



Arizona State Head Coach Kenny Dillingham Weekly Press Conference
Monday, September 22, 2025
Previewing TCU and Week Five:

On how the offensive has executed in the first three games:

"We haven't had the explosive pass plays over top. That's been just a combination of things, it's not quarterback driven. It's one time we maybe miss up a pro and the other time we maybe get beat, that happens, then our running backs free. Another time, we don't have a good route spacing, every single time there's one spot just so close. We're so close to hitting those. That'd be probably the biggest thing, and then the second thing would be just red zone scoring. Depending on what you call a real possession, but real possessions to me are not like end of half, we had 10 possessions. One of those I wouldn't count as a real possession because it would have been a two-minute drill, which I put in a different category. So nine possessions, three in the first half was all we had, three first-half possessions and then a two-minute drill that we went three-and-out on. We went down the field three times and got stopped the one time for a penalty which ended the drive. I've been happy with how we're playing. We just got to finish drives in the red zone. We got to start as a staff, finding ways to finish drives in the red zone."

On (QB) Sam Leavitt playing one of his best games at Baylor:

"Obviously quarterbacks, a lot of people look at stats. When you look at a stat line to determine the play, Sam (Leavitt) played one of his best games since he's been here. He played phenomenally, extended drives. He ran more than we like to usually run quarterbacks, but he did because it was needed in the game. He was accurate and in the quick passing game, he played really, really well. You can play one of those balls down the field or two of them and now you're saying, he threw for 330, he had 70% completions, maybe one of those scored a touchdown, he accounted for three total touchdowns and the narrative completely changes. To your point, when you start connecting on those, that's how narratives completely change at quarterback, but I thought he played phenomenal."

On the running game not clicking in the second half vs. Baylor:

"We were bouncing runs too wide, we weren't getting vertical enough with some of the runs. We could have done some better stuff as a staff, creating better leverages for the offensive line for them. It's a combination of a couple of things, in terms of not getting vertical on runs. Then we got to do a better job creating better leverages based off of what they were doing on defense. I thought we could have done some things better as a staff."

On how a shorter week affects preparations for TCU:

"The first two days are the same, Sunday, Monday. Tuesday will be the same, we just don't do as much good on good versus each other. We don't do quite as much crossover, which is good on good but on their plays, we just do way more scouts. Then we turn Wednesday into a half walk-through so we limit that day about 30 minutes less. Then a normal Wednesday and Thursday becomes mainly a main walkthrough. We lose Friday, then we try to get a little bit more rest on Wednesday."

On the confidence with (QB) Sam Leavitt and (WR) Jordan Tyson setting up success on offense:

"I got confidence that when our offense is on the field at the end of the game we're going to get it done. Over the last two years... at the end of the game when something needs to get done, our percentage of getting it done on offense is very, very high right now. That's the positive takeaway, our offense is so close to being really, really good. We're just right there, we're on the brink, still trying to figure it out. From week one to the end of week two, we got better. Week three we got better, week four we drove better, we just weren't good situationally in the red zone. If we fix that, then we're talking about every single week we're getting better. Hopefully this next week we put it all together, but at the end of the games I have the utmost confidence in those guys making plays."

On Kicker Jesus Gomez:

"He (Jesus Gomez) just prepares. If you guys come out to practice, you'll see, we don't kick him as much. Throughout the week and when we're doing field goal, he stands 30 yards behind, taking his steps, simulating like he's kicking on air. That level of focus is why I have so much confidence in him, is that it matters to him. When it matters to somebody you can trust him."

On the challenges facing TCU:

"The quarterback, he's a really, really good football player. (He) can extend plays, can make throws in the pocket, anticipates throws, and knows where to go with the ball. He's really good and then they have weapons outside. Coach (Kendal) Briles, it's amazing what he does on offense, it's so much different than what he used to be. It's so creative and it's very, very explosive, not just in the passing game, but in the running game, different formations every week trying to create leverages. What they do on offense schematically and then combined with having a quarterback and the skilled players, then their offensive line play well. Just that quarterback is a dynamic player, which he is, we've got to find a way to contain him."

