

Baylor University Football Media Conference

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Waco, Texas

Matt Rhule Press Conference

MATT RHULE: Well, first of all, thank you guys all for being here. I'd like to start by first thanking Abilene Christian and Coach Dorrel. I thought they played a tremendous football game, and he's a heck of a football coach. They came ready to go.

I told our guys they were not the type of team that would go away, that they would fight, and that's what they did. I have a lot of respect for them the way that they played and the class which they played. It was an honor to take a knee with them at the end of the game and sit there and pray and give thanks with them.

We wish them the best for the rest of the year and for us as well.

I'm really appreciative of all the people that came to the game tonight. The atmosphere getting off the bus, the bear walk, being in the stadium, the buzz of the stadium, the crowd, the Baylor line and everything. It really is one of the great places on game day, and just grateful to them and happy we could give them a win.

Really happy for all the people that have supported this team, this football program, Dr. Livingstone who is here, Mack Rhodes (phonetic), Jeremiah Dickey, all of the people here at Baylor. You know, I truly believe that sometimes we wrestle with, you know, hey, can you be elite at things and still stand for something? And Dr. Livingstone's vision, MAC Rhodes vision, yeah, you can try to go be elite in football, and you can try to go be elite as a research institution and still stand for something.

So proud of our guys, and I'm thankful to them for all of their support along this journey.

Most importantly, I'm really, really happy for our players. They've been through so much, and for them to battle and win and finish, you know, I challenge our team -- I don't want to -- the fact that we were able to go out there in the fourth quarter and get a fourth quarter shutout defensively. They started with the ball 27



whatever it was to start the fourth quarter, to me that showed the resilience, it showed moxie, it showed all the things that we're looking for.

So it wasn't a perfect game. We have a lot we have to correct, as you guys all know. But I thought we saw a lot of flashes. And for one night our guys can go out there and enjoy a win. Most importantly, they can enjoy a win at home. They can walk out and see their family and friends and hopefully go tailgate and hug their moms, hug their dads, hug their grandparents. Know that all their work was not for not. They found a way to get it done tonight.

So a lot of individual efforts that I know you guys are going to talk about. We did have two injuries, Charlie was ruled out in the middle of the game, hurt his back. And Josh Malin went down on the first play, and it was really sad to see. Hopefully we'll see how he is.

(Inaudible) hasn't played a snap here at Baylor, and he was our fourth left tackle. And went out there and to go out and run for almost 300 yards and have no sacks, that's a lot of guys, that's a lot of work. But I want to make sure I mention him.

Lot of guys were great today. Lot of guys did a lot of great things, but there are a lot of things we have to improve. So the process starts over again tomorrow. With that, I'll see what questions you guys have.

Q. How difficult was that assignment (Inaudible)?

MATT RHULE: Really difficult and not difficult. Anyone can play both, but really difficult in terms of just being fair. But really difficult that we started tailback too. He made 200 yards rushing tonight, and I knew they both could play. You know, we had Tyquan Thornton out there as well. So we had (inaudible) so it's always hard at any position.

But I thought both guys did a great job over the course of camp. I thought both guys went out there tonight and moved the football and found a way to move it for 300 yards, we had the one interception, and a tipped ball. Heck of a throw by Charlie but couldn't come down with it. But both guys found a way to make things happen. Both guys made big plays.

I was ready to put Gerry in there and I was ready to

save him with the new four game red-shirt rule. Without knowing what the deal is with Charlie in terms of the extent of his injury, I thought best maybe to sit Gerry and get Garret in there at the end.

But it wasn't easy. It's never easy because you're deciding people's fates, and I think it has to be very, very well thought out and intentional when you make those decisions.

Q. Did you say you don't know the extent of Charlie's back injury?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, through the game they just tell me so and so's down, and I don't get a lot of information. So I don't know if that's a -- you know, he could have come back, he could practice tomorrow or not. So, I don't know the extent of his injuries.

Certainly did not look good. So I'll find out probably when I leave here. I need to go in there and talk to the team. I come in here, and the medical staff does such a tremendous job. One of the things I like that they do is they send guys to get them looked at and scanned and all that so they know where it is. And I'm sure they'll probably send Charlie for an MRI or a scan or I guess that's the same thing, an X-ray. We'll find out what it is.

Q. Coach, when you took over the job December 16th, I'm sure you didn't think it would take until September 1st, 2018, to get going. But does it feel a little different, little sweeter than it might just because you know what you've gone through this past season?

