn't get anything going. I thought the defense played well. From the standpoint kept us in there and got a little bit tired and played a lot of plays in the first half. But, overall, we've got to start faster, and that will be true of this weekend for sure, with San Jose. Things that we liked, we had two turnovers on defense and had a chance for a third. And offensively I think there were some bright spots in the running game. I was happy that we were a little better. Cam Davis did a really good job and he's a great kid. If you haven't had a chance to ever talk to him or be around him, he is a really great kid from Dallas. And he has continued to improve and progress. Negatively, defensively, we gave up some big plays, and I'm talking about 12 yard runs, 15 yard passes, and got to tackle a little better again. Part of that is we have got to do a better job up front and getting off blocks. And then the kicking game, we muffed a punt. There was some confusion on was it touched, was it not touched. The two officials on our side thought it was touched, the official all the way on the other side of the field, he saw it differently. The guys on our side said it wasn't, but they turned around, they looked at it and made the call, so it is what it is. But in the kicking game, those are the kinds of things that we have got to shore up. From Mekhi, he's a really dependable young man on the football field and off the football field, in the classroom, he's really a class act, so we'll clean that up and then get ready like we did last night starting with San Jose State."

On knowing when it's time to retire:

"Oh, I don't know, when I hit my 65th birthday on November third... you know the 65th was coming, but I just think it's one of those things where you don't know if we ever know when it's time, but I did know, and I did feel that going into this season that would be something that we would approach and talk about, Laura and I during the season."

On describing how it feels to announce retirement to the players:

"Without getting too emotional? It's hard. It's hard. You know, you love the guys."

On counseling players who were recruited by his staff, and might have new eyes on them:

"You counsel them the best you can because you know what? Why did they come here in the first place? And you're hoping in a lot of ways, they didn't come because of this coach or that coach, even though that's part of it. The kids make different decisions during recruiting. San Diego is not a bad place to go to college, right? The city, San Diego State itself, so from that standpoint, you're hoping the guys who came here are here for different reasons, right? Because they all are, but at the same time, you know, we have got to finish out the season. And that's what's important right now."

On accepting changes that came with NIL:

"We all need to accept it. I don't think I was extremely high on NIL in the transfer portal, and I have said that, but that doesn't mean we weren't involved with it. So just because I don't like something doesn't mean we're not going to do what we need to do to put a competitive team on the field."

On his coaching legacy:

"It's never been, and I know Rocky would say the same, it's not about us. It never is. It's about the kids that you have the ability to develop, not just as football players, but as husbands, fathers, people who, when they're done with this game, can be somebody wherever they end up who's really good for their situation, and they can be looked up to."

Defensive end Garret Fountain and running back Martin Blake

On how Brady's retirement speech went:

Garret: "The speech was good. Coming in that morning, I knew something was definitely off and just really from my perspective, it was one of those moments where you're kind of bummed. I've had the privilege to be around him all five years that I've been here. He was the D-line coach the first year obviously then the head coach for the last four. I've learned nothing but a ton from that man and just seeing the emotion of him and me being a little bit emotional myself just because maybe things haven't gone the way we wanted this year. So it was just a little emotional really."

Martin: "We knew something was coming into that workout and it was just preparing to hear something. From the time I've been here, that's like my best friend, that's my guy. I always told him we're close, that's my guy. So just seeing him, I know he poured a lot into this program and he created this culture, him and Coach Hall. We're going to keep pushing no matter what and keep that culture, try and strive for him and keep going these last two weeks with him and try and battle it for these last two wins for him. Send him off on a high note."

On what goes through his mind looking ahead to next season:

Martin: "Of course there's going to be a little worry and a little sadness on what is going to happen next. But at the end of the day, you just have to keep being you and keep being an Aztec. I'm always going to be an Aztec. I'm always going to take whatever they gave me from here and I'm blessed and thankful for whatever they gave me. I'm still going to take that and incorporate that into next season. I'm still going to be the same dog, the same me, trying to help the team. I'm still going to try and lead in my ways. Nothing's going to ever change and I'm just going to keep the culture as much as we can that we have here. Someone stepping into new shoes doesn't mean that we change, we're still going to have that same Aztec way."