On if (HC) Kenny Dillingham has changed his play-calling due to his personnel:

"One hundred percent. I'm going to change based on our personnel. We kick field goals at a higher rate, we're struggling right now in short yardage. We get short yardage down there, we're probably going to kick more field goals than we have in the past, that's changing our personnel. Every week and every game is a little different. That's why I don't just copy and paste the book in terms of the statistics because I want to be able to manage the flow of the game for each individual team, each individual game. We kicked four field goals. It pains me to say it out loud like golly, how do we kick four field goals. That's usually not a recipe for success, kicking that amount of field goals, but it also shows the amount of drives we put together on offense. The ball control we created on offense, all of those positives, if we finish two drives, we're talking about an offensive resurgence. That's the name of it, you can't get lost in it. We challenge the offense on a few things to get better at ... but what I really want to see that, I think could be the difference. If we do that, you're going to see us take that next step because we're so close there."

On Wide Receiver Derek Eusebio getting a larger role:

"I definitely think that him getting on the field more is going to be good for us. He works, he's consistent, so I can definitely see him getting more involved."

On Derek Eusebio's multi-dimensional availability:

"It's huge, you can trust him. At the end of the day, the message to the offense today was that I want people who will play as hard as they possibly can, that we can trust them and that they will be where they're supposed to be and do what they're supposed to do. That's somebody who will do all those things. He catches the ball, he runs the ball, he crosses before contact. He does all the little things right, that's what he does. He does everything right and you can win with people who do that."

On Defensive Back Keith Abney's growth:

"He's one of those dudes who gets better every single game. He learns, he puts it in the bank, and he applies it. He is super intelligent and is the definition of Barrett Honors, the kid's going to play for a long time and then he's going to be even more successful in the real world."

On having an advantage on teams in close games:

"We harp on game situations all the time. I think guys are ready for situations at the end of games. Our guys are ready to win at the end of games. We don't always get it done, but we've won in so many different ways in these close moments that our guys are ready for those moments in the game for sure. That has nothing to do with coaching, some guys they make plays in the biggest moments. I wish I could tell you that we do something, but they make plays in the biggest moments. We got a bunch of our guys on our team who perform their best in the biggest moments."

On TCU's defense and Defensive Back Bud Clark:

"Their entire defense is playing really good right now through the first three weeks, even dating back to last year towards the end of the year with all the returners. What's tricky with (TCU DB Bud Clark) is they do many things on defense coverage-wise and pressure wise that he could be all over. This makes it harder to find him and harder to play away from him because of how exotic they are with some of their shows and pressures. (TCU Defensive Coordinator) Coach Avalos does a good job moving him around, I think it's a great challenge."

On the team's injury updates:

"(WR Jalen) Moss is still working his way back. I thought last week at this time he was going to make it. I would still say it's doubtful for him to make a return this week. We got some other guys getting checked out, but nothing from last week that should be better. (RB Kyson Brown) will be a full go, so you should expect him to be more involved this week."

On any stories from TCU Head Coach Sonny Dykes:

"I don't really know Sonny, but I know he's won a lot. I've only heard really good things about him, so he's won a lot and he always has good quarterbacks, so that's not fun."

On the pass rush against Baylor:

"I've said since fall camp that our pass rush has been one of the most improved things on our team. The size and strength of our defensive line and the ability to rush and impact the quarterback. There were times where our game's were a little sloppy this past Saturday, but for the most part our game's have been clean. (DL) Clayton (Smith) didn't get a sack, but he caused another holding penalty, which is essentially a sack in my mind, so the impact was the same. (DL) Prince (Dorbah) is also playing well. There's many guys that are just playing really well up front and they're playing team football."

On the pass rush preparation going into this week against TCU Quarterback Josh Hoover:

"We can't let this guy (TCU QB Josh Hoover) extend plays. He makes all the throws, he extends plays, and makes explosive ones. So we've got to be able to contain him and not contain him for rushing for 150 yards, but contain him from extending plays, not getting sacked, and then extended plays create explosive plays. That's what we got to prepare for."

