Jim Grobe

Baylor Bears

THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with opening comments from Coach Grobe.

COACH GROBE: We are really, really excited to be at the Cactus Bowl, to be here in Phoenix, and really excited to play a fantastic Boise State team, a team that very nearly went undefeated this year.

Great tradition. We know we've got our work cut out for us. I think we practiced really well back home. I think we've had a couple of good practices here. I'm hopeful that we'll play our very best football because we're going to need to do that to have a chance.

And we'll see if we've improved enough I think toward the latter part of the season we started getting better. And need to do some things that all good teams do against Boise State. We've got to take care of the football, manage penalties, all those kind of things. Gotta be a good team, because this is one of the great programs in the country. And we're honored to have a chance to play Boise State, but know we're going to have to play our best football to have a chance to win.

Questions?

Q. Jim, Zach making his first bowl start. How do you feel like maybe the last few games have prepared him for this, and what do you expect from him?
COACH GROBE: Well, you know, you and I have talked before. I was very disappointed when Seth Russell got hurt that we weren't able earlier to give Zach more reps. His first real solid reps were against Oklahoma. And that's not a good way to start out as a true freshman. And then we've had some issues just not only with Zach but with his supporting cast.

We need to protect for him a little bit better. We need to run better routes, the receivers. We need to have a good running game to take some pressure off him.

But what I've seen in Zach each week is he's gotten better and better and better. He's really a smart kid. He's got great character, a total team guy. Not about himself but about the team and winning.

I thought the West Virginia game -- we threw four interceptions against Texas Tech and you can't win doing that. But then against West Virginia we had four fumbles. We didn't
throw any interceptions but we had four fumbles. And he had one of them.

So I think he knows that the goal's to manage the game better, take care of the football, and I've seen him improve every week. So I would hope that this will be his very best game this year.

Q. You've had some time to kind of scout and look over some film of Boise State. What do they do good that could possibly give you guys some trouble?
COACH GROBE: Well, I think that one of the best things they do is they're a physical football team. I love their offensive line. Very athletic. Very physical up front. Give you a lot of problems running the football.

We know they throw the ball well, but you start out, you've got to be physical with these guys. And one of our issues is we're not very big up front, and I think this is one of the better offensive lines we'll play against.

I like Rypien, their quarterback's a very good thrower, deep ball and touch stuff. Nice receivers. Just a balanced offense. But it starts with them being very physical, same way on defense.

They get after you up front. I think they've got a lot of skill on the back end. And so on both sides of the ball -- you don't find a team that's 10-2 and with a chance to be 12-0, a really legit chance to be 12-0 without being balanced. And that's what I see in Boise State. But I think it starts with their physical style of play.

Q. Coach, they talked about trying to win first and second down to get you guys in third and long. How important is it conversely for you guys to win those downs and keep the chains moving offensively?
COACH GROBE: Well, I think obviously if you're not good on first and second down, you put a lot of pressure on your quarterback. And we've got a young quarterback. And it's really not fair to him to put him in a lot of those situations.

One of the things we've gotta do is take care of penalties. A lot of times our problems have been procedure penalties that put us first and 15 and now it's easy to end up third and long.

And so I think most defensive coaches would tell you if they can make the offense spend a lot of time in third and long you have a chance to be successful. So no question that that's going to be important for us that we don't get behind the chains too much and put too much pressure on Zach.

Q. You're already so gracious and you give attention to the players and the student-athletes and you say it's all about them. This could potentially be your final game coaching in college. Have you spent much time thinking about that and what does that mean to you, and how nice would it be to go out with a win?
COACH GROBE: Well, I've got to tell you, my wife, Holly, would probably be
disappointed that you say this could possibly be my last game. She probably wouldn't be happy hearing that. But I've been so blessed. I think I was remiss last night I didn't mention Mack Rhoades at the dinner last night but I should have. There's nobody I appreciate more than Mack and the opportunity that he's given me to coach these guys since he's been here.

