



Baylor Quotes Coach Matt Rhule

Texas Tech vs. Baylor
Saturday, November 11, 2017
AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas



COACH RHULE: First of all, a lot of credit to -- you know, to Coach [Kliff] Kingsbury. After a tough loss last week, this shows the kind of the leader he is. He got his kids back and ready to play. And a lot of respect for him on that.

You know, disappointed obviously in the result. But like anything else, there's positives and negatives, and we'll continue to try to build off all those things. You know, as I told our team at the end of the day, you can't beat yourself the way we did today in terms of penalties and red zone offense and then have a chance to win. And even, you know, down to the wire, you know, our kids, I think they felt like they had a chance to continue to move the football and find a way to go win the game.

You know, I'm very proud of our defense today to hold that offense to 337 yards, 24 points. Get off the field and -- you know, it's unfortunate we had the kick-off return for a touchdown as well as a fumble return for a touchdown. As I told the guys in the locker room -- not in a positive way, but in a reality way -- our offense scored just as many points as their offense did. By us beating ourselves, we gave them a chance to leave here victorious.

So a lot of credit to them. A lot of things for us to continue to get better at. There were a lot of individual guys stepping up. Terence [Williams] got hurt early, [Trestan] Ebner wasn't really able to go, and Michael Hasty stepped up and really played his best game. And Pooh Stricklin earlier this week wanted to play. We had him in a reserve role and Gavin [Holmes] got hurt. You know, I saw Gavin, our heart hurts for him as he -- you know, as he suffered that injury.

But, you know, just disappointed in the fact that, you know, we played really well at times but let a lot of plays get away from us. So let's continue to try to get better and, you know, see what we can do these last two games as we go out and honor our seniors next week and play these two ranked teams down the stretch.

Q. Four turnovers, how costly were those?

COACH RHULE: I mean, obviously, one led directly to points there at the end when we had a chance to get back in and, you know, that would have been 31-24, you know, if we would have been able to score that drive. And then, you know, one -- you know, one in the red zone down to, you know, 5-yard line, third and 2. We had points in hand and we kind of threw the ball up into the end zone. Those are rookie mistakes.

For all the great things our young players are doing, today was a day where a couple of our young guys made some errors that we just have to continue to coach through. We had the ball in the red zone four times in the first half, and we got points on one, so

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that's one out of four. And that's not really how you win football games, and not only didn't get points on the other two, but, you know, to have turnovers inside the red zone was really tough for us.

Q. You mentioned Gavin [Holmes]. What's the extent of that. And, also, do you sometimes feel a little snakebit with injuries?

COACH RHULE: Well, we certainly had two -- two to three years' worth of injuries. I think in my last four years, I think I had three ACLs. And we've had, you know, two or three this year. Hopefully, we'll wait and see what it is, but it looks like it was pretty bad for him. But he's a tough, tough, tough, competitive kid, and he'll fight back. So, you know, our medical staff does a great job. But, yeah, just really sad for him that he had that happen.

Q. When a team takes the opening kick-off back for a touchdown, what does that say to you?

COACH RHULE: What does that say to me? That my -- honestly, in my career, that's always kind of been a good thing for the other team. Let me go back to the Super Bowl and the Giants returned one. It's sort of like, all right, get it out of our system, and let's go play. So I thought we kind of came back and played after that.

But, again, you know, when you kick the ball, you know, the ball lands at the 22-yard line. they kind of -- they put their best player back there. It's not a good thing. But, I mean, it could mean a lot of things. I don't put too much stock in any one thing other than just they kind of came out and hit us where we were vulnerable. We went in this week talking about our kick-off coverage had to improve. It had not improved, and it bit us twice today. But that was -- that was a play that happened, and we just move forward and, you know, try to come back from there. I think, you know, [Keke] Coutee is a great player and he made that kick-off return. Basically, the rest of the game, we were able to kind of take him away. I don't know if he touched the ball again. But that was a special play for him.

Q. Coach, you went for it and got it against Kansas. Was there any discussion down there on the goal line as close as you were to kick the field goal and just get points?

COACH RHULE: I thought about it, but, at the end of the day, you're not going to win these games if you can't get a yard. Anybody will tell you that a yard is half a foot. And credit to them, you know.