MATT RHULE: Well, you know, for me, I just have really grown to like these players and this football team. So right before kickoff I texted Taylor, and (inaudible) and Cade, and Nance and a bunch of guys thanking them because they're the guys that stood in the gap last year.

But I really like the way this team works. I like the way this team responds to challenges. It was fun for me to be able to go in in halftime and get after them. So I like -- I've seen all the stories and all the little things that guys have been through, and all the battles that the guys are going through in their personal lives or academic lives. The way that they, you know, it's 110 guys. So it's really sweet for me to see them have a chance to just relax, take a breath, and say hey, found a way to go win.

They are winners. You know, so I said last week, you have to make a decision in life, are you going to wait until you win to be confident or are you going to be confident before you win. And I thought they played confidently. I thought that that showed out there. So

I'm excited for them. I told them I hope they have a great 24 hours, and I hope they come in tomorrow fixated on, hey, let's go get ready for Monday, ready to go. They come in on Monday fixated for (indiscernible) and ready to go.

Q. Jamycal Hasty, terrific game rushing, but also out of the back field, four catches shall, 67 yards. Talk about him kind of being that duel running back that you can rely on in the passing game as well?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, Jamycal is a single digit for a reason. One of the things that's pretty cool for him here's a guy that graduated from Baylor in three years, over a 3.0. It's not just he's a dual-threat in a lot of cases. He's a student, he's a captain type of a person. He's tough, he's competitive, and I think you just saw a glimpse of what he could do. He had another touchdown called back, catching the ball in the back field.

It's really nice to see Lovett (indiscernible), I know he got tired there and guys were catching their breath, you know, but I'm really proud of Jamycal. I think it's his second career hundred-yard game, so hopefully we can get a lot more from him as we go along.

Q. Over the course of the season, do you think the quarterback two will work, or would you rather settle on one guy?

MATT RHULE: You know, I don't mind playing both. I really don't. I think all of us would rather probably have one guy. But it's not the same as it was 15 years ago when we were in the huddle and looking in guys eyes and calling the play. It's like, now they're getting like hand signals from the sideline running plays.

So I think what it is, different guys do different things as well. Charlie ran a triple option, and Charlie made a play that probably won't go noticed, they pulled the pitch and got the ball, running down the left sideline, and that's just part of what Charlie can do that not many guys can do.

Jalin hit the deep ball to Heard (phonetics). So I just think you use guys that you have and you use different receivers and running backs.

I'd rather have more quarterbacks than not. Because guys get banged up. Sometimes it's not even long-term injuries, but if you're not a hundred percent, you've got a guy right there behind you. We'll get Gerry a little bit more running. Gary's a guy that we'd love to be able to red-shirt, but if we can't, we can't. We'll have to move forward.

Q. That touchdown pass that Heard caught, is that what you envisioned from him (indiscernible), that

**kind much athleticism, and that kind of game play?
He was pretty smooth on that reception?**

MATT RHULE: Yeah, I think Jalen can do a lot of things. He's a special, special player. So he threw a couple bubbles and had to get the ball in his hands. Hit him on the deep ball. Hit him on the O-route and he was about to step away from breaking. So we didn't.

Have a tremendous amount of plays in the first half. We had like 32 plays because we were scoring on some longer plays, which is a good thing to have happen, right? It's his first game playing receiver. It's his first game playing since October of 2016, if you can imagine that. So I just think you'll see Jalen get better and better. You'll see Chris Platt out there. He had a long touchdown run called back or touchdown catch to the 1 called back. Seeing those guys out there, I think they'll get better and better and better. And that was a team that kind of went to the Iowa State game plan halfway through the game when they started playing shell coverage and said hey, you're going to have to run it. You know, so that maybe slopes down a little bit in the second half. But I thought our backs stepped up and made plays.

Q. Coach, talking about your offensive line, to talk to the success of your running backs?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, (inaudible) represented us as a captain, and really proud of him and his work. (Inaudible) always working with those guys. Sam Tecklenberg, Christian Beard getting his first start here coming in. And again they ran for 95 yards, didn't give up a sack, and there is still work to be done. We weren't as good as I wanted us to be on third down, we were 2 of 9 on some of those late in the game when we weren't really trying to, you know, we weren't on (inaudible). Also wanted to keep their offense off the field and wanted to slow the game down a little bit.

Yeah, you take away one short yardage play, and we're third and two, and really proud of the offensive line. Again, we're going to look up this week, probably have Morgan back, probably have Johncarlo back this week or next. So hopefully our offensive line will take this and build off it. And (inaudible) used to say the biggest improvement you make is from week one to week two. So start here with the offensive line, which was not our strength last week. Hopefully we can make that jump and let it get significantly better.