He's very caring and been a great leader, been a great partner for me this season. And I've got to mention our coaching staff. I appreciate their hard work, especially these last few weeks has been tough.

And I really feel like we've got a lot of great coaches, and I appreciate them. But it's all about our players. I mean, that's the bottom line. I mentioned the other day, I think I feel like I've got 100-plus sons right now that I didn't have a year ago. And so I've been so blessed to have the opportunity to work with these young people.

I think for me, it really has nothing to do with this being my last game and whether I can go out with a win; if we were able to beat this dynamic, explosive Boise State team -- a team that I have the greatest respect for, that our players and coaches have the greatest respect for us -- but for us to get a win against Boise State here in the Cactus Bowl would be great for me but so much more rewarding to see these young people go out with a win.

They've been through a lot. They've had a lot of adversity. They've persevered. If we could go out with a win for these guys, the most special part for me would be for these guys to get a win in their last game this year.

Q. The news came out about Kendal getting the new job at Florida Atlantic a few days ago. How important is it, though, that he's staying here and coaching you all through the bowl?

COACH GROBE: Well, I think it's the best thing for our players. There's no question. I think continuity is important. I think it's been important for our players throughout the year, really. We got a little wobbly there in the middle part of the season. But I thought at the end of the season we started getting our legs back under us a little bit.

I do think that it's important for KB to be here. I'm glad that he's able to do that. I'm excited for him. I'm excited for Florida Atlantic. He'll bring an excitement there offensively. And I hope that opens the door for the rest of our coaches.

I think it's been pretty well received that I think Lane Kiffin did a good thing in hiring KB and hopefully that opens the door for the rest of our coaches, because we've got a lot of really, really good coaches. When you think of two before I got here, two conference championships in three years, you know you've got some great coaches here.

So I'm hopeful that that gives the rest of our coaching staff an opportunity to land somewhere.
Q. From your defensive perspective, Boise State, a lot of personnel-type groups, a lot of things they can kind of throw at you. How important was it to maybe have a little extra time to prepare for something like that that you don't see during the regular season?

COACH GROBE: It's been really important. But the proof's in the pudding. We've got to line up and do it. But I think one of the things that Bryan Harsin and his guys have done a great job on offense, is they make you really focus on who has what gaps. They try to get you out of alignment. One of the problems with a lot of shifts and motion and trades and all those types of things is not only are you not in position to make plays, but you have a tendency to be standing around trying to figure out what to do when the ball's snapped and that's not good on defense.

So I think the time has helped us. Sometimes you don't really know what team's going to show up in a bowl game because we don't all handle that time off as well as we could possibly.

So I think we've done pretty well. I think we're going to be ready to play. I think we're going to know what to do. But knowing what to do and stopping this Boise State team is a different thing. They're physical and do a great job throwing the football.

So hopefully we can get lined up properly. And if we can get lined up properly then we've got a shot.
K.J. Smith
Baylor Bears

Q. I know you guys have faced some big ones in the Big 12. What do you see on film?
K.J. SMITH: Yeah, they're big guys, especially their right tackle is a good-sized guy playing tackle out there. Mainly the difference, the biggest part is about the tight ends and the extra guy they have at the end of the line and the shifts they do is the biggest part we've got to get ready for.

Q. Playing a Group of Five team, and you guys in the Big 12, what's the thought when you heard you were going to play against Boise State? You played Oklahoma and Texas and big schools. Playing a team from a smaller conference, what was your thought when you heard you were going to play Boise State?
K.J. SMITH: Nothing. Face our opponent each week, prepare like we do for every team. It's just the biggest challenge was the shifts and things like that and just getting lined up and knowing your assignment, basically just learning about we've got to face a new team we don't see on a regular basis. So just getting ready and being prepared.

Q. What about the quarterback, what have you seen on him?
K.J. SMITH: He sits in the pocket likes and to throw the ball. Doesn't scramble too often. So that's what we've seen.

