

TEXAS QUOTES

September 9, 2017

Texas head coach Tom Herman

Opening statement: Great team win. Really, really proud of our guys, the way that they responded and really both sides of the ball offensively and defensively. That was a team that was averaging 475 yards of total offense that we held to 171 yards. A team that jumped out 16-0 against a top-25 team and played them to the end, and I think only fell to them by a couple touchdowns.

So I thought that's what it's supposed to look like when you're playing well on both sides of the ball, holding a team to 171 yards. We had 400 yards rushing, 620 yards total offense.

Really, a big key too was with a tempo offense like that was staying on the field on offense. We had almost 40 minutes' time of possession, almost double what they had. I'm not a big time of possession guy. We're not. But when you play these teams, it's important to hold on to the ball, convert third downs, which we did, 10-of-15, and 6-of-6 scoring touchdowns in the red zone.

So, again, really, really proud of our guys for tuning out all the noise and tuning out all the distractions that they could have allowed to creep in after last week's showing.

They got back to work, and they knew what we had to do. They knew what we're capable of doing, and they did it. I couldn't be prouder of that team in there right now for responding the way that they did.

On what he's learned about the team after two games: We're not a finished product. I wrote down we had too many dropped balls, still a few too many penalties. Field position was not great. We had a couple coverage busts, and we've still got to fix our kickoff coverage to be more consistent.

Definitely not a finished product. But, man, did our guys — they flew around. They cut it loose and played with confidence and swagger. That was something that was missing.

I think this is a smart team. This is a team that saw all of the errors from last Saturday, and they vowed to correct them, and they knew that the way we do that in our culture is to go out and work our tails off and make sure that we do things so intensely at practice that eventually it becomes habit in the game.

I saw a lot of good habits being reinforced today, whereas there was a lot of bad habits that crept back in to our team last week.

So now we've got to do it again. We've got a real one this week.

On what he wants the offensive identity of the team to be: We need to run the ball. We've got an above-average offensive line. We've got good tailbacks. That's who we are. That's what we believe in.

Now, we're not going to be so stubborn as to — you know, last week you fall down by 20 in the second quarter and you're playing a defense that's structurally taking away the run, for lack of a better term, that we're going to be able to win the game the way the defense dictates that we do.

But in games like this, you've got to be able to impose your will and run the football and take some pressure off that quarterback. I think our offensive line and backs did a marvelous job of that.

On junior running back Chris Warren III's performance: I think we all knew it was in there. We'd seen flashes of it, but this is a guy that has been banged up and missed some time for us.

Again, he'd be the first to tell you, he's not a finished product. I think there were some runs that he made a lot of yards on because he's a 6-foot-2-inch, 250 pound guy that was running hard. But he's still got work to do in terms of seeing the holes open up.

But was really proud. Chris is a guy that, in nine months, has really made a commitment to running tougher, to running stronger, to running lower. You saw that today. So that was good, to see him take what he's been training to improve on, take it to the game field.

On freshman quarterback Sam Ehlinger's performance and the status of sophomore quarterback Shane Buechele: I think Sam played good. I mean, for that being his first collegiate start, that was good. I thought he was very poised in the pocket. However, I thought there were times he wasn't seeing the coverage as well, and there were some throws to be made, and he was hanging on to it a little bit too long.

But to go whatever he went, 15-of-27 for 222, took no sacks, so he got himself out of some trouble. So when he did hang on to the ball too long, at least he made up for it by scrambling around or throwing it away or scrambling for positive yardage.

I don't know about Shane. Obviously, he wasn't able to — I thought we were on track maybe to be able to get something out of him today. He's progressing. But still, that shoulder, I would be hard pressed to say if we played tomorrow that he could go. I still think he's a couple days away.

I think we'll know a whole lot more — he's made steady progress every day, and I think we'll know a whole lot more tomorrow, Monday and going into Tuesday's practice who we're going to have.

On junior quarterback Jerrod Heard's performance as a runner: Jerrod is a dynamic playmaker. He's a guy comfortable back there taking snaps and comfortable in the QB run game, and that is a very needed, added dimension in our offense to equate the numbers like that in terms of not having the quarterback have to hand off to somebody, and now you're minus two. You're only minus one when the quarterback runs the football.

The good thing about him is he can throw the football too, and that's probably the biggest area that we'll have to expand his package a little bit or else you're going to see, like most wildcat, people are just going to load the box and play cover zero on you and dare you to throw it. But Jerrod can and will expand that part of his package.

