COACH HARSIN: We're close to game time. We're excited about that. Had a fantastic time here and just want to say thank you to everybody with the Cactus Bowl, all the volunteers, all the people that have helped make this experience for our players and our coaches one of the finest.

We've been in Arizona a few times. And we have history here. And this certainly is no exception to the first class that we've received and really thankful for that.

Looking forward to the game. I think we've had a great week of prep. Did get a little bit of rain one day, and we stayed out in it. And certainly did get some work done. And I think it brought some juice to the football team, because the weather the next day was fantastic.

But a lot of energy, lot of excitement. Now it's time to get ready to go out there and finish on the 27th against a very good Baylor team.

Overall, you know, as far as this season has gone, to get to where we are right now, you work extremely hard every single year to put yourself in the position to hopefully win a championship. But certainly to play in a game that has significance at the end of the season.

And the Cactus Bowl and Motel 6 did a great job of pairing up Boise State and Baylor. I think it's a game people want to see. It's certainly a game that's very interesting in college football. And I know for both sides a lot of respect on what both players and coaches have done throughout their seasons and over the past couple of seasons.

So it's going to be a fun game for us, three and a half hours, go out and give our very best football, and we're certainly looking forward to it.

I want to say thank you to all the media as well. I know over Christmastime and Christmas Eve you guys have been here covering us, covering Baylor, and so just want to say thank you to all of you as well, because it's been fantastic and we're looking forward to tomorrow night.

Questions?
Q. We asked you a little bit back in Boise, but starting fast -- the last couple of bowl games you've been starting off fast. With a month between games how are you able to do that and how do you hope to continue to do that tomorrow?

COACH HARSIN: Well, we're going to find out. I think it always goes back to your prep. It's that mindset going into the game. And you haven't played in a while so everybody worries about timing, everybody worries about kind of getting back into it. Don't ease into it. We've got to go out there and play and play fast and certainly we're playing a team that has a lot of speed.

I think the biggest thing is just the mindset of the practices and the preparation leading up to it. We haven't changed much. We treated it like we're going into a regular season game.

We just had more time. Some young guys have got a little bit of extra work. But this preparation has been about how do we take and maximize our time to go out there and play our last game our very best.

And I think in the previous bowl games, we've had good starts, because we came out there and we've attacked it and we've executed. We've made plays.

It's still football. You've got to go out there and still execute and you've still got to go out there and make the plays. You've got to create some momentum.

Special teams, turnovers, tackling, conditioning shows up, and I think we've tried to prepare ourselves the best we can in those areas.

Q. Yesterday Jabrill was out there at the event at the convention center. Are you not expecting to have him tomorrow night?

COACH HARSIN: No, he got hurt at the event yesterday handing stuff out. So he's not going to play in the game. No, we're not expecting him. So he was injured after the last game, and we tried to see where he was at, if he could come back. He's not going to play in this game. He's actually going to have surgery a little bit sooner before everybody gets back.

So he's got a couple of things he's got to repair. So he'll be not playing in this game here. And it's unfortunate. He wanted to. I know he wanted the finish the season but just not able to right now.

Q. Just with any game, what concerns you with Baylor?

COACH HARSIN: That's a big question right there, what concerns us about Baylor. A lot of things. I think you start with they do have a very fast football team. So I think if you're not just talking from the offensive standpoint also on defense, also on special teams, and they've been in a lot of big games.
This is a good football team. And these guys have -- give them a couple of years ago these are one of the teams that was in that conversation for a playoff opportunity. And you've still got quite a few players on this team that were around.

They've had some injuries. They've had some other things that have happened throughout this season that I know were probably very difficult to deal with. But those guys want to play well. They've had more time to prepare. They've had some time to kind of digest everything that's gone on. There's been a new coach named.

I certainly remember that at Arkansas State when there was a bowl game that was a little bit later and I was named the head coach. Well, I got a chance to be around and watch. And those players knew that this is where we're going, we're moving forward in this direction, so they had some hope. So these guys, they're looking forward to this game. They want to go play their best. I think their young quarterbacks had more time to prepare.

So really I think the last half of the season Baylor, they played well, they played hard in those games, they didn't win those games. But I see a team that's got a lot of really good individual players that has played really well in a lot of big games.

