

Tulane Head Coach Bob Toledo Weekly Press Luncheon

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East Carolina Game Re-Cap:

To recap the East Carolina game, let me start by saying that it was another disappointing loss. It's very difficult when you play that hard and then lose a game like that. I think you have to give credit to the other team; I think they're an excellent football team and they're going to go a long, long way. Once again though we played toe-to-toe with them. It was like a 15-round heavyweight fight and we played hard and we went fourteen rounds; unfortunately, you know with a ranked team like that, you've got to go 15 rounds and we didn't do it. And that was the disappointing thing. We never quit. The problem is we didn't finish the game. And the one thing I tell our kids all the time is 'hey, I just want you to play as hard as you can from start to finish.' And I think we got a great effort from our football team. We just didn't finish it. You've got to give credit to them again. They made plays when they had to and we didn't. They went 80 yards on that last drive. They went 10 plays. The quarterback hurt us on two scrambles and made a 10-yard run, a 14-yard run. We missed some tackles. He threw a 2nd and 15 pass for 27 yards; we should've done a better job. And then of course he threw the 24-yard touchdown at the end when we're in a 3 deep zone and our corner gets beat and our safety doesn't come over the top and get to a good ball. He made a double move and that was a great play for him.

On what they need to work on:

We didn't convert in key situations. Offensively, we need to convert. We need to take advantage of opportunities and we didn't do that. That's something we've got to improve on because it's happened 2 weeks in a row now. We've got to run the ball better. We haven't rushed for 100 yards yet. Our longest run has been 13 yards. And we talk about explosiveness...we need to make some explosive runs. We're not doing that right now as well. Again, I think some of that has to do with the opponent. We've played 2 very good defensive football teams. We had more yards and more points than everything West Virginia and Virginia Tech did against these guys. So that does say something about us. But they're salty. They're really salty on defense.

On the kicking game:

Our kicking game hurt us again, but in a different area like giving them the ball at the 40 yard line. We do that because we kicked off out of bounds. We start the second half; we kick it to the eight. They run it back to our 49 and then 10 plays later they score a touchdown. So those two kicks hurt us. And then the field goal with the high snap which resulted in a very low kick, the block and then run for a touchdown; it got us off on a bad start. But once again I think our kids battled back and of course we took the lead. So we had a chance to win it. Just that one play right there, that's a 10-point swing. Just us kicking the field goal and getting the 3 points...they block it and run it back for 7. So that's a big swing in a football game right there.

On the crowd:

Anyway, that was that game. I was excited about the crowd. I was really pleased. It was a very good attendance figure. And the student body; I was really proud of the student body. They came out and supported their football team and I only hope that they'll continue to do that. I appreciate it very much and I think our players really appreciate it. And that's fun for the students. They need to get involved and be a part of this university and that's all about being a part of it.

On Louisiana-Monroe:

This weekend we have Louisiana-Monroe. They're 1-2 and I constantly remind everybody that they beat Alabama last year. So they've got our attention. They've got our players' attention. And they lost to a really good Auburn team and an Arkansas team. They were actually ahead of Arkansas 27-6 and lost it at the end. Arkansas scored and went for two and beat them 28-27. And then last week they beat Alabama A&M 37-15. So, they've got a good football team. And that's something I've got to convince our players about and I think they realize that. You know, we haven't won a game yet. We need to win a football game. So we can't take anybody lightly. They've got some excellent football players. And if you look at it their quarterback, Kinsman Lancaster, he's got a really good arm. He can beat you with his legs. He's very similar to how (Pat) Pinkney was last week for East Carolina. So we've got to contain him. Their running back Frank Goodin is a good player. Their wide receiver Darrell McNeal is outstanding. They actually line him up as quarterback sometimes like we did with (Jeremy) Williams against Alabama and we did with (Matt) Forte last year. And then they've got a tight end/excellent player Zeek Zacharie. He plays all over the field. He was a second team all-league guy last year and they try to put him in positions to make plays. And then defensively, Nate Brown, the cornerback and Cardia Jackson, who was an all-league guy and Aaron Morgan and DeMarcus Carmouche. So, those guys are all good players.