On how he recruits a player who can make big plays in big moments:

"We got lucky, I think about care level, whenever I don't know an answer to something, I think about care level because it's real. I think about how badly somebody wants something, and the odds of succeeding are higher, and what you are willing to do to succeed. Are you willing to stay up all night if you knew it would create an advantage or are you willing to go to bed at 7? Some people, they just want it so bad, they're going to do what is necessary, and those guys are going to have a higher level of performance come game day. Those are the guys who are going to be more prepared, and are going to perform better. I just want people that think that everything matters."

On how they can incorporate wide receivers other than Jordan Tyson in the offense:

"I think some of it is we're potentially scheming (Jordan Tyson) JT up in some man sets. So when people bracket him in man, our answer may not be attacking him down field. I think we have to do some different things opposite of JT with how teams are going to start playing him, and how teams have played him schematically. It's up to me to fix that problem. Another thing is, we have to be better at our perimeter blocking. We're not having as many explosive plays, whether it's running backs, tight ends, or wide receivers blocking in space. Those explosive plays happen when teams are bracketing a player and double team a player, naturally they are down a human being. Well, if they're down a person, there's one less person on another side whether you run it or throw it. So if you run it, you should get more explosive runs. If you throw it, we have to create better leverages and angles to throw. It's a combination of things that we have to do away from where people want to bracket him. But once again, like I said last week. You can bracket, but we went on two drives in the first half that were over 13 plays. So we had three reel drives and two of them were over 13 plays. That's as efficient as I've ever seen on offense. One of the other drives ended on a holding call on a 3rd and 7th conversion which would have extended the drive. Those were our three drives in the first half. That's really, really good football. So we did attack the way we wanted to. We just had penalties and we didn't score in the red zone. If you look from the macro perspective of 'Did you score or did you not?', it doesn't look great. When you look at the details, we're that close to being really good. And that's always the challenge on Sunday and Monday as we come in. We challenge the guys to be better in the areas that we have to get better in order to improve, win or lose, doesn't matter."

On the investment the community has had in the team throughout the start of the season:

"It's been unbelievable playing at home and we need that this week. This is one of the games that I've said is going to be a critical game to our season. We said it dating back to when the schedule came out. We have a really good TCU team with a really good quarterback coming in on a Friday night. Emotions are high, and it's right before a bye week— we have to push all of our chips into the middle. And we need the fans there. We just don't need you there, we need you loud. We need [you] to make an impact on Friday night for our players because we've been showing up and we've been great. I mean, the atmosphere has been awesome. Let's continue to build on that and Friday night, let's make this the place to be."

On how they have seen WR Derek Eusebio grow from being a walk-on player to now:

"He is super intelligent and he works. That is how he's grown, he puts in work every day. He's intelligent, so he knows where to be. Do you want to know how many times we practiced jet sweep with him last week. But guess what? He's done it in the past and we trust him. So we just put him in there after we had some momentum. We thought, you know what, we can trust this dude. Let's keep playing him. However we have to do it, let's underthink the coaching and overthink the player. It's a player's game, so we said, 'How do we get him the ball?' and we did it."

On how important (OL) Jalen Klemm's tackle during a special teams' play was for the team's moral:

"It was huge. Jalen just worked all offseason. He's a tough guy and he's going to start playing more on offense. I said I want guys who have an edge about them. I want to start inserting a little more of an edge and Jalen's got an edge. That tackle was an example of that... He's a really good football player too, so we have to start saving some legs for some other guys and rotating him. Because that competitive nature is something I support on the football field, and I want guys who make plays like that on the field."

On what he thinks of (S) Adrian "Boogie" Wilson's performance as a starter in the absence of Xavian Alford:

"I'm glad you brought that one up. Alford is out. So that will be the same. Boogie's been playing really well for us. He and (Ghost) Rowser together had a really nice tackle to create a takeaway in the football game, which was critical. So I'm glad we have Boogie. Last year we got through the season without many injuries, which was nice. This year, not so much. We're dinged up pretty early, with some vital players dinged up through spring ball. On a positive note, it was good to get Zach Swanson back this last week. He got some reps this last week, so hopefully that continues the trend, but boogie's been great."

On S Kendrick Breedlove's performance in the defensive secondary.

