Baylor Football Head Coach Matt Rhule
Weekly Press Conference
October 22, 2018

***Opening Statement***
“First of all, thank you all for being here. It always good to have you all here and I appreciate you covering us. Coming off a bye week we got a lot of football stuff accomplished. We got a lot of recruiting done as well. Coaches returned last night before practice and were ready for West Virginia. We are excited to travel to Morgantown and play a very good West Virginia football team. A very dynamic offense and very tough, physical, fast and disciplined defense. We are very excited to go on the road and play a great ranked West Virginia team in a hostile environment.”

***On what was seen in the Iowa State film…***
“Iowa State has done a good job slowing down a lot of teams. Their defense does a great job of making plays and doing the little things right. They play a “Bend but don’t break” style but at the same time they get off blocks and make plays. I think they did a great job of limiting explosive plays and made tackles. I think they also did a great job of putting in some small things on offense. For us we have to do some different things and go back and watch other film because we are more of a four-man front.”

***On the balance between giving defense new looks and not being one dimensional…***
“I think we are throwing the ball a lot more than running it. Our problem has been running the ball against three down teams. When we have run the ball versus four down teams we have had a lot of success and when we have run the ball for over 150 yards we have won. I don’t think we should go out there and throw the ball 90 times because that wouldn’t be fair to Charlie and the rest of the guys. We are going to continue to try and run the ball and keep people honest. We just aren’t running the football and protect the quarterback great and usually those things go hand in hand.”

***On how much he puts on Charlie to get team in and out of plays…***
“We call a lot of RPO’s [Run Pass Options]. Sometimes it is a run pass option all in one play and so we might throw it three times and throw it two times. We do ask Charlie [Brewer] to get us in and out of plays. Every week is a little bit different, but we ask Charlie and Sam Tecklenburg to handle the protections. That will be big this week. This team brings pressure from everywhere, so we need to do a good job of picking up the guys they bring. Charlie is a smart guy and has worked hard on the mental side of the game.”

***On the benefits of having the extra time to prep off…***“Anytime you can give the players a little time off is good. We did the Wednesday practice that was just the underclassmen. We let the seniors act as coaches. I thought it was good for us to let our players go home and we were able to get out on the road and recruit. Everyone has been working hard since August and a couple days off here and there can really benefit a team. I really hope this break can allow the team to be recharged for the last couple games of the season.”

***On the “what’s next mentality” going into the game…***
“We are going to play three ranked teams this year. All three we will play on the road. Going into Morgantown on a Thursday night will be raucous. We better have the mentality where we can eliminate distractions and focus on the game and just take it one play at a time. West Virginia will make some big plays and we want to limit those big plays. Last year it was a 10-10 game with a minute and a half left before halftime and we let them score. We came out in the second half and they scored quick, so it went from 10-10 to 24-10 really quick. We mounted a comeback at the end. But we can’t panic. These guys will make explosive plays we just need to limit those 60 yard plays to 20 yard plays. We can only control one play at a time.”

***On Will Grier…***
“He is capable of making the big play, he calls the game at the line of scrimmage. He changes plays, he gets the team in and out of the right looks. He is accurate and can move around in the pocket. He has played a lot of football, one year and Florida and he is in his second year at West Virginia. He fully understands the offense. They aren’t afraid to run the football. Grier really manages and calls the game at a high level.”

***On young guys stepping up down the stretch...***

"Yeah, I think guys that are playing, Josh Fleeks, Tyquan Thornton, we have to get them to do more. Guys like Bralen [Taylor] and Ben Sims, we have a lot of guys, Mark Milton, BJ Hanspard, Ashton Logan, that hopefully help us here in the next five games, hopefully in a bowl game, and then be factors next season. We sat out there looking at our 2019 football team, and it's a pretty good football team. I thought for our seniors to step back a little bit and coach, have a lot of fun, so when they came back to practice they had a renewed sense of purpose."

***On injuries...***

"Xavier Newman came back to practice yesterday, Khalil Keith came back and practiced yesterday. Khalil is a little bit down the depth chart right now and Xavier, I'm not sure if that means he'll play against West Virginia or if it will be more the game after that. We have some guys that went into concussion protocol. Grayland Arnold is still not back, hopefully maybe Oklahoma State. Harrison Hand didn't play against Texas, but he practiced so he should be good. Having Harrison back I'm sure will give us more depth in the secondary."