Twice, they -- twice, a blocked guy got unblocked and made the tackle, and, you know, even hindsight, I mean, at the end of the day, there's a certain way we want

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to play. And if you can't get a yard, you can't get a yard. So we knew we had to get a yard and thought if we can't get it, we'll get the ball right back or we'll have a chance to get the ball back. But they made the play and we didn't.

Q. Last week you held Kansas to 9 points, and I think less than 300 yards of total offense. And this week you held a high-scoring Texas Tech offense to 24 points and 337 yards. And that just happened to coincide with Taylor Young moving to middle linebacker. Is his leadership and veteran leadership the reason why you guys are playing so well defensively or is there anything else that's working so well for y'all right now?

COACH RHULE: Well, I think there's a lot of guys that have gotten a lot better as the years moved on. They really started to understand the system. So we're not giving up the huge explosive play anymore. But I -- I don't want to minimize what Taylor [Young] has done. I think Taylor is good playing him at linebacker. He can be a factor on both sides of the ball as he goes inside out from sideline to sideline.

Without seeing the tape, I think Jordan Williams has been a real factor, but we're moving to Will and replacing Taylor. I think a lot of our guys have gotten a lot better. I think our corner play has really improved as the year's gone on. We haven't really given up the big -- the big play. But I think, you know, Taylor's -- Taylor's a special player. He's a special person. He's tough, he's intelligent, plays hard. He made a couple plays today, almost picked that ball off on third down and, the play before, he made a beautiful play.

So we really rely on him. Man, he's -- he's -- it's a shame that, you know, we probably aren't winning more because, get ten tackles, tackle for a loss, sack, and not much accolade. But the way he's playing deserves some recognition because he's playing really good football. Thank you for asking that.

Q. What did you see from Charlie [Brewer] today, and did you-all talk about the two fumbles on the exchange where it looked like one he might have wanted to keep it, and the other was just a bad exchange, but just overall what did you see from him?

COACH RHULE: Well, I mean, I think you had to start with the three turnovers. And, really, those -- at the end of the day, those are on him. On the back, on the second one, there was some miscommunication -- but, you know, he's the quarterback and he handles the ball every play.

So I think, you know, we saw him do a nice job in terms of, you know, throwing the football and getting us in the right place a lot. But we turned the ball over three times. Really, the fumbles are one thing, but the pick in the end zone was something I got after

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him about a little bit. You don't get to decide, hey, I'm just going to throw this up and see what happens. You throw the ball out of bounds, you play the next play, you kick the field goal, and it's 24-10. And that's how we play football.

And so, you know -- but I do know, as a young player, sometimes you have to -- you know, no matter what we say, you have to do it to learn from it. But I thought he was competitive, I thought he was tough out there, I thought he took hits, I thought he continued to fight. And, you know, I think they said he maybe set a record or something. I don't know what that is. Someone said something as we came in here. But, you know, we threw the ball away too many times. I don't really want to play that way, but I thought he answered the call in terms of those things.

Q. Yeah, you just kind of mentioned it. You probably didn't want him throwing 63 times. That probably wasn't the game plan?

COACH RHULE: No, no. And, really, I thought we had a nice mix early, you know. But, you know, if you can't run the ball -- if you can't get the ball into the -- into the -- you know, into the end zone in the first half on those three red zone drives, or at least take field goals, that's the shame of it is, you know, we turned the ball over in the red zone. So, you know, even if you kick field goals and it's 21 -- 21 -- whatever that would be -- 10, or 21-13 at the half, you feel a little better about where you are.

But you know what? They did a good job. they got a lead and then we had to fight back. So that's the way we had to play. You know, in all of this -- in all of this, number one, the kids are continuing to learn how to win and what to do and what not to do. And the other thing that happens is you see who can step up and who can play. So some guys stepped up today and made plays. JaMycal [Hasty], seeing him be a difference-maker out there was important. And we'll keep pressing.

Q. On that onside kick, did you tell Jay [Sedwick] to kick it in the air, and then what did the officials tell you after that?