On junior defensive back Holton Hill:

Holton Hill, man, what a joy it's been to watch that kid grow. He's done a complete 180 from our short time here in nine months. For him to contribute as positively as he has had in the last couple weeks is really good, because that's a position of very little depth right now.

We need him and Chris both to play their A-game each and every week.

On how impressed he was by the defense's performance: A lot because, again, that's an offense that, I mean, 475 yards averaging, and one of those games being against a top-25 team, and so I was really, really proud of the way that they responded.

They were embarrassed, and they knew that that wasn't them. And Coach (Todd) Orlando and his staff put them in a great position, got them right mentally, and hats off to the kids for cutting it loose today and playing really, really aggressive and without hesitation.

Now, we had a couple of coverage busts that one got overthrown, the other one was dropped so we've got to address that. But for the most part, I was really, really proud of them.

On whether he plans to keep playing with two quarterbacks: Yeah, I think when Shane returns, that will probably allow us to still play Jerrod at receiver and not have to spend the entire practice at quarterback. But we know that we can be effective in that package. And to be able to have that package the entire year, I think, is probably smart.

On whether he gave junior linebacker Malik Jefferson and sophomore defensive lineman Gerald Wilbon any specific challenges this week: The challenge was to cut it loose. The challenge was to not hesitate, to not evaluate, to not think. Just play the call and play it with your hair on fire, and they did that. I don't know that the embarrassment was motivation or challenging, more so than just knowing what we're capable of when we do cut it loose, and those guys really, really responded today.

On if he saw anything in practice that indicated the team would have this kind of game: I saw a team that that could have allowed the disappointment to be distracting, that could have allowed the disappointment to affect their intensity level, that could have allowed the disappointment to lead to doubt of who we are and what we do, and they did none of that.

They came to work ready to go, focused, locked in, but relaxed. There was a quiet confidence in them that I think we all knew that that wasn't our best foot forward last week, and that in order to put our best foot forward today, that we were going to have to have a great week of practice, and they did.

On when he starts looking toward the game against USC: Tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. We're going to enjoy the heck outta this one.

On whether he has a decision on his hands if Shane is healthy: I don't know. I mean, I think it would be premature of me to say that today. We've got to see how healthy he can be. He played pretty good against a really good team in Maryland.

So we've got to make sure. We know we've got a capable one in Sam. We've got to make sure that Shane can do everything he's capable of doing and doing it at an elite level before we throw him back in there because, A, you don't want a setback from a health standpoint from him. And, B, you don't want the pride of getting him in to inhibit the offense's production.

So I think we'll know a lot more about what kind of decision we have to make based on his health on Tuesday and Wednesday.

On how important it is to get backups live reps in games such as this one: It's critical. Game reps, as much as those guys — as game-like as we try to make practice, getting those true game reps are invaluable, and it was important for those guys to get out there and play against a good football team.

You did mention injuries. I'll give you an update. As far as I know, Kaleb Smith right now, head injury, which really struck me as odd, being the short snapper on field goal. I've got to look to see. I didn't think those guys were allowed to get hit in the head. I've got to see what happened there.

(Junior tight end) Garrett Gray and (freshman offensive lineman) Pat Hudson will both get MRIs on their knees. And Armanti Foreman, looks like a bit of a hamstring. Maybe kind of really, really powerful cramp, I guess, is the best way to put it. The trainers don't think it's necessarily strained at this point, but we'll know more on him tomorrow.

On how Ehlinger and Heard reacted to the game plan, and whether they planned on using Heard as much as they did: No, we planned on it. I think, to be fair to that kid, he goes from basically being our starting Z-receiver to backup quarterback and did it without hesitation, very unselfishly.

He said, Coach, I'll do whatever it takes to win. But with him doing that, we felt, one, we needed it to take some pressure off of Sam and be an enhancement to the run game. But secondarily, I think it was important to make sure that he got quality snaps and important snaps in the game so that he understands that him making that move for the betterment of the team does not go unnoticed.

Junior offensive lineman Connor Williams

On Sam Ehlinger: He didn't seem nervous at all. He was confident and did a great job.

On if they cut loose: I feel like we definitely did. We finally went out there and cut loose. We might have had a few mistakes. Overall we played fast and physical. I feel like that was successful.

On if this team got a mental boost after the game: I feel like we did. We needed this. We needed to go out there and put it all on the field and see that we can execute.

On how important it is to keep the run game going: The run game was our number one focus going into the game as an offense. It was good to see us go out and execute. It started off with the O-Line. All five guys, we did a great job. We put ourselves in a good position for the tight ends and running backs.