***On what Xavier Newman's return means for the offensive line...***

"I think when he's fully healthy, right now he's kind of limited, he's a starter for us. At left tackle, [Josh] Malin is battling through an old, beat up knee. During the Texas game, [Jake] Fruhmorgen was sick. So, we've had our share of little things, but hopefully they're all going to get healthy down the stretch."

***On if he was familiar with West Virginia during his time at Temple...***

"Not really. Grew up a Penn State person, so I remember the days of watching all those games. As a football fan, I loved watching the backyard brawl between Pitt and West Virginia. Then, I married my lovely wife Julie whose parents are both Mountaineers. Jeff Nixon, our offensive coordinator, he went there and played for two years. A lot of respect for their program and a lot of respect for Dana Holgorsen and Coach Gibson on defense. They have really good football coaches."

***On if players have carried over a sour taste from Texas through the bye week...***

"I think the biggest lesson they learned from that is hopefully that you can't win big time football games against big time teams on the road when you make a ton of mistakes. The team that makes the fewest mistakes wins. I think that lesson, that everything counts, is one that I heard them saying. I've seen the amount of distractions that I deal with on a daily basis, the level of little things, has diminished a little bit. I think they're starting to realize, if you want to be great, you have to learn how to be great every day. They were certainly disappointed after that game, but I think it's the lessons that they learned that are important. There's no doubt that [WVU] is going to be ready, that Coach Holgorsen is going to be ready. We know we're walking in to face a highly, highly motivated team. We've just got to make sure we're highly motivated, highly prepared and highly focused."

***On if the defense is playing its best football...***

"The defense has been weird. If you look at the Kansas game, we held them to 7 points on one play. They've put up yards and scored against a lot of people. That day, I was like wow, we made a big jump. Then Oklahoma, they're averaging 50 points against everybody and that game kind of got away from us at the end. Kansas State, we didn't give up a pass play over 20 yards but gave up these long runs. We kind of put it all together at Texas in some ways, but we can't say we played well if we didn't have a sack. This is a different kind of offense, this is a dynamic offense. Our chance to stop them, no one really stops them. We have to try to create some negative plays, rip the ball out, get some turnovers. I think our defense is definitely improving, but we have got to create some turnovers and get to the quarterback if we want to come out with a win."

***On using the running backs in the passing game...***

"Against Oklahoma, we threw some angle routes to the running backs and they had some 16, 17, 18-yard plays. We haven't really hit them on home run balls down the field. [Trestan] Ebner was a high school receiver, and JaMycal [Hasty] is one of our best receiver slots. We just try to use them coming out of the backfield on some things to keep us going. We think our backs are dynamic playmakers, so we want to hand it to them, but if we're not running the ball well, we want to throw it to them and let them go do their thing."

***On if the best way to stop West Virginia's offense is by keeping them off the field...***

"I think the number one thing on offense is points. You take points any which way you get them. If you can hang in the game, then it's important. In lieu of that, I think keeping them off the field is key. But that's not really our strength. Our strength has been playing in tempo and getting ourselves going. Can we put two first downs together and eventually get a drive going. In my old life, I would have lined up and tried to run the ball every play. That's just not really who we are, we're a little more spread and tempo. I owe it to our players to let them go play the way we play best. But it'd be great if we could keep them off the field."

***On West Virginia's defense...***

"When we played them last year, they played really well against us. You're not going to find a defense that plays harder, runs with the ball better than they do. Outstanding on third down, they'll play man, they've got a nice blitz package. They have playmakers. Defensively, they have really good players and a unique system. It's the only 3-3 stack that you see all year, so you have to get ready for it in three days. They create matchup issues for you up front. Really impressive on their end."

***On Chris Platt's leadership...***

"The fact that he wanted to practice last week, he wasn't happy with UT. He wasn't doing it to kiss up or anything, he was doing it to play great football. Early on, Chris was getting his legs back and now you can see him really taking steps. We'll need him down the stretch to make plays in games like this. He's been such a positive influence in the locker room and meeting rooms and on the practice field. That alone has made an impact."