On the young defensive line stepping up:

Garret: "I think they have an absolutely great chance of doing that. I think the young guys that we have in our room are going to fill the shoes that are needed. Darrion Dalton went out earlier this year with a shoulder injury as well. I think him coming back, obviously Tupu and then Keion, Ryan, Brady, all those guys and some younger guys that we have, I'm working with them every day and they put in the work and they work hard every day and they want to get better. I think they have really taken strides towards becoming really good football players and I think you're gonna be able to see that next in the coming season."

On what they have learned the most from Hoke:

Garret: "I was thinking about this today before coming in here and there's not a lot of words that I could really describe it. He's helped me become a better man, really, and a better person in society. He is a phenomenal leader of men. He's an even better father and husband. Just having that role model and I was fortunate enough to have come from a very strong family background and my mother and father have been married for many years, and I've seen that. But also seeing it from another person as well as far as like Coach Hoke and Mrs. Hoke. You still see them having fun joking and pizza and stuff like that. But anyways I think I've learned so much on and off the field. Obviously, how to bust my tail and on the football field and how to be a great player, and how to learn to be a great player and what you need to do because he's been around this game so long. Also like I said, just being a man, husband, and a father. He's a great role model for anybody. Really, and I've learned a lot through that."

Martin: "For me, he just taught me it's okay to be a person and to be a football player. He was always there no matter what. I'm forever grateful for him giving me the scholarship and all that but just him as a coach, just an amazing person like he'll run on the field and talk to me, as my relationship grew with him, he just taught me it's okay to be a person and a football player. We can talk one on one, he can be there for me. I can say, 'I'm this, I've I seen this' and he's like 'Oh, yeah it's okay. You saw that? Then we'll fix it on the next one,' like it's okay to be wrong. It's okay to be hard working but at the same time, have some character to you, have a personality, have the influence on the game as you'd have. You have your own influence on the game. He taught me it was okay to be like that, it's not just being an Aztec but to be you as an Aztec. That's what I loved about him the most. He just taught me it's two sides of football, and you have to incorporate it both in the game."

On losing players to NIL:

Martin: "Me personally, NIL is great. NIL is an amazing thing for college athletes, but I'm one of the people that likes to work. I don't really care for NIL as much as other people do. I'm going to put my nose down and do whatever I can to help this team win and help myself. That's how I see it. NIL is great, we should have more opportunities and we should branch out for things like that for other players coming in. But for me, I'm always going to be the same hard worker and I bet we have people all over the team like that, because that's just being an Aztec. We're going to come in here and work and hopefully we get the opportunity. Hopefully we get more, we're never going to not get any more. But if we don't, that doesn't deter from us trying to be a great team."

Garret: "The only thing I can really add to that is I feel along with Martin, the NIL is a great thing. If you want to pursue that, some schools are more prominent than others at it. But you're around SDSU, this is a culture about football and about playing the game and playing it for wins. Not trying to come in and go to a school where the only reason you're there is money. That's one of those things where money is sometimes the root of all evil. When I came to this place, and that's why I've had no interest in going anywhere else, is really because I love this culture. I came here on a visit and I saw the culture and I understood what it was like, and I wanted to come to this program because of the culture and I wanted to play this game for this culture and these fans in San Diego and I wanted to help the program as best that I could. It was for the team aspect of it and for playing with my brothers, playing for my teammates, for this city and winning football games. For me, college athletics and college football was about earning a degree and winning games, it wasn't about money for me. I know some people have

different opinions on it, but that's pretty much mine. I think a lot of guys would agree with me that sometimes people get away from playing the game to play the game and have fun and win football games, more in it for the money when that's what the pros are for instead of college."

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