On Dominique Dade:

One thing that you have to know is Dominique Dade, one of our players who was declared ineligible academically, went through an appeal process and has been accepted back into school. And now we're just waiting to see NCAA-wise if he's eligible. We think we should be finding that out within the next day or two. He's able to practice. And we believe he's going to be eligible when it's all said and done.

On Players of the Week:

Players of the week. Jeremy Williams was the offensive player of the week and I was pleased to see that he also just received the Louisiana Offensive Player of the Week award. Adam Kwentua was our defensive player of the game and we do not have a special teams player of the game.

On Injuries:

The only injury that came out of the game that was new was Alex Lauricella. He had an MRI yesterday and it's basically a bruise and a sprained ligament so he's going to be fine. He's going to be able to come back hopefully in the next week or two and be able to contribute.

On his biggest concerns with the team:

Well, some of the biggest concerns are some of the things I just mentioned. One, obviously special teams. We've got to do a better job. I mean, you get beat fast on special teams more than anything. We also have to be able to tackle better. We're missing a lot of tackles. We're making some mental errors defensively, but we're playing hard. Offensively, we've got to run the ball better. We've got to take advantage of opportunities. We get on the goal line and we've got to score. The other thing...we're down there and it's 3rd and five and the play we had called we might have scored on, but we had a penalty and it goes back to the ten. Then I ran just a draw just to not throw an interception or turn it over to get us in field goal range so we can go ahead. So, if there was a conservative play that might've been the one too, but prior to that I think we threw it quite a bit. But, we're just beating ourselves. And we've got to stop from beating ourselves. I constantly tell our football team before you can win you've got to stop from losing. And more teams beat themselves than actually get beat.

On how you coach 'learning to win'

Well, I think if you talk to our players, we showed them yesterday some video of the game...of eight or ten plays, and if they would have performed better in those eight or 10 plays we would have won. If we were to finish the game. I mean, keep playing, and don't look at the clock. Don't worry about the score. Just keep playing and play well then you'll win some games. Then once you win, you know how to do it. I mean, you never give up, you never quit and you feel confident that you can always win. Just like East Carolina did. They felt confident at the end that they were going to win that football game and they did. Our guys need to gain that confidence and that comes with time.

On if he thought at all about going for it when it was 4th and 2 and Tulane kicked a field goal:

No, I was going to kick the field goal there. There was no thought there at all. My thought going down early was if we can get close, and we did, we made four yards, we lost 3 yards, we made two yards. It was 4th and one. I was going to go for it. I mean, you're going to play a 14th ranked team and try to win a conference championship and beat one of the best teams in the conference...at that point I was going for it. But as you go through the game then things change. And I felt our defense was playing pretty well and I thought we could win it and we had it won. So I think we did the right thing, I think I did the right thing in kicking the field goal when it was 4th and 10. And 3rd and 10 I ran the draw. I was playing for a field goal at that point and didn't want to turn it over. I wanted us to go ahead.

On Tulane not being able to run the ball as well as they would like:

Well, I think it has to do with the opponent for one, I really do. Let's give credit to Alabama and let's give credit to East Carolina. Alabama played Clemson and Clemson had zero yards rushing against them. The only score they had was a punt return for a touchdown. East Carolina, they played Virginia Tech and West Virginia. They didn't have many yards rushing. So again, let's look at the source. And that's a reason why we tried to throw the ball a little more against both of those teams too. Because when we tried to run, as you saw, it was very difficult. That front 7 was very good against East Carolina. So it has to do with the opponent as well. But we need to continue to get better. And we need to keep picking away and trying to make the run go. Because, I tell you what, when you run the ball it gives you a chance to make big plays on play-action passes, which you saw. Jeremy Williams scored on the touchdown because the safety started supporting. So, when you run the ball you get a chance to hit home runs and that's what we call them, you know, making big plays. And then the other thing about running the ball and being better running the football...if you look at the time of possession in the last two games I think we had about 20 minutes more than our opponent right now. And I said it when I first took the job...if you can run the ball and get physically tougher; your defense will get physically tougher. And that's one of the reasons we led the league in rush-defense last year. Right now, our defense isn't on the field as much as our offense. So they should be better rested and should be able to play harder for a longer period of time. And that's one of the reasons we do it too, is to not have your defense on the field. I'm watching games right now; I'm watching the Auburns and the Arkansas and I could go on and on...the West Virginias and the Virginia Techs and everybody's going to the spread option football. And I guarantee you their defense is on the field for a long time. They're playing a lot of snaps. And I believe that it hurts you as a football team. I'm not a big believer in the spread-option offense. Because I really believe you don't become as physical. I mean, I'm looking at a couple of the teams East Carolina

played and they're not the same teams I used to know. I'm looking at Auburn and they're still pretty good on defense, but that offense, I mean they scored 3 points last week. That's not a physical football team anymore. And I just think this game is about being emotional and about being physical. And I think those particular offenses detract from what you want to do.