And so this will be the best football team we've faced all season. This will be the biggest test we faced all season. And that's why I think everybody understands that. I think that's why this game is so intriguing is because of that.

Q. You've got I think five Arizona players on your roster and three more coming in next year, something like that. Has Arizona become fertile recruiting ground for your players?

COACH HARSIN: Yeah, it has been. Scott Huff, our offensive line coach, recruits this area. He's a former Husky. He gets it around here. But I just think the culture of Boise State really fits guys in the West Coast and Arizona. And when they come there and they see it, the quality of living, the university, the program, obviously the football, and to be quite honest, the games that we played here, if you do go back to that first Fiesta Bowl, there's talk of Boise State, and these guys are young guys.

So they've heard of our program for quite some time just because of the games we've been in. And that has helped us in recruiting.

But the guys that have come out of here have been really great players for us. And we feel like we have great connections here with the high school coaches and we know -- they know what type of players we're looking for and we're going to continue that. So it's been a great area for us to recruit. And we want to continue that and we're looking forward to this year.
Q. Coach, what are your impressions of Baylor freshman quarterback Zach Smith, and can you draw any parallels to maybe what he's going through now to what Brett Rypien went through last year?

COACH HARSIN: Well, he's a really, really good-looking, physical player. You look at his high school stats, very impressive. As far as what he's gone through, a little bit of the same. I think their season and when he came in, under the circumstances, he's probably had more pressure on him because of he's really the last guy standing. And he is a tremendous player. And just being a quarterback guy, you know, I always kind of look at those situations because you wonder, you never know when you're going to be in it.

And we certainly were a few years ago, when we had Brett step in there and have to play. And I think you learn quite a bit. You're thrown into the fire. You learn.

You are going to have failures, how you handle it and how you respond is extremely important. And he's done a pretty good job. I think he has battled in there. And that's the one thing, give him some more time in these bowl preparations, let him digest more of the season, and go, here's the things that I have to get better at, because he is so young.

And I think when we go play we're going to see a really good quarterback back there playing. And I think that guy's the future of their program. Certainly the experience is going to help him. But there are some comparisons in there.

He's a young guy that has been thrown into a tough situation. And we're watching him going this guy's really good, and we're going to be prepared for when we go play.

Q. Jeremy is here. Wanted to ask if you've heard any decision he's made regarding his future?

COACH HARSIN: Yes. I was wondering about that right there. First it's Jeremy McNichols' birthday. Give him a little hand. (Applause).

Yes, we've had that conversation. Today is that day. Jeremy has decided after this game that he will move on to the NFL and we're excited about that. That's a great opportunity that we have players on this team that are going to get a chance to live that dream. He's certainly done a tremendous amount of great things for us.

And you know this is not an easy decision. That's one thing I want everybody to know. It's not an easy decision. There is a lot of things -- it's your team -- it's your future. It's about getting that degree, because we all know that football ends.

And having that piece of paper, when it's all said and done, is really, really important to the guys that are sitting up here. At the same time, you've got to decide, hey, this is where your mind's at and where you want your future to take you.
So fully expect that we continue and prep today and I think a great opportunity for him going into this game to go have a great game, to play his very best, to finish. And he's certainly practiced that way. He's done that throughout the season. And expecting that to happen tomorrow night and really excited for him and very appreciative for what he's brought to Boise State.
Jeremy McNichols
Boise State Broncos

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: Everything, family, coaches, teammates. It was one of the hardest decisions having to make, coming out early and with school, not finishing school, getting a degree, putting all the marbles in, and with my football career, and putting in the school part on the back burner right now. It was all those components.

Q. What made this the right time then?

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: I figured I've done everything I wanted to at Boise State. I won a championship freshman year, won a couple of bowl games. I met a lot of great people here in Boise. Got great coaches behind me and the support. So just moving forward, I think I'm ready to go to the next level and improve my career.

Q. Was that a decision that you had made recently? How long did you kind of ponder it?

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: After last year, it was talked about, and as the year moved on, you know, getting closer to the season, it got talked about even more. And even through the season you know, I always went back and forth with my family. And I didn't really talk about it too much with my coaches because I wanted to stay focused with the team and everything.

