

Baylor University Football Media Conference

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Matt Rhule Press Conference

Baylor - 56, Stephen F. Austin - 17

MATT RHULE: Well first of all appreciate you guys for being here. Obviously very proud of our team. It was one of those games where we did enough good things to be happy but enough things that I can get upset about tomorrow and correct. 34 guys played their first college football, so very happy for them. Two first time starters. Couple guys that scored their first touchdown. Two great plays. Gerry, getting a chance to see what Gerry can do. I thought there were a lot of things that were good. We didn't have a lot of penalties, until some silly things late. So we looked like a good football team at times. A lot of credit to Coach Carthel and his squad, I know they have had some -- they didn't have a full team with them, they had some guys that were down, but I thought that they competed, they hung in there, we went up 14-0, they fought back, even the way at the end, the way they wouldn't give up, they kept fighting and that's who he is. So I have a lot of respect for him. And there's no doubt that SFA will be back at a high level under his leadership. But for tonight it was a good night, great crowd, I appreciated the Baylor line and the fact that they stayed, come out of halftime and they were all out there. So hopefully people had fun. And I thought a lot of guys made some great individual plays. We'll try to watch the tape and see what we can do to get better, so.

Q. Did you like the focus y'all came out with? Y'all looked crisp right from the beginning.

MATT RHULE: Yeah, we have been a mature team so I liked that. Obviously to get the stop on defense, to get a blocked kick, I think that's six blocks in the last six games. I think that's 11 in the last 12 games or something like that. 11 since I've been here. So six in the last six games. He gives me all this information as I'm walking here. So I liked seeing those things. I thought offensively we looked sharp early. And then a silly penalty or something knocked us back. I didn't like that lull where they scored and then we didn't answer it there to the level that I think we should. But I thought it was good. I thought they hung in there. I think the



biggest thing about when you're in preseason you're practicing for two hours straight, there's not a lot of lulls. When you go to a game you have to go sit down, you have to kind of lock back in and go back out there, so I was pleased with a lot of that. And then I thought that they tried to play to the very end. We had to play, we had to, had an opportunity to get a lot of guys in the game at the end, and, but I liked the focus, it was good.

Q. Blake Lynch had turnovers in the last two games last year. The pick against Tech and then (No microphone.) What do you think (No microphone.)

MATT RHULE: He has the ability to do it. I was getting on him a lot early, too. I thought he was kind of loafing around out there a little bit and it's hard to tell with Blake because he's got that affect where he doesn't show a lot of emotion. But he's a guy that as a former receiver can track the ball, sees the ball, and goes and gets it. He knows what to do with it. I thought he had a chance to return that one for a touchdown. So I thought it was a really nice job by him. So as we continue to evolve and get more and more guys comfortable I think he's a guy that will certainly help us a lot.

Q. (No microphone.)

MATT RHULE: Those plays where he got the ball in space and he made somebody miss and reverse field and did a bunch of things. So, he's obviously one of our more dynamic playmakers and getting him the ball in space made a lot of sense. And so I thought he just, again, made the first guy miss. When you watch college football and you watch the first games, usually special teams errors, usually penalties, but usually missed tackles show up. We certainly had our share of missed tackles today which we have to address but I thought he was a guy that really got us a lot of extra yardage at times.

Q. That number of guys seeing their first action, what was that number?

MATT RHULE: 34 guys, first game. I told our team I hope they appreciate like the coaches are scrambling around at the end of the game trying to get guys in even for one play. But you know, we but we talk a lot about the top five or six guys on our team. There's a lot of guys that work really hard and so to get them in for one play. Not everybody gets a chance to play college football. They're out there so we want to make we get them out there. And you've got guys like Prince Pines,

started his first game, didn't even practice last year, was dealing with a medical condition. And we'll see how he did, but it looked like he had some fun out there, so hopefully we can continue to get those young guys going.

Q. (No microphone.)

MATT RHULE: He's got great vision, he has great hands, so we can utilize him as a receiver and as a back. He's got great speed. From the bowl game on, you can see how the opportunities were, he doesn't look like he's running super fast but he definitely he is. He's completely unselfish which make it's fun. So he's one of the guys that can really help us this year become a more dynamic group.

Q. A lot of things that y'all talked about offensively, defensively, special teams throughout the off season when we talked to you, I think you did well tonight. How good does that feel right out of the gate?

MATT RHULE: The other day I was telling the players our scoreboard does not define us, like, we want to turn the film on and see us playing the game the right way. And the standard doesn't change whether you're a one, two, or a three, at the very end the standard doesn't change. So playing smart disciplined football is what I want to see and it looked like at times it was that way. I didn't see our guys talking trash, I didn't see our guys doing selfish things. So I was pleased with it, even when they got personal foul on us, we didn't retaliate and do something stupid and get an off setting. So I thought we looked like a good, clean football team. And, again, like you said, made some improvement in some of those areas. We'll go back. I believe you make your biggest progress between week one and week two. And as I told them, that's not going to be a good enough effort in many more weeks, definitely not next week, so we have to improve a lot this week.