On if his team is more confident after playing so closely with 2 ranked teams even though he does not believe in moral victories:

You know, obviously, there are no moral victories. But I think when you play as well as you do and you come up short it gives you confidence against good opponents. But now we have to take the next step. Now we have to start winning these football games. I think our players are convinced that what we're doing is the right thing. And by showing them some of those clips yesterday, Mike Parenton can tell you; it makes our entire team realize that if a few guys would do their job and do it better we would probably be 2-0 right now instead of 0-2. So it's like a handful of plays each game...if you could eliminate 5 plays each game we'd be 2-0 right now.

On if Devin Holland has gained his starting position back:

No, no. Because when they threw that pass back across the field for the touchdown it was man-to-man coverage and that was his man. That's one of the plays I pointed out yesterday. When you've got a man you cover your man. That's the simplest thing you can do in football. If I've got Ted Lewis, I'm going to cover Ted. I don't care what anybody else does. But I'm sure not going to run over there when the cornerback runs over there. So to answer your question, he is not going to start again.

On being #1 in the country for sacks:

Yea, we're #1 in the country. One of the things we're doing is very similar to last year. We're changing up our fronts and changing up our blitz's. We're a 4-3 team, but we're also a 3-3-5. Or a 3-5 team. We're trying to come from different places to create a mismatch and to try to take advantage of what they're trying to do blocking-scheme wise. And we know as well as any of our offense, that when people do a bunch of things to you it's confusing. So one of the things we try to do is we try to create confusion and try to get some mismatches. And last year we had a lot of sacks and that helps you for run-defense. And this year the same thing. We're trying to put players in position to take advantage of their abilities.

On if he's curious to see how his team responds after playing back to back games against ranked opponents

Yea, I am because first of all, I was anxious to see how we played that first game. Because you don't know your team until you play. And I thought we were pretty good. We played pretty good. And I said it wasn't a fluke. And last week we proved it wasn't a fluke. But now, are we ready to take the next step. And that's what we have to do. Are we ready to take that next step? And that's not going to be easy. Everybody on our schedule is capable of beating us, but on the other hand I think we're capable of beating anybody on our schedule. We will find out if we are maturing and buying into it by playing better and hopefully winning this week.

On if he's worried about the other units of his team being discouraged by the below average play of the special teams:

No, and the reason I say that is I'm a big believer that you don't point fingers. I don't ever want the offense or the defense pointing fingers at each other. I won't allow our staff to point fingers at each other. They pull for each other and I think if you have a staff that...if an offensive or defensive coordinator or offensive staff, defensive staff starts pulling away and thinking they're better than the team...then you've got a problem. And I don't feel that way. And I think again, if you talk to our team, I won't allow that. And that's one of the reasons why yesterday I put together a handful of players on offense and defense and special teams. Nobody's a virgin here. We're all a little bit at fault.

On Jeremy Williams and Kevin Moore playing together:

Well I think Jeremy Williams and Kevin Moore have worked extremely hard during the off-season to be on the same page, so to speak. I think Jeremy has loads of talent; he needs to focus a little more; concentrate all the time. He becomes a little lacks sometimes and he needs to be wound a little tighter. So he's an excellent football player. They worked hard during the off-season. They worked extremely hard this summer, as did all of the receivers with the quarterbacks to work on the passing game.

On his quarterbacks and receivers being on the same page with one another:

The passing game lives and dies in seconds and timing is so crucial. You've got to know where that guy's going to be at the right time. And all of our routes change according to coverage. So you might see a play and it looks like 4 different plays, but when you look at it on film it's the same play. But depending on the coverage the receiver adjusts his route to something else. And the quarterback has to be on the same page. And unless they work extremely hard during the off season to do that it's very difficult to time it up once you start playing games.