And I kept it kind of inside. And then towards the end of the year, it became a bigger discussion just because of the year I had. And even then it was going back and forth. And I mean a decision probably was made about a month ago about --

Q. Have you talked to Jay much?

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: Yeah.

Q. How much what he's done and his influence impact you?

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: Jay was in the same situation. And playing running back, the lifespan is really short. So when you can get in and you know get a little bit of money and things like that, that goes into it. And then talking to Jay was huge, just because he mentored me through the whole process.

He told me the things that I was going to get with the pressure and the coaches and teammates and just leaving early. So Jay played a huge part in that.
Q. Did you get any kind of feedback from the evaluation and where you might go? Or what have you heard in terms of where you might be able to go?

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: I'm not too sure about all that right now. I just want to finish this game and then we'll worry about that later.

Q. Was there something you needed to hear from agents or teams or whatever that you were going to go on a certain round? You feel confident to come back?

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: They told me I would get drafted. So that made my decision a little bit more easier. But I still have to declare, turn in my papers. I still have to run at the combine and everything like that. So the projections and everything, we don't pay attention to right now. We'll get a better idea in a couple of months.

Q. Getting drafted anywhere was all you wanted to hear and what Jay did as a fifth-round guy?

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: Getting drafted high would be cool. But the projection and everything, I'm not too sure right now.

Q. Zach said that the coaches have at least maybe try to keep you apprised of who is in the draft class, who is coming out, stuff like that. How much, have you looked at that stuff yourself?

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: Yeah, that goes into account too. The guys that you're going to be getting drafted to and then where they're ranked at and where they're projected at.

So, I mean every year I feel like it's going to be a good class. And I mean if those guys are wanting to go to the NFL and improve their future and everything, I'm happy for them.

And I'm happy to be able to compete with those guys in my draft class. And I think it will be fun.

Q. Do you have any thought of not playing this game?

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: No, there's no way. I grinded with these dudes the last two and a half years. And there's no way that I would sit out on these guys and be selfish.

So that's just my thoughts on that.

Q. The last two years Jay and (indiscernible) had huge games in their last game. Was that kind of a motivation for you to go out in style here?

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: Yes.
Q. You talked about the money and stuff. How big is that for you and your family? How much of a factor is that and how excited are you?

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: Yeah, it’s exciting. Financially, to be able to help out your parents and your family is huge. And I mean, I’m still trying to wrap my head around the whole situation, because I’ve been dreaming about this moment since I was seven, eight years old. And now that it’s here, I’ll eventually be able to help them out is huge for me. It went into my decision as well.

Q. Have you talked to your teammates about it?

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: I think they’re happy for me. Being able to come through Boise State and get another Boise State player into the NFL. And you know it gives those guys hope and dreams, and you know that if they come here and work hard that they can get to that level.

Q. You said you’ve known for about a month. Have they known or did you tell the team today? Or when did the team find out?

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: I’ve been talking to a few players here and there. But like I said. My biggest thing on my decision I didn’t want to be a distraction. So I kind of kept it to myself and to a few guys. And I mean I talked to the coaches after the last game and talked to Coach Harsin and all those guys and they fed me great information that will go into my decision. So I think it was the right time to let it out right now and not be a distraction.

Q. Was yesterday when you actually told Coach Harsin your final decision or how long has he known?

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: I think he’s known probably a couple of weeks. After our meeting he had a good idea.

Q. Obviously you talked about, we talked about how you felt when Jay left. And before him it was Doug and obviously guys like Alexander and stuff like that. Do you feel Boise State can keep it going with that running back –

JEREMY MCNICHOLS: I think so. Alexander had a great year as a freshman. He got a lot of playing time. Even when I was a freshman he got more playing time his freshman year than my freshman year.

So I think that experience at a young age in Division I football is huge. And it’s going to help him and he’s going to have a whole spring and a whole summer. And also Robert Mahone. He redshirted this year but he did all the scouts and everything and practiced hard and was in the weight room a little bit more. So I think he’s going to be ready as well. With me leaving, I feel comfortable and confident with the guys coming up.
Brett Rypien
Boise State Broncos

BRETT RYPIEN: But it's interesting, they play teams in the Big 12, and our offense is a lot different than the teams in the Big 12. We're very multiple and we'll use a lot of different personnel. So you kind of get maybe a little bit of a sense from some looks that you're going to get. But it's an interesting game, because we haven't seen -- they haven't really seen an offense that is very similar to ours this year.