On if the run game was important to take pressure off a starting freshman quarterback: Not necessarily. We just need to establish our run game to have a successful offense. We did that today.

On the difference between this week and last week: San Jose State had a good defense. I feel like we finally cut loose and had confidence. We weren't uptight. We were loose and ready to go out there and play.

Junior Wide receiver Jerrod Heard

On what this past week was like: It was good. The anxiousness and nervousness went down. I feel like the guys were more relaxed and kept more to their assignments. Everyone was just ready to have a good time. We wanted to get back out there and do what we do. For Texas football, that's to run and throw the ball, and have fun doing it.

On what Coach Herman tried to get across to the team over the week: He just kept everyone's head up. His focus wasn't really trying to prove a point. He wanted us to remember that we've got each other's backs and we're the ones we can rely on. He helped us gain that confidence and still kept us motivated for the long season ahead of us.

On the importance of this performance after the game last week: It was very important. It was a team win. We are excited and going to celebrate for a little bit, but we're going to get back to work tomorrow for a big one coming up.

On the feeling of going back to the quarterback position: I think being back there and communicating with the offensive line is something you lose. But taking snaps and being able to run behind them is something that I love.

Freshman quarterback Sam Ehlinger

On what he liked about his game today and what he didn't like: There are a lot of things that I can improve on — accuracy down the field on some of my passes. I thought overall managing the blitz pickup and managing the offensive line, they did a great job. They're in places that they need to be going a lot of times. So I think accuracy down the field on a couple of the passes could have been a little better.

On if he envisioned his first touchdown pass at Texas being a 1-yard flip: No, but I appreciate Coach Beck giving that one to me. He kept flipping it and trying to get my first passing touchdown.

On if there was a moment he it sank in that he was playing quarterback at Texas: I don't think so, and I don't think it ever will. It's one of those things where it's so surreal that it takes a really long time, if it does settle in.

On if Shane Buechele offered him any advice on starting as a true freshman: Absolutely. Shane and I are great friends. We're roommates at the hotel, we talked about it last night. He told me, 'Just play football and relax and do what you do. You've been preparing for this moment since January.' His advice really helped me. I took a breath and played football.

On how the offense was different this week: I think passing-wise, the game plan wasn't that different. I think running the ball, we wanted to run the ball downhill because we know we have a great offensive line and Chris (Warren III) is a really good runner, getting Jerrod (Heard) in there to get some QB run. I think the package that we had together was perfect for what we did today.

On what the offense can do going forward: I don't think there is a ceiling for this offense. I mean we have so many playmakers. You look across the board, all the receivers that we have, the receiving room is stacked. The running backs, we have the shifty back in Kyle (Porter). Chris (Warren III) is a great downhill runner, and he'll run you over and he showed that today. And the offensive line is the best in the business. And we have great coaching. So I don't think there is a ceiling for this offense. I think it can really take off.

Junior defensive back P.J. Locke III

On how much Texas needed the win: Definitely needed today. The wait over the summer and to go out with a loss in the first game. Just come out here today, take big strides, keeping our mind clear that we're not the same team from last year. Just keeping everybody confident, keeping a positive attitude. Coming out here, we matured in taking a big step. I feel like it was really big for us.

On approaching the game after last week's loss: Basically, that we're just not the same team from last year. We did some great things in the game last week and all the mistakes we did, they were because of us and they were correctable. The biggest instances were just do our job, just doing our job and staying relaxed, not becoming overly anxious.

On what he said to freshman quarterback Sam Ehlinger after his first win: Just talking about how I'm very proud of him for stepping up. This is something that he's been waiting on, he has that next man up mentality and from day one he was going to be ready. His name was called and he went out there and played his butt off.

On how tough the week's practices were: I wouldn't say it was just tough, but it was getting over that hump. Just letting guys know that we're not the same team from last year, just keeping a positive attitude. Like I said, those mistakes that we made in the first game, they were correctable.

On junior defensive back Holton Hill leading Texas in touchdowns: I know that he's going to be all in my ear about it. Honestly, I'm not surprised. When Holton steps on the field, he just has a different mentality. When he's walking around campus or anything like that, he's just real quiet. When he steps on the field, his passion for the game just comes out. He did a great job, real vocal, and

he's a hell of an athlete. Very, very talented, and I'm not surprised that he makes those plays. It's just a matter of when he's going to make them.

Junior Running Back Chris Warren III

On today's performance: Just coming here and playing ball. That's all it is. It's good to come out and play ball because that's why you're here.

On being out last year: It's rough because you know you can't help your team. You just have to support them emotionally and morally.

