

## **Head Coach Gus Malzahn**

*Opening statement...* "I'm happy for our players. It's a good win, we have our off week coming up and it couldn't have come at a better time. We have a better idea of who we are offensively, defensively and (on) special teams. Some things we can build upon, and we can get some guys healed up. Much needed. Really, I felt that the keys to the game were that the defense forced four turnovers and gave the offense some short fields. There were three kickoff returns that were impact plays in the game. Also, some short fields. Peyton Barber had a good game. He ran the ball hard – extremely hard in the second half when they knew that we were probably going to run the football. The crowd was great on a misty afternoon. But overall good win – I'm happy for our players. Good spot going into the off-week."

*On the team's identity...* "We do what we have to do to win, and that's just the way it was today. I was excited about the running game. We didn't have to throw it that much. We had some short fields that had something to do with that, too. But we have a good idea about who we are moving forward."

*Impact of Peyton Barber...* "We knew he had the chance to be a very good running back. The thing that stands out to me about Peyton is it is very important to him. He reminds me of Cameron Artis-Payne, about the importance of the game, the team, and everything that goes with it. He shows great toughness. He ran the ball extremely well and hard. For the most part he has had good ball skills. I think we put the one ball on the ground and he got it back, but he has really been the leader of our offense so far."

*The impact of explosive plays...* "We talked about explosive plays. I think Ricardo Louis made one of the big plays in the game. He was covered, Sean had to hold it as long as he could, and they had an extra guy coming through the gap, and Ricardo made one of the bigger plays of the game right before halftime to give us a little bit of breathing room. I thought that was a huge play, too."

*On Barber being explosive in the fourth quarter...* "I think that is who he is. He gets stronger as the game gets going on. Like I said earlier, they knew we were going to run the football. It is not just a credit to Peyton, but it is also a credit to our offensive line. They are starting to come together and they are jelling a little bit better, and starting to do some good things."

*Plan for Jeremy Johnson...* "We went into this game just like last game. Jeremy had some packages if the situation presented itself. Jeremy has worked extremely hard, and he had a good week of practice."

*On the wildcat...* "That was Kerryon Johnson's first time running the wildcat. I thought he did some good things. It is just a matter of him handling the ball a little bit."

*On ball security...* "There is no doubt we have to correct that. There were some close things, especially the one going in right there. I think our quarterback had something to do with a couple of them. He has to protect the football. At the same time, like I told him, he is not a running back. You get what you can and try to get down. He tried to run over a couple of guys right there, and we need to do a better job of that in the future. The bottom line is there were no turnovers, which is big. The coaching factor as far as ball security has to get better."

*On Sean White remaining the starter at quarterback...* "I think he did some good things. He competed and did some good things. We will keep taking this thing week-to-week like we have been doing it. We are starting to get good answers to the questions that we needed. There are a bunch of new guys out there, a bunch of young guys in certain situations, so we have a better idea moving forward."

*Confidence in the passing game...* "I am very confident; we just didn't need to today. We ran the football, and we had short fields. If we had

to throw the football, I feel as good as you can about a guy who is a second start. He made a really good play when he got the ball off to Ricardo like we were talking about.”

*On the 4<sup>th</sup> and inches play...* “From a coach’s standpoint when you are down there close, you can go for it. But, if you go up by 17 the game is over. We feel pretty good about our field goal team, but obviously we didn’t get it done. When you don’t make it, it’s easy to ask why we didn’t go for it. That’s just part of it. You get a feel for a game and you have to make the best decision you can as a coach. At that time, I felt pretty strongly that we needed to kick the field goal and go up by 17.”

*Auburn only having one penalty...* “That was a huge focus of ours that we talked about. We can’t beat ourselves. We can’t be behind the chains and I think we talked about that Tuesday. We have to have the plus plays on first down and I thought for the most part that we did that today.”

*Evaluation of the defense...* “I think you have to look at it collectively. The big thing that stood out to me was the four turnovers. If you get four turnovers, I don’t care how many yards you give up, you still have a good chance of winning. We were very opportunistic. They are still a work in progress just like our offense, but the good thing is, we know a lot about what we have and the good thing is that we have an off week which is much needed to heal up and clean some things up. It’s a good win against a quality opponent and we can get some good momentum going into the second half of this season.”

*Comparing San José State this year and last year...* “They are much better. They are much improved on offense and I thought they were solid defensively too.”

*The importance of the off week for Sean White...* “It’s very important, not just for him but for everybody. It will give us a chance to really catch our breath as coaches and really evaluate the big picture and get

the best plan moving forward.”

*On D’haquille Williams today...* “He made a really good play on that tunnel. He broke a couple of plays and almost popped it. He’s a guy that does draw the attention of the defense and a lot of time opens up other things.”

*Things the team will focus on in the off-week...* “It’s just getting better at who we are going to be in the second half of the season. We’ve gotten some good information on the young guys. I think that is probably the biggest thing for me is how the young guys are going to respond, what their strengths are, and building around those strengths.”

*On when Ricardo Louis will be 100%...* “He’s close. He practiced the majority of the week and we tried to rest him. It’s going to good for him to rest this next week and have him back. He made one of the impact plays of the game.”

*On the health of Tim Irvin...* “He wasn’t able to play.”

*How far is the team from where you want it to be...* “We are a run to play action team and to be a really good offense, you have to be balanced and balanced means that you take what they give you. If they are giving you the throw, you have be able to execute and if they are giving you the run, you have to execute that. We are still working toward that, but there were some bright spots today that we can take for the rest of the year.”