Q. What makes you guys so different from what you're seeing?

BRETT RYPIEN: I think we're just always open to trying different things. And we can change personnel groups at any time. We go from a 10-personnel group to a 13-personnel group. And we'll get in 22 personnel, sometimes, too. And we just do a lot of different things and that's what makes us so unique. And it's definitely a very complicated offense, I think, to play in.

But the guys that we have taking initiative to take that extra preparation to make sure that we all know what we're doing.

Q. You actually use the tight end?

BRETT RYPIEN: Yeah.

Q. So to come down to Arizona, a little bit different than back home. You've been here a few days now?

BRETT RYPIEN: The weather's been a lot nicer besides one day we got poured on at practice. But it's been great down here so far. I'm from Spokane, Washington. So we just got seven inches of snow a couple of days ago.

So it's a lot better than that, for sure.

Q. You guys have a history in Arizona in both games, a lot of good surprises, a lot of good trends for you guys. Is there anything you are in particular looking forward to?

BRETT RYPIEN: Yeah, it's the next game. I think we talked about that all the time. And the next game is the biggest game of the year. And you know, this is a great opportunity for us to be down here. I think this whole staff this bowl game has done an unbelievable job of taking care of us. And we're really looking forward to going out there and playing our best ball tomorrow.
Q. Give me your thoughts on Jeremy, on his decision?

BRETT RYPIEN: Jeremy is my roommate. So I've been talking to him about it for a while. And kind of got a sense of where he was going with that decision. And I couldn't be happier for him.

You know, that's something that I think he needed to do and he felt like he needed to do. And it's going to be awesome for him moving forward and I'm going to be rooting for him.

Q. I asked Coach about this, about Jeremy, what seems to be (indiscernible)?

BRETT RYPIEN: Well, he's a very diverse player. And he can do a lot of different stuff as a running back and we can split him out as receiver as well. He actually played receiver in high school. So he has that experience with him. And I think the best thing he's done this year is taken his game to the next level. His physicality has been unbelievably consistent this year, and he's brought it every single week and I think a lot of teams will notice that.

He does a great job I think in every aspect of the game that you don't see out of a whole lot of backs coming out of college. He does it in the pass game, he does it in the run game and he does it in pass protection.

So he's a very, very diverse player and a guy that is going to be able to step into I think any offense and make a contribution.

Q. As you look at the film of Baylor, (indiscernible) on that team. What concerns you?

BRETT RYPIEN: You know, you see they're big and fast for sure. Probably bigger and definitely faster than any team we've seen all year. They've got a lot of different guys that can cover in space and it's going to be a challenge for us for sure.

And we've been trying to prepare for their speed as much as we can. But obviously it's going to be a little bit different going out there. And it will be a good challenge for us but at the same time we're looking forward to it and at the end of the day comes down to executing for us.

Q. Bowl game, extra practices, how much does that mean? Is it more for the underclassman than the guys who are trying to finish up?

BRETT RYPIEN: No, I think it's beneficial for everyone. You know, with those extra practices, because you kind of get a week after the final game the season is over to kind of go back and look and see what you can improve on from last year and what you need to be working on going into this bowl game is spring forward yourself into next
year, and that time is really big for me because I like to go back and self-evaluate and see what I can get better at.

And I take those into our first week of bowl practices, which are very generic, because we really don’t even know who we’re playing yet a lot of the times.

So we go and are working fundamentals and getting back to the basics and stuff like that. Then once we know who we're playing, we start getting into more specific game planning type of things and you get a whole extra week to game plan. You get 12 practices, 12, 13 practices to game plan and get ready for the game, and that’s a huge advantage.

Q. When people think of Boise State football, what should they think?

BRETT RYPIEN: They should think of a standard of excellence that has been set over the past 10, 15 years that has a very, the fan base and the players and the coaches have a very high expectation for the program and a program that expects to win 11 games per year, and if you don't, it's a disappointing season.