On needing to have a game like today: I don't know. Because last week we needed that too. We needed the games. We needed the adversity and we also needed the success. We needed both. Last week and this week.

On today's improvements: Today, I saw us executing better than we did last week. We played a lot harder this week too. We played for each other and that helped us get it today.

On getting Tom Herman his first win as the Texas head coach: He expects that from us every day. He says it's fourth-and-inches every time we walk into the building. He has no less expectations for us than for us to come out and try our hardest, regardless of the situation.

On the emphasis on the running game: It was just a different game plan. We like to structure our game plan differently and we decided to run the ball a little bit more this week.

On Sam Ehlinger's performance: I liked what I saw from Sam out there today. I'm proud of the kid. Me and him are pretty close. Sam's a baller. He'll come out and play regardless. I don't think he's the one to get nervous about this kind of stuff.

On responding to adversity: You need adversity because you need to know how to respond when the games get tougher. Not every game is going to be easy and not every game is going to go step-by-step your way. You need to be able to respond.

Senior defensive lineman Poona Ford

On what was different between this game and the opener last weekend: Just better preparation throughout the week. Everybody was making sure that they were taking of themselves during practice and transitioning that into the game.

On if the defense's confidence built up throughout the game: Yeah, a little bit, but we can't really settle. We just try to stop them from getting more. We just try to get three and outs.

On if the preparation changed this week: Coach always says, 'We never change,' so I pretty much feel like it's going to be the same, but it might be a little more intense because of a bigger opponent and we need to get ready for that. So we're going to prepare harder and try to be ready for the game.

On if there is different preparation for road games: Same thing, never changes. It'll be the same thing throughout the week as far as the preparation up to the game on Saturday.

On getting the shutout win today: It feels good. It was what we were supposed to do. We want to enjoy this one now and get ready for next week.

On the embarrassment from the Maryland loss driving the team against San Jose State: Yeah, during the week, we talked about not letting Maryland beat us twice as far as going into the next game. We never looked back, we just kept preparing throughout the week, so that really just drove us to today.

Senior wide receiver Lorenzo Joe

On the difference between playing with each quarterback: Each guy has their different game. Sam (Ehlinger) did a great job today filling in for Shane (Buechele). He's been prepping all week and working hard. Like I said, they all have different styles so we have to be ready for it all.

On getting great catches today and seizing the opportunity: I'm just staying positive. That's been my whole career, just staying positive and waiting on my number to be called. And when coach called that play, Sam (Ehlinger) delivered a great ball and I tried my best to just keep my toes in. And when I saw the review I thought, 'Man, that has to be a catch.' So Sam did a great job of throwing it and the line did a great job of blocking up front.

On the team's emotion from last week: I just felt like we got down too easy, especially when things weren't going our way. Coach says we can't do that, we just have to keep bouncing back, and I felt like this week we did a great job of doing that. Now it's time to get ready for next week.

On what he said to Sam after the game: I told him congratulations on this first win. Keep working and always be ready.

Senior linebacker Malik Jefferson

On the advice he gave Sam Ehlinger before the game: I told him he'd never know when his name would be called or when that redshirt would be burned and I'm so proud of him.

On their need for a shutout: That's what I preached. I told those guys to go out there and play as hard as you can. We needed the shutout to prove to people that we could actually do it and prove it to ourselves.

On how Coach Herman prepared them: It was a lot about ourselves. It was important that we stopped the run and that we went out there and got turn overs.

On linebacker Gary Johnson's performance: I was happy because I just want him to fly around and just go make plays and do what he does. He's a very fast kid and I was excited to see him out there right beside me. Helping him no matter what and doing whatever we could to make sure he was focused.

Junior defensive back Holton Hill

On his thoughts when catching the interception: I just saw my team blocking for me and I just used my vision. I cut it back and I was like, 'Yes, thank you.'

On comparing the secondary's performance to last week: After last week, we went back to the drawing board. We made our corrections even though we didn't have a perfect game. Because we've got a big opponent next week, so stay humble and next week hopefully the same outcome.

On the locker room compared to last week: Today we had the juices flowing, everybody's feeling pretty good.

On the mental state of the team: Mentally, I feel like we're all feeling pretty good about ourselves. But not too good, because we know that we have another great opponent that we're playing next week. So everyone is really excited to go out there and play a great team.

On how important getting the shutout was: It was really important for us. That was one of our defensive goals going into the game.

On the team's readiness to play USC: I feel like we're as ready as we're going to be by Thursday, the end of the week. But mentally, we feel like we're there. We're ready.

