

October 10, 2009



An interview with:

COACH LEACH BRANDON SHARPE

Q. Brandon, just kind of rank this as far as best defensive performance you've ever been a part of, can you?

BRANDON SHARPE: You said rank it?

Q. Yeah.

BRANDON SHARPE: I mean, there's not a rank to it. You know. We're just going out there, having fun. Being excited to play, play the next play. It's all starting at practice, you know, just go out there with excitement.

Q. Coach Leach, could you talk about Sheffield tonight and the way he performed? And do you have yourself a quarterback controversy here?

COACH LEACH: I thought he played really well. I didn't think there was a controversy there. I thought he played really well. The best thing he does is he's decisive. He is a really good presence out there for the entire offensive unit, and I think he has a lot of presence for the whole team.

I thought he was a real inspiration to everybody. And I thought he played really well. I thought he did the things, you know, you really want a quarterback to do. He played decisive, and then worked the pocket really good.

And he made some things happen with his feet, not just recklessly running around, but getting himself in position to make additional plays, which, you know, were routine plays, but used his feet to get himself in position to do it.

Q. I think you guys held Daniel Thomas to under 50 yards, and only 15 came after that first series. Could you talk about what you guys did against him, and if that was a focus coming in?

BRANDON SHARPE: Yeah, like I said, it starts all the way from practice, you know, three-and-out, three-and-out, you know. Just keep plays. Everybody just thought as a defense to stay together, you know, the whole defense works as a team.

Jamar Wall said in the meetings, you know, D-line, get the seven front, the front seven. Get it up front right, and he's got the back. So we just all connect with each other and just got at them.

Q. Were there any areas of your team's play tonight that you were not pleased with?

COACH LEACH: Just I would say the only ones that come to mind are the personal fouls there during the one drive. Then the other would be, you know, our interception. Tried to make a little too much happen. You know, we're going to be in a pretty good position for a shutout. But then offensively we gave up that score and let that fellow pick it.

Q. Can you talk about what you do on kickoff coverage and keeping Brandon Banks in check?

COACH LEACH: I thought they did a good job. I thought kickoff coverage was really good, because, you know, he's a handful. I thought our kickoff unit, you know, had a real committed week of practice and really did a good job taking up the challenge to stop him.

You know, there was a point in the middle where there's a few kicks we'd like to have back. But other than that, I thought really good job. Special teams was a big part of our win tonight.

Q. Is it nice to see all three sides of the ball coming together for a full 60 minutes?

COACH LEACH: Yeah, and I thought that was a really critical thing for us to take and build on because it was all three sides. I thought our sideline did a great job. So four from that

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**Coach Leach and Brandon Sharpe
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standpoint, and I was really proud of our guys.

Q. Did you have any inkling that the team was going to put it all together tonight? Is that something that you just don't realize until it actually happens?

COACH LEACH: I thought we were on the threshold of it. I felt like we've been on the threshold of it a couple of times. And then just let off or relaxed or somebody gets to it.

I tell you what, I was starting to get sick of was some guy get depressed and mope around because he made a bad play. We've been having too much of that guy acts like he's ready to go, and they get the little moping face going, and then, yeah, we don't have time to sit and wait for that:

We didn't really have big problems with somebody, you know, sometimes a guy gets over exuberant if he makes a play and it takes a series or two to get them back. We didn't have a problem with that. Somebody would make a mistake, and then everybody else was going to wait on him to mope about it for a series or so. And I thought there was too much of that.

But I thought that, you know, we had said the guys that we elected captains this week I thought did a great job as far as really bringing a lot of energy to our practices which I thought was really important and everybody was just excited about playing the next play.

Q. Against Rice, you had seven touchdown passes and tonight Sheffield had seven. Does that show you can have anybody back there that can throw for seven touchdowns in a game?

COACH LEACH: That may be against Rice and tonight. But there were some in between there that we weren't that precise, I know that.

Yeah, we're just going to try to be steady, try to be consistently steady. Just, like I say, try to take this and build on it. Kansas State's a good team. There is no question about it. Had a real good record coming in here. Have a highly respected defense and, quite honestly, a coach that I respect as much as any in America, you know Bill Snyder.

There's a lot of good things going on there I was really proud of our players being excited about the opportunity to embrace this thing.

Q. Talk about the overall play of your defense and how you would rate that?

COACH LEACH: Thought it was really good. Wish we would have gotten out of the blocks the first drive a little bit better. But after that I thought they played really tough. We came close to getting even more turnovers. Would like to have seen him get those, but got some and I thought that was good.

I thought where we kept them out in four downs down there. I thought that was really impressive. That was something else.

Q. What about what he did against Thomas?

COACH LEACH: I thought that was good. He's a great player, you know, a point of emphasis this week. So they need to feel proud that they, you know, stopped a guy that is really good and is really a good player.

You know, folks got together and you do it together. I thought that was good. I thought some contributions by our young guys, the overall excitement by the defensive side of the ball, I thought was really good.

One thing I thought was really key, although we didn't capitalize on it offense quite how I would have liked, was defensively stopping them the first series of the second half I thought was really important.