Q. A couple of years ago, 8-5?

BRETT RYPIEN: And 9-4 last year.

Q. What was that like?

BRETT RYPIEN: Well, last year it was difficult. I got thrown into the fire my freshman year after the third game and had some really good moments and had some really bad moments, and you kind of learn to manage all those and take the highs and lows lightly, because you can't really ever get too high and you can't get too low. You've got to kind of stay steady throughout it all.

It was a great learning experience, but it was motivating going into last year knowing that that wasn't the standard for this program.

Q. I talked to Coach Harsin, the way college football is set up today; there's the playoff and everyone seems to focus on the semifinals championship game, and it's hard as well if you're not a Power Five school. Does that bring an automatic chip on your shoulder, Boise State already had that anyway didn’t they?

BRETT RYPIEN: No, definitely. Our goal first and foremost is to win the Mountain West Conference and then win a bowl game. So we know we don't control what bowl game we go to but we can control if we win the Mountain West Conference. And we weren't able to do that this year, and that's obviously very frustrating.

So, yeah, we have a chip on our shoulder at all times. We know we would have to probably go undefeated two years in a row to even be in the conversation to make the
playoff.

But at the same time, if we win our conference and we take care of business non-conference, we're looking at a New Year's Six bowl. And that's kind of the ultimate goal first is to get one of those and then you start worrying about, okay, other stuff.

**Q. When you heard you were playing Baylor, what did you think initially; they obviously were 6-0, and then been through a slide, it's been a hell of a year for them?**

BRET RYPIEN: I haven't really got a lot of time to pay attention to their season. So when I saw 6-6, I was kind of surprised, because you think of Baylor, they've been a powerhouse the last five years.

And then going back and looking at their season, watching the film, you can tell they've struggled with some injuries, because it was kind of hard to know who was their starter in the second -- their starters in the secondary because there was a lot of different guys moving at different positions and different things like that.

So you can tell they've been through a lot this year, but at the same time they have a lot of talent. And obviously they're a good program. And like Coach Harsin said, a lot of those guys were in the conversation to play in the National Championship just a couple of years ago.

**Q. With the name of Rypien, nephew of Mark, and won the Super Bowl in '91. Probably the last good Washington Redskins team they had. With the name on your back, did that bring something with that responsibility?**

BRET RYPIEN: Yeah, I think maybe a little bit. I've gotten that comparison for years now. So I'm kind of used to it. But it's definitely nice having a guy like Mark to be a mentor for me and a guy I can look up to and talk to after games and stuff and helps me on and off the field.
THOMAS SPERBECK: Yeah, I think it's very exciting, every time we play a Power Five school. And it's exciting for our whole team and program. I wouldn't say we treat it any differently than any other game. But it is on a bigger stage and it's an opportunity for us to kind of prove how good we are. So it's definitely exciting.

Q. Talk about the speed of Baylor defense. This year they're plagued by injuries and now they're at full health. But do you expect to see kind of the defense -- at the beginning of the season they were one of the best defenses in the country. But do you expect to see that similar defense that happened earlier in the season as opposed to later during their six-game losing streak?

THOMAS SPERBECK: Yeah, definitely. We expect to see that early Baylor defense early on in their games, the one you are talking about and how good they were. If you expect the best out of them you'll play your best. I think it's pretty critical that we don't underestimate them.

Q. What are some of the challenges you can present to them offensively? What do you guys do well that you think you can challenge their defense?

THOMAS SPERBECK: One thing we talked about is our shifts and motions. We get guys moving around and kind of get them communicating and make sure they stay true to their assignments. I think that will be a big part of it.

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

THOMAS SPERBECK: I never played football on a baseball field, no. But I'm assuming the outfield's hopefully like the grass that we get to play on. So hopefully it won't be too much of a curveball.

Q. In terms of receivers and things like that, how have you guys been able to use this month off to prep for this game?

THOMAS SPERBECK: We definitely are getting back to our fundamentals, doing a lot of footwork drills, things like that. Just kind of getting back to the basic and everything that comes off it and working our route endings, things like that. But it's definitely been a big month for the wide receiver group.