Q. On the flip side of that, was it encouraging on the first half on that first and goal play to see him get Jamcal into the end zone?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, absolutely. One of our (inaudible) short yardage, it was short yardage and being able to knock the ball and have it go in. You know, you get a

tight end weighing in there. And that was Connor Galvin who was a true freshman offensive lineman, Christoph Henle who was a true freshman on the wing. So those are guys with lights in their eyes. They were wide-eyed. So that's part of the fun to me is seeing guys grow and develop. Then going against each other. They go out there and say, hey, can I do this? Even halfway through that game, Christoph, a young man from Austria, he gets here this spring, catches a pop pass down the middle, gets hit and he comes up with it.

There is all these cool little stories and everyone's on their journey. Hopefully we can build off of it. But I was proud of him for knocking it in there.

Q. (Inaudible) the way they threw it in last year, and there was a quarterback battle. Is this what you saw from Jalen from the time camp started?

MATT RHULE: There is going to be a battle in everything that we do here. You know, everything's going to be competitive; and it doesn't mean that one guy, I think if you watch Jalen out there, you can see, wow, he's got physical tools and he can do a lot of things. He's also really coachable. We had 3rd and 2, and flipped it out to Jamycal, and I ended up screaming at him from the sideline.

Walks over, I got it. He's just a grown man, and Charlie's a competitor and a winner. One's 22, one is 19, so they're both going to continue to do this. But, you know, I want to have good players. I want to have as many as I can. And I want to have as many play. So even at the end of the game you saw Josh get in there and kind of wait his turn, and he kind of takes off. There is going to be a day this year where (inaudible) is out there busting up the seams.

It is a good start. Especially in game one. We'll make more decisions as we go at every position, you know. But you have to kind of see it on tape first. So let's see what Charlie can do. It didn't seem right to me to not put Jalen in the game in the first quarter to see what he can do. He hasn't had a lot of game reps, you know. But he got out there, and the room wasn't too big for him. Charlie came back and hit the deep post to Mimms. So I'm excited. If I put both on the field at the same time probably.

Q. Charlie has different skills, is that the same way with Jamycal and Lovett, that they bring something different that maybe the other one doesn't?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, they're both good runners, but Jamycal is maybe a little bit more of a (inaudible) a little downhill. But they both find ways to get yards. And I thought came out of the back field and caught some balls. He got hit and caught some balls for some big

plays for us.

I think we have three good backs. Obviously debating whether (inaudible) Craig Williams, I didn't want to burn one of those four games tonight on him. And it's kind of funny, coming off two ACLs, here's a young man from Abilene, tore his ACL in high school, signs with us, first day of practice tears his ACL again the first day we start in spring. So all these he's done is work. And he had a good camp. It was nice to see him get out there and play. But I like our running back. Jeff Nixon has done a great job. And Kurt Brian who is our offensive GA is a really good young coach. He's done a fantastic job with those guys as well. So that was a step.

Q. Did you see Jamycal have a great camp?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, he had a great camp. He didn't practice one day because he was going to go graduate. Seemed like it was a good idea for him to miss a scrimmage toss graduate. Here's what's important to me, if you guys know, he ran down the kickoff tonight. He didn't just go play running back. He ran down a kickoff. So that number 6 means something. He didn't just run down the first one. Opening kickoff in the second half, he ran it down the field. So there's a lot of guys like that that are saying, hey, I'm all in. John Lovett ran down a kickoff tonight. Marcus Jones, that's why I gave him a scholarship. It's not just a nice story. That catch you made to Warner, that's a big-time football catch.

So lots of cool little stories that I like to look at. But overall hopefully they can just take one more step, and I'm really proud of (inaudible), he's done it consistently now.

Q. What are the things you need to see from your defense?

MATT RHULE: Just too many big plays, and really, really big plays. There are two kinds of big plays tonight, double moves and trick plays that fooled us. And we knew that was going to happen. Hey, this is going to happen, play through it. Then we saw a couple long runs, that kid was fast now. Couldn't run him down. A couple long runs where the ball cut back, and their receiver cracked our safety, and we were playing bump and run. And it was a two for one.