COACH RHULE: You know, the officials are right on that call. I mean, that was supposed -- that was supposed to be -- and I'm not a big supposed-to-be guy, because whatever happened, happened. But it's supposed to be a ball that's kicked over the front line about 20 yards down the field and -- you know, to Marques [Jones], was running down there and try to outrun a guy with his back turned and go try to make a play on the ball. And Jay just miss hit it. Instead of kicking it 25 yards -- 20, 25 yards -- he kicked it about 10 yards. So once they fair-catch it, whether it's in the air or off of one bounce, they have the right to the ball. And, you know, so when we went to go get the ball, it gets there.

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So there was some confusion on my end in terms of why we didn't rekick it, but they explained that to me. Yeah, that's a ball that we thought, hey, let's kick the ball over their head about 20 yards down the field and see if we can go make a play on the ball.

Q. So you mentioned it, [Keke] Coutee -- I think I pronounced his name right -- he took the opening kickoff back 95 yards, but was pretty much a non-factor the rest of the game. Did you guys plan that going into the week or did that -- did the corners just play outstanding today?

COACH RHULE: Well, I think it just kind of happened. You know, and they did a nice job. They kept getting the ball to [Dylan] Cantrell. Every time we were off into the boundary, he played well. He's a really good player. But I think that was just a function of the game plan. In fact, some of the things I think we went in there thinking we were going to do, place three down, we kind of got away from that. I thought Phil [Snow] made some good adjustments, and we played a little bit more of our four-down structure. So we knew we had to have our eyes on him. We knew we had to take away the big play with him. So that was definitely an emphasis, let's take away the big play to Number 2. But, you know, him not touching the ball again, that was just really more, I think, the way the game played out.

Q. Matt, you mentioned the cornerback play improving as the season has progressed, but, you know, does the -- does the missed tackles concern you, I mean, especially, you know, ten games into the season?

COACH RHULE: Oh, yeah. Yeah, missed tackles are a problem. And I think, you know, the one down the sideline, that was a safety, you know. So, you know, our safeties have gotten better at tackling. I mean, you know, there was a point in the middle of the year we couldn't really -- we weren't really tackling anyone. But, you know, we were a missed tackle away from that being -- not being a touchdown.

And so we have to just continue to do it. You know, we have to continue to work it. We have to continue to recruit. And that's not taking -- I'm saying we have some older kids. And so, you know, as those kids graduate, I think we have some guys coming in midyear that, you know, will continue under Phil's tutelage.

But, you know, I look at everything -- I look at everything from, you know, way back here. And so it doesn't mean the little things don't bother me. As I was saying a couple weeks ago, you can be pleased with progress but not happy with the result. You know what I'm saying? So I'm not happy with the result at all. That game bothers me more than anything because, you know, I don't care how many yards we have. None of that ever matters to me, but --

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to have that many yards -- you know, what really bothers me is to be 11 of 19 on third down. We were 11 of 19 on third down and didn't win the football game.

And so -- but I see the progress and I see -- you know, so we're covering better. We're not giving up the big play anymore. But we still do have issues with missed tackles at times. And, really, there were some issues today. Credit to them. Some of their bubble screens, you know, not leveraging the bubble, which, you know, to be quite honest to us, it's unacceptable.

And so we'll keep coaching it. we'll keep getting better at it. What I will tell you is we'll come back and play a lot of these teams next year. And our kids are learning how to play defense right now. So it's not good enough. It's not good enough. Coach [Phil] Snow is in there. He had his hands on his head. It's like the kids -- the kids on defense even have their hands on their heads.

But we're learning how to play defense. And as I told our guys, you know, they came here last year and they gave up a ton of points in this game. And to come back today and give up 24 points to that offense, look, we're upset about giving up 24 points. Giving up 24 points is not going to be good enough. But they are learning how to play defense, and they are getting better. So we'll build off it. Hopefully, we'll build off it this week and the following week into the off-season. But -- but, yeah, you know, they're getting better.

But, yeah, everything is a concern. I think the most important thing to realize when you go through this is this: You can see the progress, you can talk about the process, you can see the result, that doesn't mean that you sleep well. That doesn't mean you walk into work, you know, hey, everything's great. No, no. It's not good enough. But, at the same time, it is getting better.