Q. How would you describe them as a whole, your playmakers, the wide receivers?

THOMAS SPERBECK: The wide receivers, it's definitely an explosive group. I feel like we kind of feed off each other. When we see Cedric make a big play, it makes me and Chaz want to
do good and make a big play.

I think our whole offense feeds off each other like that. But for the wide receiver group specifically I think we're always making each other better.

Q. And I know you guys have a few Arizona guys, a little bit younger. But in that group, in terms of Austin and that sort of thing, do you see any kind of common characteristics and how would you describe those two players?

THOMAS SPERBECK: They're definitely two hardworking guys. It's exciting to see Austin play. And Julian right now is kind of injured with his shoulder. But A.C. on special teams, him running down the field, he's definitely a hard worker, and he's a fearless guy. He throws his body in there and does anything that the team needs from him, especially special teams-wise.

Q. You have those two guys, Austin and Jay, plenty of Arizona guys. Do you see any common personality traits or kind of any commonality between those four or five guys?

THOMAS SPERBECK: It's actually funny you say that, sometimes when they're talking and they kind of almost, like, sound the same. It's funny. But I don't know, that's what I think, at least.

But other than that, I wouldn't say the same characteristics or anything like that, yeah.

Q. When you say they sound the same, like voice or lingo?

THOMAS SPERBECK: Yeah, it's almost like they have their own accent. It's almost like -- that's what I think, at least. But I don't think a lot of people see it like I see it. But, yeah.

Q. Obviously you had a big game here a couple of years ago. What's your mindset going into a game like this now?

THOMAS SPERBECK: My mindset is just kind of like every other game. I don't think we're treating it any differently, just like Coach Harsin said. But prepare the best we can. We've had a big month of conditioning and strength and kind of getting our game plan down for these guys, and I think it should be fun.

Q. Think it's going to be a high-scoring game?

THOMAS SPERBECK: Hopefully on our end it will be. But who knows. It's hard to tell.
Sam McCaskill

Boise State Broncos

SAM MCCASKILL: They're going to start out and try and establish the run. So within the front six, front seven, that's huge on us, like, that's our responsibility.

And so that's something that we're going to need to stop. In order to stop their offense we've got to stop their run first. And so you know that will be huge.

And then you see in their pass game, they get a lot of big plays out of the receivers. They'll throw the ball up and they'll go up and make plays.

So that's on us as well. We need to get after the quarterback so he doesn't feel comfortable back there, just putting it out there and putting our DBs on an island. And just trying to help them out as much as we can.

Q. And you said you were here, your first year was Petersen's class, right?

SAM MCCASKILL: Yes.

Q. What's the difference between Petersen and Bryan?

SAM MCCASKILL: There's a lot of similarities in there. And they've coached together for a long time. So you can see the parallel right there. You know, they place such a big emphasis on the man you're becoming and what you do off the field.

You know, everybody -- so many people worry about your production on the field, but that only takes up four years, if that, of your life. And so what they're trying to do is create a culture that will be beneficial to you kind of in the workforce, and so they do a great job with that, teaching you a lot of life lessons and different success tactics to go into the business world.

Q. I'm covering you guys for the Mountain West Network. We have these players like (indiscernible) and McCaffrey, but they're not going to play in the bowl game. From a player's perspective, what do you (indiscernible)?

SAM MCCASKILL: You know, I think there's always --

Q. What people said before, you guys came down here, I'm going pro or getting ready for the draft, not going to play. What would be your mindset?

SAM MCCASKILL: I don't know. That's tough, because I think something that plays into those decisions big is if you have had a lingering injury that you've kind of been playing through, you don't, maybe not make it to the bowl game you're hoping to, like maybe one of the New Year's
Six bowls, so there's incentive because you do have a lot to protect.

I saw an interview Nick Saban did talking about kind of the importance people place on the playoffs. And then kind of downplaying all the other bowl games. And so that kind of makes it less of a decision.

I agree, I think there is a lot of talk of the New Year's Six bowl and the other ones get pushed aside a little bit. So some of the players don't feel it's as big of a stage to play on.

So I think I would have a better answer for you if something like that were to happen in our program. But in those guys' defense, I bet there's some background stuff that a lot of us don't know about that weighs into their decision.
Ben Weaver

Boise State Broncos

BEN WEAVER: All these coaches are teaching you so many values in life that will be so beneficial.