Q. They're nine points being undefeated. What type of challenges -- you've played good teams, how do you think Boise State fits into some of the opponents you've played this year?
K.J. SMITH: It's something you've never seen before. A lot of shifts, a lot of motions, a lot of different formations. You've just got to be on point and know what you're doing at all times and getting lined up and being quick with it and staying true to your technique.

Q. Who is your NFL team?
K.J. SMITH: Cowboys.
Aiavion Edwards
Baylor Bears

AIAVION EDWARDS: It's just focusing on now, and what's happening in the future.

Q. Have you ever played a football game on a baseball field before?
AIAVION EDWARDS: No, I have not. It's going to be interesting. I saw how they kind of restructured the field and all. And it's pretty cool and I'm excited to play on it. I've never done it before.

Q. What stands out to you about Boise State's offense?
AIAVION EDWARDS: They're a good, physical offense. A lot of personnel groups. They do a lot and it's something we've got to really focus in on. And being able to defend all that they do. It's going to be a challenge, but I think we're prepared for it.

Q. The running back McNichols, number 13, announced an hour ago he's declaring for the draft. What have you seen out of him, and do you expect his final game, he'll be fired up?
AIAVION EDWARDS: For sure he'll be fired up. He's a really good back, watched a lot of film on him. He does a great job. Fast guy, physical. He knows how to get up field and get yards and make some huge plays. Something we have to limit for sure, but he's a good back and he will make some plays.

Q. How does their offense compare whether scheme, personnel, to the offenses you see in the Big 12?
AIAVION EDWARDS: Not too much. Not too many of the offenses we see. Possibly a Kansas State. Most the Big 12 teams don't run as many heavy packages as they do.

But I think we've prepared well and we're excited and ready to face the challenge.

Q. The quarterback, number 4, what do you see out of him?
AIAVION EDWARDS: He's a good quarterback. He does a good job, just making plays out of whatever he's given. So something that we have to limit as well. They have a really good offense and we're excited for the challenge.

Q. What was your first thought when you heard you were playing Boise State?
AIAVION EDWARDS: You think about the tradition and them and the bowl games in the past. So I thought that it's going to be exciting game. It's always nice to play someone out of conference. And this is a good game to end my career on.

Q. Do you remember when they played Oklahoma in the Fiesta Bowl?
AIAVION EDWARDS: I still remember watching when I was a kid. I can't remember how old I was, but, yeah, something that I won't forget. I remember the plays exactly. It's
going to be exciting to finish out my career playing these guy.

Q. First Big 12 team they've played since then.
AIAVION EDWARDS: I didn't know that.

Q. Your being a senior, what are your emotions coming into this game?
AIAVION EDWARDS: I'm excited. It's kind of hard because it is my last college game. But I'm excited to hopefully finish out on a high note. Go out one more time with the guys that are here and the guys that I've worked with for so many years. So that's just -- we're excited and we've prepared well. And we're excited to accept the challenge.

Q. Will this be may be the most physical team you guys will play. I know Coach Grobe has mentioned that. What do you think?
AIAVION EDWARDS: I think so. They love to run the ball. They bring a lot of guys to do it. They shift here and there. And they're prepared and they do a great job running the ball.

And that's what they've done all year and they're extremely physical and it's going to be a long, rough game.

Q. You were in Arizona three years ago at the Fiesta Bowl. Has this bowl experience been much different than that?
AIAVION EDWARDS: Not much. We prepare the same way. But the bowl experience has been a little bit different but we've had a great time and a great week. It's just been exciting, and it's exciting to know we're about time for game time.

Q. Zach is obviously going to start his first bowl game. You veteran guys, how much do you take it on yourselves to kind of help him through this?
AIAVION EDWARDS: We try to do our best to help him and I think that he's actually very prepared for it. He's a guy that's ready to accept the challenge as well. We've all been working hard and he's done a great job in the games he's played and we have full confidence in him.
RYAN REID: Just Coach Grobe coming in, the spiel we had after winning six, the whole thing with the coaches in May. And just the excitement we had the years before. And it's so much to remember and so many memories I've made with these teammates and my coaches. It's exciting.