On the Tulane's upcoming practice schedule:

Well, I've already set the schedule. I finished it this morning. And what we'll do is this week is a typical week and then what we'll do is we'll come back Sunday and have kind of a practice like a Monday and then we'll come back

Monday and have a little shortened version of a Tuesday. So, Sunday we'll have just helmets on. Monday we'll go full gear. Tuesday we'll go full gear and have a shortened version of a Wednesday practice. And then Wednesday we'll go with just helmets again...so we'll shorten that. But we've got to work on the run and shoot. And then so after that Thursday night game, we're going to give them Friday morning off so they can go to class. We're going to practice Friday afternoon, then we're going to give them Saturday and Sunday off. But that Friday afternoon, we're going to have to work on some wishbone offense stuff for Army and then come back the next week Monday and be ready to go. So that's kind of our plan right now. We're going from a spread offense this week to a run and shoot offense the next week...to an option offense against Army.

On if the different offenses run by other teams puts a particular strain on Tulane's defense

Yes it does and we see spread stuff, but the spread means you spread them out and you run the football still and throw it. But the run and shoot is they're going to throw it and run it a little bit. It's two different offenses even though they're playing with 4 or 5 different receivers. So we've got to do some match up things against SMU that we wouldn't have to do against some other people. And then again we have to turn it around the next week and change the complete front coverage because of the wishbone or option offense.

On if the gap has been closing between the play of big-name schools and smaller schools, such as Tulane:

I believe in the last several years its been closed. I remember at UCLA it was closed because of the 85-scholarship limit. I remember it was 105 and then 95 and now its 85. Right now, with Dominique Dade back, I think we have 80n guys on scholarship. We don't even have 85. We've got 80. We had 79 a week ago. And a lot of people are in that boat. I talked to Skip Holtz this morning. I called Skip and I just felt horrible for him because 3 of his kids got hurt in our game. The tackle is out for 8 weeks. The linebacker's done for the season; blew out his knee on the goal line play and their receiver broke his foot. So, he's not at 85 either, but he has some walk-ons and he's got some other players he's built this program. And I think it's so much more difficult for elite teams to stay up there. Ohio State, look what happened to them. They lose their running back and they're a different football team. So I think, you know, the numbers have changed the competition. And obviously when you have injuries and those types of things to your key players you're a different football team. There is much more parody in college football today.

On if there are better players today in college football:

Well I think there are better players and I think those better players are being filtered down to the mid-major teams. I mean look at the Boise States; look at some of those mid-major teams; the Fresno's; Louisiana-Monroe. They've got some excellent football players. Just look across the country is what I'm saying. There are so many good football players and good teams. The thing is the elite programs have the better football players but still, the other ones are getting better too. That's why you're seeing upsets every week.

On if he challenges his team by telling them that people don't believe they can be physical, or run the ball well:

Well, I really don't challenge them that way. I tell them this is our philosophy and this is what I believe in. And I try to convince them that if we're physical and we can run the ball, and we can stop the run, it gives us a chance to be more successful. And I don't really care what other people are doing. I'm just giving you my feelings and I honestly believe that you see people doing all those other things and they lose a quarterback...look at Oregon last year. Oregon was off and running. They lose a quarterback and they don't win. So, I believe in what I'm doing. It's a west coast offense. You see a lot of the pro teams running the same offense. The last quarter of the Cowboys/Eagles last night, that's all offense. So we're a pro-style offense. You don't see the pros running spread or option offenses.

On if there's a chance Dominique Dade will be able to compete on the field this year:

Yea, I think there is. We'll know more later on in the week. Probably by Wednesday or Thursday. They've allowed him to practice. He was out there yesterday. He's not in very good shape right now. But he was out there yesterday and by Wednesday or Thursday they should have a ruling. They think it's favorable, but we'll have to wait and see when it's finalized. He could possibly play this week if he's ruled eligible. The thing is I don't know how many plays he can play because he's not in great shape. I'd say if he's eligible he could play probably 8 or 10 plays. He might even be able to return a punt. But, he's not in very good physical shape right now. He's missed a lot of practice.