Q. You mentioned earlier about Sheffield moving around well in the pocket. How much of that was this offensive line and playing better tonight?

COACH LEACH: Well, there's no question they played better. They played significantly better. I just thought the whole offensive line unit played well. I thought Lonnie Edwards stepped up, and had the best game that he's had. I thought they played good. I thought all five of them played good.

Oh, and also the confederate played good, Keown. He's from South Carolina. So (smiling) but he played good, I thought.

Q. How hard will it be or will it be hard to choose a starting quarterback after a performance like tonight?

COACH LEACH: Well, it's not just hard. We'll get together, talk about it and figure out what we're going to do, you know.

Q. Are you leaning one way or another

right now as far as that goes?

COACH LEACH: We'll see, you know. Just you'll have to stay tuned, I suppose. That's what makes sports exciting is it always changes.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

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An interview with:

STEVEN SHEFFIELD

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Steven Sheffield.

Q. Could you just describe the whole night for you and everything leading up to this game during the week?

STEVEN SHEFFIELD: This week we were preaching as a team. I talked about it a lot to the team, and the coach was talking about how we needed this week to be that week that everything came together because we hadn't played a full game on all three sides of the ball. You know, just playing a smooth game, things going our way. We hadn't done that against since day one, that hasn't happened this season.

We preached on that all week, and sure enough everybody came to play, and that happened. All three sides of the ball, and how we wanted it to, and hard work pays off, so...

Q. With the defense getting so many stops, was it pretty easy to stay in the rhythm offensively?

STEVEN SHEFFIELD: Yeah, it was good. You know, especially with the cold weather too. You know, I always stayed warm, basically, and I didn't have to be on the sideline warming up too much.

Yeah, defense played amazing. It was great. The coaching was great. We had a lot of fun.

Q. Do you feel like you've earned the starter spot?

STEVEN SHEFFIELD: In my eyes, yes, but it's not my decision. So it's up to the coaches. We'll see what Coach Leach thinks this next week and go from there.

Q. Can you talk about just going out there, feeling like a captain on this team, starting this whole game, just feeling like this was your offense the whole time? What was that like for you?

STEVEN SHEFFIELD: It was good, you know. It's a great feeling. And I can't say that I felt this since high school where I can go out there and take charge of things. Everyone looks to me for guidance and tempo and just stay fast-paced on and whatnot.

But, yeah, it's a good feeling. I've been waiting for this for a long time, and I've worked real hard for this. I'm glad things are going the way they are.

Q. Did you talk about the play of your offensive line? It looked like they were protecting good out there tonight?

STEVEN SHEFFIELD: Yeah, the O-line, amazing. They made it easy for me. It couldn't have been easier for me. And I love those guys to death. Golly, they played their hearts out tonight. Like I said, it just made it easier for me. It reads easier, makes everything easier.

Even when I had to get out of the pocket a lot of times that's just, you know, maybe me being able to not see a receive error whatnot and just wanting to get out and see it better. Like I tell them, you know, if one guy's coming up field, don't quit on him just because he beats you. Turn around and I'm going to step to the side, block him again, and I'm going to get out of there. They practiced hard all week, and it paid off.

Q. Last week you said you graded yourself as a B. You know, this week I think you set a record for most yardage in a half. How would you grade this week's performance?

STEVEN SHEFFIELD: Probably an A-minus, yeah. I mean, I made some stupid decisions, and I didn't need to.

It was like I threw one that they took to the house that was me not making a good decision and not making a routine play. That's what I need to let go.

At the same time I'm not going to beat myself up about it. You know, Coach Leach always preaches on play the next play, and that's what you've got to do. Forget about that one and go on to the next one.

Q. What is it about this offense that seemed to click all the time? Early this year against Rice, Taylor had seven touchdown passes. Now tonight you have seven.

STEVEN SHEFFIELD: Um, you know, we just spread things out. The splits are wide with the linemen. You know, we just use all the field we can, and it helps a bunch. It just makes the defense cover more ground.

When everybody is doing their job, and doing what they're coached to do and what we do every day, catch the ball get straight up field, hold on to it, and get good ball security, we can't be stopped if everybody executes well.

Q. What did you talk about after you had to settle for the field goal? What did you talk about to get more in the end zone after that?

STEVEN SHEFFIELD: Playing the next play. Going down, our next drive, making it where we don't settle for a field goal and going to score again because that's all it's about, you know. Just keep scoring. That's what I told everybody. That's what Coach Leach told everybody. That's what we did.

Q. Can you talk about your mobility and how that kind of helps you extend the play a little bit and find a receiver down field?

STEVEN SHEFFIELD: Yeah. In my eyes it definitely helps. It buys me more time. More time is, you know, more time for the defense to have to, you know, guard someone and cover them up. And we practice it's called scramble drill all the time. When I have to move our receivers go to certain spots and they make things happen. They make smart plays. Makes it to where the DB's there's no specific route they've really got to cover because they're just kind of creating it, you know as we go. Yeah, it helps out quite a bit, I think.