Q. The coaches all came back. That was a decision Coach Grobe made. It's not easy for them either. They at times lost it. What were they like day to day? What was it like when you knew they were upset, too. How did the players react to that?
RYAN REID: Well, one thing they did a great job at is not showing it. They never really showed it out on the field. Never really showed it out at practice. Never showed it out at the game.

After the games, you know, in the locker room, you know, they were always heartbroken. You could see it in their faces because I know they love us with a passion.

We know they'll go to the end of the earth for us. And that's what kept us going and kept us fighting.

Q. I asked Kyle this, was this more difficult than even you thought it could be? Start from May 26th until now.
RYAN REID: No. It wasn't. I always expect the worst and it wasn't the worst.

Q. Why do you expect the worst, because of what you've been through?
RYAN REID: No, because I mean you never know what you're going to get out of the situation, and that's just how I always go into any type of situation expecting the worst.

Q. What would a win tomorrow night mean and would it change the way you look at this year?
RYAN REID: A win tomorrow night would mean sunshine in Texas, definitely over Waco. And it would mean a lot to not just me but this whole team.

Q. (Indiscernible)?
RYAN REID: They're well balanced. They have a great, great running back, and they have some talented receivers to go with them. When you have a quarterback like they do, all he has to do is just distribute the ball, get the ball to the players that he knows will make the plays and that the coaches know.

And that's the difficult part about it is just getting the adjustments done on defense to take away their big plays.
Q. I know you've played a lot of really good offenses, really good teams in the Big 12. When you're watching them on film, they're obviously a quality team when you look at them on film?
RYAN REID: Yeah, it's a whole different offense. And when you're looking at it, it's, like, man, why are they doing all these formations, all these shifts and motions? And what are they trying to do to us?

And when you look at it they're just trying to outleverage you and try to outsmart you. And when you get a team like that, you really have to throw the Big 12 tendencies out of the fast tempo and just bombs away, because they're looking to beat you and they're going to try to do it any way they can.

Q. The running back just announced he's going pro an hour ago. Do you think he'll come out pretty motivated in his final game tomorrow?
RYAN REID: I know he will. Congratulations to him. I know he'll come out with a fire under him. And I know he's going to come out like his hair's on fire. So we have to stop him.
Zach Smith
Baylor Bears

Q. Week by week, good and bad, what did you learn about yourself physically and as far as being a quarterback?
ZACH SMITH: Yeah, I learned that when I get antsy in the pocket that I tend to maybe force something or maybe not be as accurate. So I feel like I just gotta stay calm back there and to stay poised. Like I felt like I was really poised in the Oklahoma game and made some good throws.

I feel I have to stay back there and stay calm and not let the stage get too big or get too nervous out there. Just stay out there, be calm and make plays like I know I can.

Q. Can you compare how the game slows down once you've been on it? I know you had a couple of games where it didn't go well at all, but did it slow down and can you kind of describe that?
ZACH SMITH: Yeah, it's hard to describe. But when you're out there, when you're on the sidelines it seems like it's going 90 miles an hour. But once you get out there your adrenalin's going and it just really slows down. And watching film and knowing exactly what they're going to do against some of our plays, that also helps a lot, makes it a clearer picture for me.

Q. When you're a backup, you never know when that time's coming you might have to be full-time. You played a little bit. Was that enough to prepare you for what you saw once you started being the guy?
ZACH SMITH: Yeah, I mean, I think it was sufficient and enough. But I think it would have helped a lot more if I would have got some a little bit earlier, like true reps, but I mean, that's understandable.

But I think it was sufficient enough for me to come in, and I knew what I was doing and what I had to do. We just fell a little short in Oklahoma.