Q. Why Boise, what made you decide I'm going to stay here and train?

BEN WEAVER: I think it gives me the ability to kind of work on other things as well. I mean, you can only train for four, five hours out of the day. And for myself I need to be doing something. I need to be doing something productive. And to be able to work part time and work towards my career and what I want to be doing with my life post football is extremely important to me because as you see the lifespan of the NFL isn't very long.

And if I were to get that opportunity, it would be awesome. But if it were not to happen, then I want to be able to kind of have my life in order.

Q. If football doesn't work out hypothetically, what do you want to do? Have you thought about coaching?

BEN WEAVER: My idea is to be in the football aspect. Not necessarily coaching. I'm currently trying to start my own company actually in a type of football equipment. Some innovative things. I've been working with our engineering program and actually our venture college.

So doing some of that stuff would be really cool. Trying to stay in the football aspect. But not necessarily coaching, I don't think.

Q. Can you share any of your ideas? Are they still secret right now?

BEN WEAVER: Still secret, exactly. Sometime, yeah.
MARIO YAKOO: As an offensive lineman I do our thing and at the end of the day we gotta get Brett the time to hit our shots and whatnot. And we've got to make sure that there's not people just running in Brett's face are free hitters and we should be good.

Q. I know you're really close to Jeremy. First I want to start off, every game I watched at home where they scored you had a handshake. Talk about the bond that you share with him.

MARIO YAKOO: Just over the years, ever since he came in, I've been a part of this -- him since his official here. I was big in him from Utah and whatnot. Just created a bond, strong bond that can't be broken. I've watched film with him almost every single day and it's just a bond you want to have between a running back and his offensive line.

And touch on them, fired up for J Mac. He deserves all the recognition he's getting right now. And fired up for the opportunity he has. I know he's going to take advantage of it. He's a young running back. Only his third year playing running back. That's going to be huge for him. I'm fired up for it and couldn't be any more proud of a friend.

Q. With him, he said that he kind of made the decision about halfway through the season. Did you see it before then or when did you kind of like, dude, you need to get on and get to the next level?

MARIO YAKOO: We've always talked about it before the season. We talked about you have a good season and the running back's shelf life it's not as long as you want it to be. You've got to be realistic about it.

And yeah, we've talked about this multiple times. I've given him my opinion on it. And he just was undecided. So leaning towards the end of the season you could start to tell this decision was going to be made. And yeah, it's huge for him. I'm happy for him and I'm going to support him whatever decision he made whether that was to stay or come. I was going to support him on his decision and I'm fired up for him.

Q. You started later playing football, if I remember right, when you told me the beginning of the year, when I first talked to you the first time, what about your future? I know you told me you have aspirations to the next level. What are you looking forward to the most?

MARIO YAKOO: I'm looking forward to a big game tomorrow. I think it will springboard me into everything I want to do from then. Then I'll sign with an agent. And I'll continue pursue my dreams. I'll start training. I'm not sure where I'm going to be training yet.
And come pro day, come combine, come the all-star games, I'm not sure what I'm going to be in. And then I'll pursue my dreams as well.

Q. What brings Baylor the most challenge for you guys?

MARIO YAKOO: They're just a physical defense. They like slanting a lot. They like moving a lot. They like to get the offensive line on edges so you can't double team them.

So that will be big for us. Just as an offense communicating what they're doing and at the end of the day we've just got to be physical and play our football.

Q. Is this going to be the toughest game you guys have faced all year?

MARIO YAKOO: Yeah, it will. Yeah, it will. They've got some dogs on defense. They've got really well-structured, they're pretty sound. They hit their gaps. And at the end of the day they've got really good players. They're in the Big 12 and they've got some good players there that represent that conference and it's going to be a big challenge for us.

But as O line, we'll be ready for the challenge and we're fired up.

Q. Bulletin board material, Cannon promises win. I know you read it. What did you think of it?

MARIO YAKOO: That's just his opinion. Let that be. Let the (indiscernible). Come tomorrow, at the end of the game, we'll see whether he was wrong or right.

Obviously we noticed whatever he said. But that's just more to fire us up. And as a team I can tell you we're fired up and ready to get out there. We're ready.