"That was his best game as a Sun Devil for sure. He triggered when we needed him to trigger, blew up screens, covered really well, kept leverage, squeezed, and attacked the ball when he was behind it after chasing it on their first drive, which created a TFL. That's a guy who has a high level of care, he wants to be good. Sometimes he's too hard on himself, but his want is there."

On how Sam Leavitt has adjusted as opponents get a better read on his game:

“Really well. When you think about last game, he equated for almost 300 yards and probably 75% of our offense. In the pass or football game— he was efficient. We didn't turn the ball over. He was his best in the biggest moments. He's starting to learn how teams are going to play them. When you're a quarterback, you go through the nobody knows me phase and you get to play your game. Then you're to, somebody learned me, and then it's copycat. Everybody learns about you, when one person learns something that gives you problems, everybody learns it. That's coaching. You have to grow from that. Then they'll figure out something else that gives you problems, and you struggle until eventually you've been through the cycles of what defenses can do that gives you problems. He's getting to that point where he's seen so much now, that we know how teams are going to attack him for the most part. He's done an awesome job.”

On keeping things light when possible:

“I think you have to keep it fun enough where it's not like every play is the most important play, but you can't be wound up all the time. You've got to go play the game. I tell Sam before the game, ‘Everything I told you, forget it.’ If you're thinking about what I'm telling you before you take a snap, we are in trouble. You should be thinking about whatever is in your mind at that moment. You've got to play naturally. If you're at safety and you're thinking about all this other stuff, you should be thinking whatever is natural to you. If we did a good enough job as a staff, what is natural to you is the plan ... and if they're thinking about what they want, what we want, something's wrong. I always say to those guys who love ball that when you get out there, if you're not ready, that's on us. Go play your game.”

On Keith Abney raising his level after a pass interference call:

“He was pissed because he thought he was in a good position. I told the guys at halftime, we got two pass interference calls on their last drive at the end of the half. We're doing what I told them to do, which was take away a certain route concept and they were doing it so I thought they did a great job. We're playing man coverage. If you play man coverage 50 times, you're going to get pass interference calls. I wish we didn't. Maybe we'll play a game where we play man coverage 50 times and we don't. But, wake me up when that happens because it won't. It's just unfortunate when it's back to back and it's unfortunate when it's on third downs. Third down penalties drive me nuts because they extend drives for free. But if you play man (coverage) and challenge people, you're going to get flags. I always look at the end of the game when it comes to in-game penalties. I always look and compare us to the opponent because every crew calls things differently. So you can't say penalties are bad because penalties can also be aggressive. So, if they're saying, ‘Hey, we're going to call this game a certain way,’ as long as you're close to the opponent in penalties, then all you're doing is playing football. They just may call it more. The penalties that drive me nuts are the self-inflicted, not on the ball, or false starts. Those things drive me nuts. Football penalties, that's the game of football. It's going to happen.”

On cleaning up penalties in the second half against Baylor:

“I don't like procedural penalties. I hate pre-snap penalties. So I think there's a balance of wanting your guys to play aggressive and teaching them to never get penalties. There's some penalties you can't live with, but if we're getting penalties attacking and playing the game with an aggressive mindset, I'm cool with it as long as we're not doing it recklessly. But I want to see

violence and passion and aggressiveness. That's what football is. I say over and over again, 'Move people backwards, you win games.'"

On changing the look of the offense throughout the season to keep opponents guessing:

"Our thing is every three games, we want to be completely different. So hopefully this week we look completely different. Once a team gets three games (of film) on you, they're going to have enough information. So every three games we try to look different, be different, and change everything. The hard part is that it's a short week, so there's a balance of how much can you completely change as opposed to normal going into a short week, but we definitely hope those disguises and some of those things look completely different this week. We tried to change a little last week. We'll change a little bit more this week and try to constantly adapt. But, can you do it throughout a game and get your job accomplished? For us coaching, it's simple. But can we show it correctly because if you don't show it correctly, then you're just out of position and they already know what you're doing. So there is a balance of what do you show, what do you not, how do you, do you want to trick people or do you want to say this is what (formation) we're in, let's dance. I think sometimes you've got to say this is what we're in, you called your play, we've called ours, and let's go. Then other times you've got to throw the quarterback off to get him out of that rhythm as well."