Q. Can you compare the experience you now have entering the offseason after Tuesday and how much that will matter to you going into the spring?
ZACH SMITH: Yeah. I feel like, kind of feel like a whole new guy coming in from when I came in and looking at all these workouts and all these plays and stuff like that. So I think it's given me a whole lot more confidence going into this next season knowing what I can do and knowing what I need to do this next season. It's going to be fun.

Q. A bunch of guys playing their last game, a bunch of seniors. Not a lot, but there's some trying to lead this team through a difficult time. What would it mean to give them a victory to finish it out?
ZACH SMITH: I think that's super important for us and for them and the school. And we
really want to send them out on a win. I think it would really pick up the morale of the team and for them. I mean translating it into next season and for the rest of their careers. I think it's going to be great for us to go out there and hopefully get a win tomorrow.

Q. When you look at Boise State, they're mainly known for what they do sometimes on offense but they've been pretty good on defense as well. What do you see in a short amount of time you've had a chance to study them?
ZACH SMITH: Yeah, they're a really solid team on defense and offense. But they're really solid on defense. They're going to fly around and they're going to be physical. We can't go out there and play paddycake. We have to get out there, get after it and grind. I think it's going to be a fun game, I think.

Q. So that power spread that Baylor's known for, can you reestablish that? Do you feel like you kind of almost did against West Virginia?
ZACH SMITH: Yeah, I think West Virginia was a stepping stone, kind of. We hit some big plays and really had some good drives. I think that was a stepping stone for us to come out. And tomorrow hopefully do the same thing and play a little bit better than we did.
Kyle Fuller

Baylor Bears

Q. Some of the coaches that might not be here and for you and the rest of your senior class, do you feel it's more an opportunity to close a chapter and end on a high note?
KYLE FULLER: Yeah, you could say it like that, but it's also another opportunity for us to go out here and get a win. So that's really just what we're focused on.

Q. I guess what do you see from Boise State defensively, what are some things they do well and some things you guys might need to pay attention to tomorrow?
KYLE FULLER: They play tough, physical defense. They're very effective on defense. They have a very good front four, and that's really just going to come down to us executing on the offensive line tomorrow.

Q. Have you ever played a football game on a baseball field before?
KYLE FULLER: Never played on a baseball field. It will be interesting to see how that is.

Q. Obviously senior, final game, but to know last year's game, how it went. It was a great game for us. Sent the seniors out. To have that feeling, what was last year's feeling like for the seniors? How much did you enjoy that?
KYLE FULLER: It was an accomplishment, definitely an accomplishment. One of those deals where we went into it ready to play and that's how we're going to treat this one. We're ready to play. We've been practicing very hard. And it's been a long, long trip getting ready for this game.

Q. How much would it mean to you to win your final game as a Baylor Bear?
KYLE FULLER: It would mean a lot, just going through my really five years here at Baylor. We've been through a lot, and it would always be a blessing to come out with a win.

Q. How about the coaching staff, win for them, win one for Coach Grobe, everything that's went on this year, but that would, I'm sure -- Aiavion said that it means a lot for the players to do that for the staff.
KYLE FULLER: Definitely, Coach Grobe came out here and helped us out tremendously. He's a great guy. And it would mean a whole lot for us give him this W.

Q. How about Boise State, what do you see from that defense and just overall as a team, what do you see from Boise State?
KYLE FULLER: They're a very good team. They play very physical defense. They're very good on offense. It's just one of those deals where it's just going to come down to who executes better.
Q. What’s it like playing in these bowl games? You’ve got accustomed to playing every year in a bowl game. Not every team plays in these. But Baylor, you see that name now, wherever the bowl is, you shine a little bit more light there. What’s it like playing in a bowl game?
KYLE FULLER: It’s extremely exciting. It’s just one extra game you get to get to, to play against somebody that you probably never played before. It’s really exciting.

