



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

5500 CAMPANILE DRIVE, SAN DIEGO, CA 92182 | (619) 594-5547

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San Diego State Football Press Conference Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2017

SDSU head coach Rocky Long

Opening statement:

"Thanks for coming, it must be a slow day in sports news around here – there are quite a few people here. I don't know if I look refreshed or not, but I think our team looked refreshed yesterday in practice. We had a little more quickness out there and a little more speed, so hopefully that will carry us through the last two games of the season. This week we play a very explosive offensive team. If you look at their statistics, they throw for a bunch of yards and they score a bunch of points. They score a lot of points on some pretty good football teams and that's not our style. I hope it doesn't turn into a scoring contest because that's not our style. We'll see how we come off the bye week, there's a concern about how sharp we'll be especially at the beginning of the game but we'll see how that works out."

On how junior quarterback Christian Chapman is preparing for Saturday's game:

"Last week we did a lot of different things other than get ready for the game and yesterday was our first game plan specifically for Nevada. I didn't see anything special yesterday as we were putting in our game plan but we don't compete against each other much, plus it's against the scout team so if he doesn't look good against the scout team, I'm really nervous. He looked okay yesterday."

On if the two losses putting SDSU out of the national conversation bothers him or not:

"I don't pay much attention to that. In our league you better have won a lot of games in a row and most of your good wins better be near the end of the season or they completely forget you. I did watch a lot of football this weekend and I did notice Stanford beat Washington. I did notice that."

On the 59-52 overtime game between Boise State and Colorado State:

"I watched that whole game. If you're on one side for a coach it's exciting and wonderful, and if you're on the other side, it's devastating. I mean when Colorado State went ahead by 14 with about two minutes left to go in the game, 90 percent of the time that's a win, maybe more than that. Maybe 95 percent of the time that's a win. So I'm sure Colorado State is very disappointed and I'm sure Boise State is very happy, but I thought Colorado State outplayed them."

On if he would like to see the conference change the schedule to play teams from the other division to create good matchups:

"No, every year could be different. You never know which side of the conference is going to be the strongest from top to bottom. (In 2012), there was a three-way tie for the conference championship and two of them were on our side. So I think every year mostly depends on what players you have coming back. It might just rotate back and forth between the two. They have more experienced teams on that side than we do on our side. They have more coaches in place than we do on our side, I think we have three brand new coaches on our side and one that's a second-year coach so you know there is some stability involved in which side of the conference is best."

On the health of the offensive and defensive lines:

"All the guys that were hurt I think are going to be able to play. Some of them won't be able to play well, we're still waiting on Antonio Rosales to get completely healthy. He moves around better and he's feeling better than he did but he's still not at 100 percent so I'm not sure that one has been cleared up. Our defensive linemen all are expected to play, how well they can play I don't know. They were okay yesterday but we didn't have pads on yesterday, we have pads on today. Everybody looks pretty good in shorts."

On the linebacker play in general:

"Obviously we can be better than we have been but some of that is due to inexperience and some of that is due to injuries. I think going into the season we said we were young in the offensive line – I think that proved true and I think they have gotten better as the season goes but I think that it's proof that they are not as good as having an experienced offensive line. We were very inexperienced at the linebacker position and at safety and I think that has proven true too. Last year when we had all those veterans back there we had 26 interceptions. This year we have 10. But last year we had 22, that's not because they are better athletes, it's because they are more experienced and are in the right place more often. I think it's proved true and I'm not taking them back (the wins) either or giving them away. Beating Stanford and Arizona State, I thought we played over our heads and being 8-2 at this time – I think preseason if we said we would be 8-2 at this time and qualified for a bowl game after the first six games of the season, everybody would think it's a wonderful season and unbelievable that we played this well with this many young guys. But because of the hype of when we were 6-0 people forgot what our team was really like going into the season and that's fine if you forget, but just remember that 8-2 is pretty damn good. Last time I looked there are only four undefeated teams left in college football by the way and two of them are going to lose sooner or later for sure."

On what getting to 10-2 would mean for their bowl situation:

"It might make a little bit of difference, not a big difference in our league, because our league and a lot of those bowls are owned by ESPN and the league and ESPN get together and decide who goes where. They try to get the best matchups and they try to get the best TV package, which teams will get the best ratings. So I don't know if 8-4 or 10-2 makes a darn bit of difference."

On if he thought at all about keeping senior running back Rashaad Penny in at San Jose State to get a big number of yards and national attention:

"[I] had no thought of that. At the time he had 234 yards, you get recognized nationally pretty good for that too and then when they look at he's second in the nation in rushing and he averages more yards per carry – that's all national news too. It doesn't do any good to beat somebody up just to make one guy a star, it doesn't do anybody any good."

On if the practice of ball control against a weaker opponent will translate to better competition:

"Well obviously the defense we were playing against wasn't as good as some of the other defenses we've played against. To use that time in a game where we're ahead like we were not trying to embarrass the other team but to get some experience for inexperienced players. So in the fourth quarter it was totally our second and third string that were playing in the game. And we ran the ball and got first downs until we could take a knee and run the clock out. I still believe that's the right way to do it, that attitude and philosophy are changing in the coaching profession as we move along — that doesn't mean it's right. I believe you don't ever try to embarrass an opponent. I've been on that other sideline, all the experienced guys have been on both those sidelines and some of the new guys coming up haven't been embarrassed like that but they will be someday if they stay in the game long enough, they will be and then they will know how it feels."

SDSU senior tight end David Wells

On if having less practice time and not having a game affects players:

"You have to go out there in a game with a lot of plays and a lot of full speed reps so just being able to take Friday, Saturday and Sunday off and letting your body rest, it does a lot for you. Especially if you do it right, you don't go out and mess around, you take care of yourself then it's very helpful to what you can do."

On how important it is to finish strong and not lose focus:

"It's really important, nothing is set in stone yet. We still have a chance to win a championship and we still have a chance to accomplish what we set out to do at the beginning of the season. Only thing that we can control is going out and playing hard each and every week. It's not over until it's over, that's really it."

On how they prepared for Nevada following the bye week:

"We approach it the same every single week. We get our game plans, usually on Tuesday, but going through the bye week we already prepared for them a little bit we realized what sort of defense they are running and special teams and all that sort of stuff like that. We starting installing small things at first and then usually when we see what they do in their most recent week, that's when the game plan gets changed mostly. And then we go out there today, which is really our first hard practice of the week and we go out there and go through what we've got to do and run our plays that we've got to do. That's really it."

On if they will be watching Fresno State earlier in the day and how that affects them:

"It just depends on what TV channel it's on. We only get certain channels. Like Parker (Baldwin) said, it's not going to change how we play. We've got to make sure that no matter what the outcome of that game is we have to control what we can control, that's really all that matters to us right now."

SDSU junior Aztec (safety) Parker Baldwin

On if having less practice time and not having a game affects players:

"Not having to play a game and go through all those plays, especially if you are a player who plays every snap, sometimes after a game you feel fine. You feel like you are not banged up, but the toll it takes on your body and having that break is huge being refreshed for these last two games."

On how important it is to finish strong and not lose focus:

"Finishing strong is really what we're all about. Last year we finished strong and this year we plan to do the same."

On if they will be watching Fresno State earlier in the day and how that affects them:

"We'll be aware, of course we'll be watching that game. It obviously means a lot to us to be able to win a championship so we'll be aware. But either outcome of the game is not going to change how we prepare."

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