And, you know, just hold the football, you know, score a couple -- hold the football and kick a couple of field goals in the red zone and it's a whole different halftime and a whole different game. And so -- but you know what? I'm going to coach. There's a certain way that I believe in coaching. You know, Tony [Nicholson] had that fumble for a touchdown at the end. I put my arm around him and said let's keep playing, babe. And so Tony's going to remember that. I'm proud of Tony Nicholson now. Like, he shouldn't have played probably. Doctors cleared him. A lot of guys wouldn't play. He went out there and he played the whole game. And he fought. So you know what? He competed.



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So I say that because I think that's a really important message, and I'm going to keep saying it. You can be pleased with progress, pleased with individuals, and furious at the results. And that's -- that's how all of our lives are, right? Like -- you know, like, our kids make mistakes. My -- my son, my daughters make mistakes. I can love my kids and not be happy with what they did. And so that's -- a day like today, we just take it like that. We keep moving forward. But we are definitely getting better.

Q. Matt, on the fourth and 1 when JaMycal [Hasty] got stopped, was Terence [Williams] not available at that point or did -- what did you guys think about -- if it wasn't going to be to JaMycal, what were your options that you all were considering coming out of the timeout?

COACH RHULE: So Terence went in, and there was a shoulder, and so, you know, I -- I came back and said he was up. But, you know, Terence has had shoulder surgery, and he's been banged up. And I just -- at the end of the day, I didn't want -- you know, I didn't want to put him in there, you know, fourth and 1 without him having gotten a carry or two and got himself back going. And JaMycal was running the football really well. You know, with [Trestan] Ebner being down, [John] Lovett had been in there as well. But, you know, we just took a chance.

And, really, on that play, it has less to do with the back and has more to do with kind of the offensive line. Like, if they move the guys -- I mean, when you get that far as an offensive line and you have to move them that far -- and, credit to them -- I watched the replay up there. You know, we blocked the guy and he threw us off and made the tackle. And so -- but I'm going to be aggressive on fourth and 1 and the goal line, you know. And if we don't get it, then we expect our guys to play defense, you know, and get the ball back and go right back down there and score again. But yet would I love to have Terence? That's sort of his role. But, you know, when he got hurt and it was his shoulder, you know, even though they felt it was the other shoulder -- I found out later it was the other shoulder. Even still, when you're a back and your shoulders aren't right, you know, that's when a lot of fumbles start to happen.

Q. Okay. So Charlie Brewer had 63 pass attempts but only had one sack against him, and then JaMycal [Hasty] averaged 5.6 yards a carry. Can you speak on the improvement of the offensive line from week to week, especially today with, you know, 63 dropbacks and one sack?

COACH RHULE: Yeah. They've gotten certainly a lot better. And, you know, I say it all the time. You know, you have three of those guys that are out there playing at times -- or two to three of them weren't even, you know, playing offensive line in spring ball. So I think Coach [George] DeLeone has done a good job. I think they've done a good job. They'll continue to get better. But, you know, I think Charlie [Brewer] keeps us alive

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sometimes with his feet. You know, he does a nice job of kind of moving around. And, you know, they're working to improve. And so I just hope that we, you know -- if we continue to get better, as we continue to play defense, allow us to run the football a little bit more, you know, you hope that their play will, you know, even be more important. But you're right, to hold the ball that many times was impressive, and to drop back and throw the ball that many times is impressive, and thought they hung in there pretty well.

***Q.** You talked about the running game, you talked about JaMycal [Hasty] stepping up. Looked like he was running really hard, finishing runs today. What did you see from him, really, as kind of your bellcow today?*

COACH RHULE: You know, that's the guy that practiced the receiver all week too, you know. So a lot of credit to JaMycal. And I just think he had an aggressiveness, he had a burst, a bounce that he hasn't really had lately. You know, but he's coming off a knee, and it takes a little bit of time to kind of get your knee back going again. So, you know, I think he gave us a lot. You know, Charlie [Brewer], I think, had confidence in him and found him on some checked downs. And he was able to extend drives and keep things going. So I thought he did a nice job. And, you know, we've been waiting for JaMycal [Hasty] to break out. We haven't necessarily given him as much of an opportunity as he would like, but he's been -- he's been patient and he got his opportunity today, and I thought he did a really nice job.