Q. For Zach Smith, you’ve worked with a lot of quarterbacks in your time at Baylor. Zach makes a third, fourth, fifth start right in there, what have you seen from him over the last couple of games and what do you think you’re going to see from him tomorrow?
KYLE FULLER: Now that he’s gotten that first start out of the way, it’s definitely exciting to watch him grow. He’s definitely become more mature as a quarterback. And it’s really more of our job, our responsibility to keep him calm and to make sure that he does make good decisions.

Q. What do you think this game will be like for him, he’s still 18 years old, playing in his first bowl game, that’s a pretty big deal for him?
KYLE FULLER: It’s a neat experience. Kind of a springboard for him going into next season. He didn’t get to play the entire season this year. But this is just an extra game for him to prepare.
Jordan Feuerbach  
Baylor Bears

JORDAN FEUERBACH: I mean they really do everything well. They're very physical, and they don't blow assignments. They're going to try to force you to make mistakes and they're not going to. So I think the main thing is knowing our assignments and holding onto the ball and not making stupid penalties. I think penalties and turnovers have really killed us lately.

So I think if we cut down on those, then that fixes a whole lot of our problems as an offense.

Q. What have you seen from Zach, his progression from the start of the season to where he is now? And what do you expect to see from him tomorrow?

JORDAN FEUERBACH: I mean, he's getting better and better every week, in my opinion. And he's a true freshman. He stepped into a tough situation. But he's been tough. He's been extremely poised. That's probably the thing that surprised me the most is he's never hung his head he's never gotten down.

So I expect him to just keep improving like he has all year. And hopefully he'll get his first collegiate win. So that would be awesome for him.

Q. Have you ever played a football game on a baseball field before?

JORDAN FEUERBACH: I never have. I'm excited to. I think it will be fun and unique. So I've been talking about that since I found out it was at Chase Field. So I think it will be interesting. This might be the only time I'll get to in my whole life so it will be fun.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

JORDAN FEUERBACH: It's through the roof. He's got a great arm. And, I mean, it's been even great since he had that injury. So he can make all the throws that you want out of a quarterback.

Q. Kyle, where are his strengths?

JORDAN FEUERBACH: If we're talking about next level stuff, I would say he has to improve on taking more snaps under center and kind of footwork stuff. Or mainly out of the shotgun. I think that would be the main thing he'd have to work on. I think his strength is he's just a playmaker, he's athletic, super athletic. He's got a great arm.

And he's able to improv and that's always good to have a quarterback that can get out of the pocket and make throws on the run like that.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

JORDAN FEUERBACH: Right. Exactly.
Q. Just him entering his transition time.
JORDAN FEUERBACH: I think he can adjust. He has the arm for it. He'll just have to put the time in the playbook and with the footwork and stuff like that. But he has the arm for it. And, like I said, I think he can stay in the pocket. If he goes to the NFL, when he's forced out of the pocket, I think he'll show his play-making ability that he did all through college. So I think that he'd be great for the NFL.

Q. From the emotional and mental standpoint (indiscernible)?
JORDAN FEUERBACH: It's impressive how he's handled, I mean, both of them, really. I've never -- he was smiling on the field after he got hurt. I mean, he's never hung his head. And I mean, everyone knows what he's been through and how much he's put in.

And so it just made you sick as his teammate seeing him go through something like that again. But, I mean, he's going to work hard to get back and I'm sure he'll be back even better than ever.

Q. Coach said after his injury he was smiling and happy, what does that type of mentality, personality, do for the rest of the team?
JORDAN FEUERBACH: It helps you play loose. You don't want to play any sport tight and don't want to play worried about failure and stuff. You want to play, you want to let it fly.

And I think that's what he's done for our team is he's let us play to our best ability and not have any fear or any worries. So I think that's kind of the attitude he brings to the team, a gunslinger's mentality.

Q. What do you remember about that bus ride home?
JORDAN FEUERBACH: I just remember he was smiling and he said I'm going to be all right. I mean, I figure after you break your neck, you know, ankle is next to nothing.

So it just keeps you at ease. And you worry about him still, but you know with a guy like that, he's going to be fine and he's going to bounce back.