Baylor Football Head Coach Matt Rhule
Weekly Press Conference
November 5, 2018

***Opening Statement***
“I appreciate you guys being here. Thank you. Obviously, I am very excited about last Saturday. I thought our players went out there found a way to make it happen. They played four quarters and that was our goal. It wasn’t always perfect. There was a lot we could have done better. But I am proud of their effort and intensity. Most of all I was proud of their togetherness. We kept pushing as we had each other’s back. We will quickly move on to Iowa State, a tremendous challenge being our fourth ranked team we will face on the road. Hopefully we can learn the lessons from Oklahoma, Texas and West Virginia and go out and play against a team I have the most respect for. Their coach Matt Campbell is a winner and it will be a real challenge.”

***On becoming bowl eligible with one more win…***“Those things might be for the players. I am so simple with the way that I look at it. I think that if we take it away from just blocking and tackling and constantly focused on external things we won’t be ready for what is in front of us. This is such a good football team, that if we are focused on December or January we will probably miss this Saturday. Iowa State is a tough place to play. I have never been there, but I have heard from the players and from talking to other people. I just think we need to be completely focused on Iowa State this weekend. This defense we are going to face is either one or two in every defensive category. They also have an elite receiver and running back, as well as a great young quarterback.”

***On players focused on next week, not worried about bowl game…***“I hope that’s our guys mindset. It is great that they are focused on the task at hand. The key for this game is to forget about what has happened and forget about what can happen in the future. We just have to think about what is up next. That is all I ever say to the guys. For example, Denzel Mims caught the game winning touchdown he also was the guy who made the tackle on the last play Hail Mary. What a lesson I get to teach our players today. Denzel is sitting out there, and he made the tackle to win the game. Life is always about what is next. Life is always about learning about what happened. We are the exact same team that went out and lost to West Virginia. We played a better game, but the mistakes were still all over the field so if we start thinking about December and January we are going to come out and get punched in the face. I think we must stay focused on what is next.

***On players returning in game from injuries…***“I think we are getting mentally tougher. The guys have given into the process. They are letting themselves practice that way and when something becomes a habit it can become a way of life. Jeremy Scott and his staff have done an amazing job. Dave Snyder and our training staff have done a great job with our doctors in terms of all the things we can provide to the players for rehab. Clay Johnston’s father Ken, has joined us as our return to play specialist. When I played the trainer said you were good to go and you would get back out there, now there is another level to it. He helps them transfer from cleared to getting game ready. We never tell our guys to play hurt. James Lynch ran off the field on one play instead of going down and we almost played the down with 10 guys. If you’re banged up lay down. Our guys are sore. We played 90 downs of defense on Saturday. All those guys who were dinged up will be out there today.”

***On Brock Purdy…***“He has a sensational arm. He puts the ball right on the money. He is extremely athletic, and Iowa State has now input a quarterback run package which always adds another element. Even on Saturday with Cornelius we created some problems for us running the ball. Brock reminds me of Charlie last year, he just goes out there and plays and they have such a good scheme.”

***On winning even though it wasn’t a completely perfect game…***“After you win or lose the truth is always in there. We try to handle them all the same and we go back and watch the film and see what we can do better. Eventually you hope that the players buy in to that and they don’t want to just feel happy, but they want to become elite and be the best version on themselves. Iowa State battles and they have played from behind and overcome adversity. For us to overcome being down in the fourth quarter is huge. We know how we played on Saturday and we will see how we practice today. I think our team respects Iowa State and we have watched Iowa state play a lot of the guys we have already played. We know we have to play our best game to compete with these guys.”

**On the importance of the players parents to be at the game…**“I can’t hear anything during the game because I wear a double headset. My wife said after the West Virginia game that Mrs. Lynch just cheers the entire game. She is so positive and it is fun to watch and be around!”