So, obviously that kind of happened to us early in the year last year, so we were able to do those things, you know, and I'd like to see a little more pass rush. We had some guys that weren't weren't in the game that could really rush. We had guys that weren't in the game, and as the hit went on, Lynn the third down, knocked the ball out, those were some big, pivotal moments, attacked it. We'll have to continue to limit the big plays. It was great to see the defense score

there. Get the pick, get a little more that way. But it will just be more of making big plays, and we'll make a big step, I think over the next week.

Q. Your guys are focused on what's happening out there and trying to win a game. But the game was four hours long, there were 18-jillion reviews during the game. Is there a way to do this better for the fans?

MATT RHULE: I was probably too focused tonight on, oh, my goodness, let's finish this game off the right way. But, yeah, I'm not going to say anything about the reviews. I don't want to get in trouble. And I'm not saying I have anything to say. I was screaming for a review on the one.

Q. But the TV timeouts, I mean, is it hard to get in a flow?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, you know, at this think we're just kind of used to it now. This is my seventh year, sixth year as a head coach. I'm kind of used to it, TV time outs and all that. They did some things to speed the game up. They are starting the ball quick after kickoff return, and they've got to get out there now. I know they're working on all of that. Yeah, I think there's a lot of little things that happened tonight that were probably a little different in terms of the reviews and things like that.

Q. When you have two quarterback play, and you have the luxury, do you talk to them much? Do you say much or are they both so competitive they know what's going on?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, they're pros. Only thing I would say to them is this is not a comparison. It's a comparison for you guys, it's a comparison for us. But for them, you cannot live life comparing yourself to other people. You have to be the best that you can be, and you have to prepare yourself.

They're both competitors. They're both winners. They're both going to have great careers. They both went out there and played well tonight and won. I think for them, would I like to get more, yes. You have to make sure you don't have that stuff. It's hard to creep in and get in the flow. People will say all those things, right?

But I didn't see it. Pretty sure they didn't play two quarterbacks, they talked about it. They were playing two quarterbacks, so, it's just kind of the way it is now. You have good players getting out there. Let them play. One game might be like this. One game might be like this. But, yeah, I talked to all of our players. I try to talk to them about the rules and where you are and all of that. That's, hey, you're in the series tonight. Glenn does a great job talking to them. You know, I think

they're just both winners. There is not a bit of me that's concerned about that one to be quite honest.

Q. Talk about the red-shirt rule. You mentioned you thought about putting Gerry in. And you put Garret in later. Are these decisions your staff sits down to talk about?

MATT RHULE: We sat down and talked about it, definitely. But, you know, it's like, hey, this is our plan, right. And then you switch midstream because of the different things that happen. It just really came down to more time. If it was the final score was 55-24, it was 55-0 at halftime, you might have played someone for a full half. But I look at squirrel nine minutes, and I think he's special. We're going to use him at some point. We didn't use anybody that was a true freshman tonight. And hopefully we can use them sort of as the year goes along. You know, you hope for some guys there is incentive to get them ready to play at the end of the year. They're pushing trying to play more.

But we definitely talked about it. We have different guys in different categories, and then they adjust based upon the game.

Q. (Inaudible)?

MATT RHULE: I'd have to see. You know, I mean, but they found a way to get it done, right? Like we have this little stupid little saying. We say our standards. We say do exactly what you're asked to do, whatever it takes. Do exactly what you're asked to do whatever it takes. So he went out there and it was whatever it took. He found a way to get it done. A lot of times guys will say I tried, but it was this, it was that. But he went out there and played. And I couldn't be happier for him.

I was saying in pregame, make sure you guys get your arms around these young guys. There were some young guys that were really, really nervous, and they went out and found a way to make it happen. So they'll be more confident next week. We have to play a really good football team next week. So we have to be a lot better. We'll be counting on a lot of those young guys to become vets overnight.

Q. Seemed like Connor Martin picked up where he left off last season. Is that part of being a reliable guy for you?

MATT RHULE: I looked at him and said can you make it? It was a terrible decision on third down. The he went across, and got in range. That was on me. He said, yeah, so we kicked it. He knocked it right through. So happy for him, and it's just really good, hey, we have a guy that can go out and get points. I think that was his career long? 50-yard career long. So fired up, man. Hopefully he can just continue to do

this.

(Inaudible) he came out there and looked good. Sedge wick came in was punting the ball well. Our punt fielding was not what I would like it to be, and we'll have to correct that. Those guys in the game, they were adjusting as they went because Christian did a great job, came out, and they were kind of rubbing in the (inaudible) so Jalin and Tony, good to see Tony get that great first return. He was maybe a block away from having a touch do you know. So hopefully we can continue the special teams we had tonight.