

September 5, 2009



An Interview With:

COACH MIKE LEACH

COACH LEACH: Questions.

Q. Could you kind of grade this performance from your team or assess this performance tonight?

COACH LEACH: Average. Slightly above average probably.

Q. What were some of the good things and bad things that you saw? Was it more bad than good?

COACH LEACH: Well, I already said there's more good than bad. I think it was a good starting point. I think that -- well, I thought our defensive line played with pretty good intensity. I thought that -- I thought our whole line could have done a better job playing together. I thought our receivers did some good things.

I thought, let's see, I would say Taylor Potts, Baron Batch and our secondary were tentative. I think our returns and special teams were tentative. I thought the other guys flew down there and did quite a bit of damage.

I thought that -- but you know, I thought that as far as the first game goes, that's how it typically is, and you know, that's -- you improve the most in the first three games, and that's why you film it.

I felt good about it. I don't feel great about it.

Q. Can you elaborate about the job you thought Potts did?

COACH LEACH: I thought it was mixed. I thought his best plays were really good. I thought -- and I thought he really did a good job. I think sometimes offensively, as you get off the blocks, Bear Bryant used to say that defense, you have to stop 50 percent of the plays. He said offense is going to screw up on their own half the

time, and so then you have to stop the 50 percent where they don't screw up. And so I think, you know, which illustrates the point, just getting in sync and stuff like that,, sometimes takes a little time.

And I think that, you know, there were times where he was real sharp and then we'd miss a blitz or there would be some time where he would force a ball. There would be some time where he would check a run and we don't -- we either don't do as good a job blocking it or carrying the ball as we might, you know and so I think it was mixed.

But again, I think that offensively, you know, it's a little different than just flying to the ball. I think that you have to execute something in order for the defense to be held accountable. And I think there were too many spots offensively where we played with eight instead of 11. Although I would have been shocked had that not been the case at this point.

Q. Taylor said he did a couple of things back in the pocket he doesn't normally do, throwing off one foot, missing reads; did you see some of the same things, or was he just out of sync times?

COACH LEACH: Well, I think he just needs to play like he does on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. That's all he needs to worry about. The good stuff, really good and some of the try-to-be perfect stuff, not so good.

Q. Talk about the running game, it seemed to struggle; what was our overall thought process on the running game?

COACH LEACH: I thought that we were too spotty on the offensive line and too tentative at running back. You know, I didn't think that there was anything in -- you know, they mixed the front up and they said, you know, I'm coming, I'm not coming, all that. Nothing special about that. Just executing together really.

And then I thought Harrison played with a

lot of intensity and smart. We probably should have got him in sooner.

Q. North Dakota recently moving up to SCS, do you feel like they are headed in the right direction?

COACH LEACH: I've thought that for quite some time. They have always been pretty good up there, and you know, there's a pile of athletes up there, you know and used to be kind of -- they would either go to Big Ten, Notre Dame or Nebraska. No, I think they are really good. Thought that coming in, too, because I don't have a number for you -- I don't have a number for you.

But they almost made the playoffs last year. They lost a number of games but just a few points. People sometimes do that, lost X number of games by nine points. You know, they are an example of that. They probably were in the middle of winning all but one or two of them last year.

So I thought they were good. And they are a reasonably big physical team, about -- size-wise, they are not lacking anything and typically these teams are first level, they are not necessarily lacking anything, and may even have some really talented guys that transfer or something like that and then you play them early in the season. It's tough.

But you know, there's a whole lot of people in the country that played a I-AA team that have a lot more to work on than the red Raiders do right now. I don't know who all, but you guys could probably roll off your tongue. I'll tell you another thing; they are not done -- they are not done falling yet tonight probably.

Q. Talk about the penalties a little bit. Would you put that on first-game jitters, or do you attribute it to anything else?

COACH LEACH: Yeah, I think it was some of that. I think it was a combination of things. I think the biggest thing I look at is the differential between us and our opponents. Teams that -- there's two things that teams that throw it and spread it out; typically they are penalized a little bit more but typically they are opponents are penalized a little more. And I think some of that has to do with the fact that there's more space. That's easier to see. They see your guys, they see the guy -- the guy on them, too. Because I thought about for years, it's a fact.

And also, teams that are aggressive and try to make things happen get some penalties. You know, one thing that kills me is you know,

there will be some team in the country that's just pitiful and they will say, well, but they were the least-penalized team, at least they were really disciplined. You know, really disciplined? They weren't really disciplined. They were afraid to make a mistake and didn't make anything happen. So there's a fine line between all that.

I think that some of the first-game stuff, some was bonehead stuff, and, well, some was other stuff, you know. (Laughter).

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