***On managing the red shirt rule…***
“We keep a running tally, it’s a spreadsheet. Guys in red have used their games, guys in white have game available, guys in yellow are at four games. We keep and active track on it. A lot of guys played there first game on Saturday. Gerry got in for two plays. We ran a trick play with him and he ran the ball once. Down the stretch we have tried to get the guys to play in these last few games and we would like to get to a bowl game and allow our young guys to play in the bowl game. That bowl practice and bowl prep is different when you know you are going to play. Jared Atkinson has played four and he will red shirt, Grayland Arnold has played four and is banged up so he is going to red shirt. Xavier Newman had played four games and he told me he wasn’t going to redshirt. But I told him he wasn’t going to play unless he was healthy.”

***On what makes Iowa State's defense so complicated...***

"There's been some defenses [we've faced] that are complicated like it, but they have this 3-3, 3-2 dime defense. Last year they played a lot of Cover 2 and made people run the ball and rally up and tackle. Now they're pressuring, they're out there and they move around and you can't really see what they're in. Some defenses you play you'll know if they're playing man-to-man or zone, they're blitzing. These guys just do a great job of disguising. They're able to do it because of the way their players play. They get off blocks and they're able to survive inside in the run game by playing with less guys than most people would. It's because their D-Line is so talented. They run to the ball as well as anybody. Coach Heacock, their defensive coordinator, has done a really nice job."

***On what Coach Kent Johnson brings to the program...***

"I met with him as we were talking in a normal, parent-type conversation and it was pretty clear right away we wanted to see after last season, hey can we get him involved with us because he just brings so much knowledge and so much experience and he's such a wonderful man. My old strength coach in college, there were two of them, was a guy named John Thomas, who I love. One of the meanest coaches, in a good way. And Jeremy Scott, who is our strength coach here. John Thomas is now at the University of Miami helping injured players return to play. We talked to Kent and he's done being a strength coach, he wanted to move more into the medical side. He does a lot of things to do prehab, to keep guys from getting injured. He brought a lot of things for our whole team. He puts up a plan to correct things to avoid injuries or when you come back from injury and you're out of rehab you don't slack. He does a magnificent job. A lot of guys have come back quicker and we're able to keep a lot of guys on the field as a result of their work with Kent."

***On learning from past games in order to approach Iowa State WR Hakeem Butler...***

"We went back after the West Virginia game and we watched everything that we did. We made a lot of corrections because we knew going in to last week, [Tylan] Wallace was leading the country in contested catches. We played bump-and-run and I thought Phil [Snow] and Francis Brown, I told them it was the best game Francis has ever coached. As the game went on, we got more aggressive in coverage and played more bump-and-run. We got back to some fundamentals. We're not getting run by, we're getting beat down the field at the point of attack. And even with a couple pass interference penalties on Saturday, I much prefer those to touchdowns. I think our secondary, we got back to some base fundamentals of stepping and replacing, trying to stay in front of somebody, try to stay a little higher on the routes. That really helped us. I thought we moved around better. We've made a lot of corrections coming out of that last game. That being said, Butler is a dominant player. You can't just take him away, they've got Matt Eaton on the other side. Matt played for us at Temple, so we know the type of player he is before transferring to junior college and going to Iowa State. All their receivers, they spread it around. And if you try to play pass coverage, they have one of the best running backs in the country and a tremendous quarterback as well. It will be putting all those things together, I think. We really took to heart, we didn't just say 'Well the kids just didn't show up to play against West Virginia,' we don't ever say that. We ask what did we do, what did we do wrong, so we went back and watched a ton of things we had done earlier in the year. I met with Derrek Thomas and reminded him, that's part of playing corner. If you're a step behind at corner, that's a touchdown. He was starting to cramp up [against OSU], and that last drive I looked at him and said 'I'll never ask you to play hurt, so if you can't go, don't go, but if it's just cramps and you can go,' and he said 'Coach, I'm going,' and played his best football on that last drive. I think all of us tried to improve after West Virginia, looked at the things we were doing and tried to get back to being really fundamentally sound and they improved a lot."