*On Cassanova McKinzy playing buck...* “That is something that Will (Muschamp) worked on during the week and he will evaluate how he did. I just felt like we need a little extra right there since we didn’t have Carl Lawson. We will see how he graded out and see what Will wants to do moving forward.”

*When will Carl Lawson be back...* "We are hoping we get him back. There's no timeline right now, but we are hoping to get him back before the end of the season."

*On Johnathan Ford's performance...* "I think he flew around and made some good tackles. The kickoff return was one of the huge plays in the game. I think it was a seven-point game and he almost busted it. He took it all the way downfield and gave the offense a short field. I think he played a solid game."

### **QB Sean White**

*On his performance in the victory over San José State...* "I thought I did fine; I thought I did well when my number was called and we ended up winning the game. I was happy. I thought Peyton (Barber) played a really good game on the offensive line. They did a great job and I'm just happy we got a win today."

*On what Barber brings to the offense...* "He's a beast. He just keeps coming play after play and he doesn't seem to get tired. He did a great job today. He broke a long run, scored five times and he's the story of the game. He played amazing. I'm proud of him."

*On how comfortable he was during the game...* "I felt fine. I thought when we threw the ball, I did pretty well. We were running the ball on them well in the second half, so we just stuck with that. I'm just happy we got the ball running."

*On his chemistry with receivers...* "I think it's going good. It's slowly building each and every week. Now, we have a bye week and it will only continue to build and we'll get better."

### **OL Avery Young**

*On the mindset of the team...* "We're getting better. As the team rises up, everything is going to get better."

*On paying attention to the criticism...* “Nope. The only social media I look at is that of my family, including my fishing videos and stuff like that. You have to be in the game to understand how it works.”

*On the off week...* “We’re just going to keep working on what we need to work on and getting better. We don’t look at it as an off-week, but as a week of getting better.”

### **DB Blake Countess**

*Success on kickoff returns...* “One thing we talk about in special teams is coming out and setting the tempo. I really don’t get many balls kicked my way, but I saw it, hit it, and it just opened up for me. I was just trying to make something happen. I’m a little angry at myself because I didn’t take it the distance, but it is what it is. I think we put our offense in a good situation.”

*On the defense’s success in forcing turnovers...* “It was great. We talk about taking steps in the right direction and we did that as far as turnovers go. We allowed a few too many big plays and they put some points on the board. That’s not our goal, but we took a step in the right direction and we got the win so that’s really all that matters.”

*On helping force an interception in the first quarter...* “We were in off coverage, so I just broke on the ball and I got my hand in there. We always talk about running to the ball. It just so happened that Justin (Garrett) was running to the ball and good things happen when you run to the ball. I got my hand in there on the ball, it popped up and Justin was able to catch it because he was in the right place at the right time.”

*Did the defense focused on causing turnovers in practice last week...* “It has been a huge focus. Those are momentum plays for our defense and offense. Getting great field position has definitely been a big emphasis because we haven’t been as good as we need to be. We still need to get better as far as the turnover margin goes, but we’re taking

steps in the right direction.”

**LB Justin Garrett**

*On the first quarter interception...* “I just saw Blake (Countess) break up the pass and I grabbed the ball out of the air and tried to take it back to the house.”

*On his knack for being around the ball...* “I’m just trying to stay healthy. That’s been my biggest concern since I got here. As long as I’m healthy, I know I can make plays and I do. I play my assignment and do what I’m supposed to do. When you do your job, big plays come and you just have to be able to make them when they come to you.”

*On building on big plays for the future...* “Coach (Will) Muschamp always says good plays speak for themselves so we’re going to try to correct the bad plays and see what we can get better on.”

**OLB Cassanova McKinzy**

*On the defense in tonight’s game...* “I feel like we played all right. We could have been better in certain areas, but we just needed to get a win.”

*On playing with his hand on the ground...* “It’s different, but I was trying to show versatility and I believe I can do it. I liked it.”

*On his play in tonight’s game...* “I feel like I did pretty well. As a defense we could have been better in some areas. As a whole, I think we did pretty well. Just trying to get the feeling back being a winning team.”

*On feeling comfortable at the buck position...* “Yeah, I like it. It’s a lot more physical. Anything that’s physical I like.”

**WR Ricardo Louis**

*On his big catch before half...* "We worked on that play in practice, and we knew that was going to be a great play. Sean delivered a great ball, and I went and made a play on the ball."

*Performance of Peyton Barber...* "He's big, very consistent with it. He's taken on every challenge. You saw that today. Five touchdowns, that's very rare for a running back."

*On finding the end zone...* "We needed the great feeling back of winning and making plays, being explosive. To come out with a win, it feels great, and it gives us great confidence moving forward."

*On what to improve in the bye week...* "On both sides of the ball, just being consistent and playing our game. That's what we need to work on. On defense, we want to be shut down on defense, lights out. On offense, we want to be able to be explosive. Our offense, we set things up for the big plays. So if we get better at that, being the Auburn offense, we're going to be great."

### **RB Peyton Barber**

*On scoring 5 touchdowns...* "It's a blessing, that's pretty much all I can say. I've got to give all the thanks to my offensive linemen, Coach (Gus) Malzahn and the three backs."

*On big runs in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter...* "I feel like as the game goes on, I continue to get stronger."

*Going over the top on his final touchdown...* "It was something I wanted to try out a little bit. The previous times we had gotten down there, a lot of the guys tried to go for my feet, so I thought I'd go over the top."

*On more offensive production this week...* "I feel as if the preparation was the same thing we'd been doing the last couple of weeks. It's just really making our mark and showing that we're a downhill team."