***On what the Give Light campaign means...***

"The first thing I'll say is Julie and I went to the introductory celebration for the Give Light campaign. 1.1 billion, that number blows me away. And to have 541 million already raised, I thought that was really cool. This is a beautiful campus and whether it's the Welcome Center or the Tidwell building, all those things, I think everything we do to continue to improve as an overall University, to become a tier one research university, to attract the top professors, just makes us better. I don't just worry about football, I want us to be part of something excellent. I think the whole campaign is awesome. For us, number one I'm excited about a new basketball fieldhouse. I'm excited to increase our home field advantage and increase recruiting. Imagine if you give Coach Mulkey and Coach Drew that, what they're going to do, I mean come on. I'm fired up about that. For us, I'm excited to have a football operations building. It's going to open up so many opportunities for all of our other student-athletes. We use one weight room, so if we're in there it means track has to lift at 5 or 6 a.m. It means women's volleyball is lifting at 8 at night. At the end of the day, all of our sports are important. To have a football operations center, to get us out of this building, where we can have locker rooms and meeting rooms and nutrition and weight rooms and training facilities, I think that helps our student-athletes as they develop their welfare. At the same time, it opens up locker room facilities, this entire building for the rest of our student-athletes. I think it's such a win-win. It's going to be a gamechanger for us in recruiting. I certainly am grateful to Dr. Livingstone and Mack [Rhoades] for their commitment towards the future. We have the most beautiful football stadium, beautiful facilities and if we continue to add to them, we'll continue to build the program, the entire athletic department. After the game, I try not to watch Twitter but I was so touched by the volleyball team celebrating in Norman. That's what's really cool about this place. All the athletes support each other. I think this will be a win-win for our entire athletic department and also our entire University."

***On the difference in recruiting players from the Northeast versus Texas...***

"Anytime you ask someone to leave their family and friends behind, number one they have to trust you and believe in what you're doing. Whether it’s been Harrison [Hand] or [John] Lovett or Rob [Saulin] or Johncarlo [Valentin], they've had a lot of other options too. They could have stayed and played in the northeast. For them to want to come here, a lot of it speaks to the relationship they have with Francis Brown. He's one of the best recruiters, not because he's a recruiter but because he's real. It's fun for us to go get 3, 4, 5 guys a year. I think we lead most schools in terms of taking guys from Texas. That's really how we want to build it. But if we have connections, whether its back up north, here and there we also want to add those guys in. I think it's such a wonderful University and a wonderful place. You get to pick where you want to live for the rest of your life but if you're a guy like me who grew up in New York City, go spend 4 or 5 years in college at Baylor. Go to Texas, go try something new and see where life takes you."

***On John Lovett...***

"He's a single digit because he's tough. He's been battling nagging little injuries and I think he's fought through them. He'll do whatever is asked. He'll play defense for us if we asked him, he'll play special teams. I think the biggest thing about the game the other day is he made the first guy miss. If plays are blocked for six yards, if you get six yards you're a good back, if you get eight yards you're a great back, the guys who take it for 80 are the ones who are elite. I thought on Saturday he made the first guy miss and that was a gamechanger for us. When you talk about John Lovett, I always start with his work ethic and toughness. He's everything that we represent."

***On building a football team here...***

"When we send things out to recruits, we let them know. We try to have a system and the ball goes where it should go. At the same time, especially for our young players, we try to work them in slow. I think we all saw on Saturday what Josh Fleeks can do when he has the ball in his hands and some other guys. Continuing to utilize all of our players, all of them work so hard and if we can get them out there for a couple plays and put the ball in their hands, I think that helps. I think our commitment to playing young players, that's been important in recruiting as well. People see if you go to Baylor, they're all growing and I think we'll wake up here in a couple years and these sophomores will be seniors and they'll have a lot of experience and hopefully have a pretty dynamic team."