Q. (No microphone.)

MATT RHULE: Those are beautiful plays. Charlie saw the right look and checked to it. Art made great adjustments on the football. And I just think Art is a guy that understands -- so often young people think about what they're not. Well, I'm not as fast as Platt, I'm not as tall as Mims. Art figured out, hey, what am I. And he's a tough guy, with great hands, who is really smart, who can run all day. And so he's accentuated the things that make him a really good player. And so his body control and ability to catch has been awesome. That's why I put him out there, he's a sophomore and he's a captain tonight, and that was because of the work he put in day-in and day-out. And so I don't think those catches were a surprise to anybody, certainly not to our DB's because if you watch all those little videos

we put out, we put those day-in and day-out and it's good just to see it come to fruition.

Q. Can you explain what a touchback is?

MATT RHULE: A touchback?

Q. On a kickoff? It's been awhile.

MATT RHULE: Oh, yeah, yeah. I told the team, I said when I was at Penn State, when we had Brett Conway, who got drafted, he let me being on the kickoffs team at times because he always kicked it into the stands and they didn't have to worry about me running down the field. It was really big for Noah because it's one thing to be able to do it and certainly to go out there with pressure and do it and I thought he either brought one out, but if they were bringing it out, they had to bring it out from deep in the end zone, so it was good to have that weapon. And I was pleased with -- we had one bad punt, but I thought Issac at the end was backed up and had that booming punt. And so we realize we have to be patient with our specialists as we move along, as they grow, but they looked pretty good out there today.

Q. What did you see from Gerry Bonhanon today? He threw the ball really well, ran on his first play really well. What did you see from him and especially going forward?

MATT RHULE: He's got -- he can do things with his feet, he's got great decision making. He's such a good human, such a good young man. One play I was getting after him because my thing is I don't want them to feel like the game's over and I'm not coaching them hard at the end of the game, I mean I'm coaching probably harder when we have a lead. And he's able to still -- you know what, part of that is to be able to talk back to the coach and say, well they did this, and he did it so clearly so I know that he'll be able to give great communication in the middle of games. And I think you saw how much the team loves him. He's running down the sideline, everyone is going nuts for him, they really, really, they care about him. And so it was fun to see him get out there and play and have some extended time because he certainly worked hard for it.

Q. (No microphone.)

MATT RHULE: Yeah, things have a tendency to kind of run fast for me in the game. I believe we ran an option, we pitched off the defensive end, the ball got out there, the MIKE linebacker beat our tackle over the top. So he probably would have gotten a three-yard gain, instead he kind of reversed field and made a play.

Q. Does he do that in practice?

MATT RHULE: You know what, he does. We don't -- that means -- I mean him having to do it means we didn't block it real well. So, but one of the things I

respect about that is they played hard. They flew to the ball, which is why some of the naked and things we did were wide open just because we're trying to utilize their effort against them and that was a time we did it by mistake, but he just kind of made a great play.

Q. I know you emphasized all summer that you wanted Charlie to, the line to keep him clean. How did you think that went?

MATT RHULE: I wasn't happy at halftime. We had too many times he got hit. And I thought it got better at times and that's one of those things that we'll have to go back and look at because it's always hard to tell, you kind of just see him laying on the ground at the end of a play, but I don't know that I was real happy with that.

Q. Did the defense look faster to you tonight?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, I thought that they looked faster. I thought that we were -- we went with some three-man rush on third downs, we didn't blitz a ton on third down, we blitzed more on first and second down. And just a hair away from getting some sacks. I thought the quarterback back did a nice job for them of escaping. Really just, we knew they were going to run some out and ups and some double moves and some trick type things on us. Unfortunately, one or two of them got us. But I thought I was really pleased with them when we fumbled the ball in the third quarter and they went out there and they held them to a field goal. So I thought that was positive. So I thought overall the defense looked really good at times, just that one drive was frustrating where we gave up the explosive play and then they burned us with the blitz a couple times by hitting some seam routes on us. So some things we have to definitely clean up or else we'll be in trouble moving forward.

Q. They picked up some momentum late in the first quarter. They had the football down just 14-7. What did you say to your guys in that moment?

MATT RHULE: I don't really have a chance to say much to them. I think the biggest -- I think I got them together once, I can't remember when it was, to be quite honest with you, and I just said, is this how we're going to play? Like all of a sudden now we get a block in the back on offense, we get beat on the double move. Like we can't be a team that all of a sudden we get up 14-0 we start relaxing, that's just not how you play football. And you have to answer scores with scores and when you have someone down, you have to keep them down, you can't allow them to have life. So I challenged, I challenged them -- I don't know if it was exactly that moment, but it was in that general vicinity -- and not saying it was my challenge it was just them I think and then I think we kind of rattled off whatever it was 37-7 at half. And that was my

challenge at halftime was we had one turnover, that's all. We blocked one punt. Let's go block some more. Let's go make the plays we're capable of making. And we made some, we missed some. Denzel wide open down the sideline, we over threw him. Platt had a chance to make a big play. So we had some chances but overall I thought that we showed the focus to rebound from a little bit of a lull.

Q. You guys were 8-13 on third down. How important is that to be able to move the chains and keep it going?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, I think one of the reasons why we made the jump we made last year is we made a huge jump, I think we were 29th in the country in third down. Part of that is being efficient in first and second downs and being in manageable third downs. So I thought we did a good job of that. Thought we got into some we got -- a couple times I think we got to third down, we went for it on fourth and got it. So sometimes third and eight and I say, hey, take two downs to get it, so maybe we're not trying to get it on third down, we're trying to get to fourth and three or less and then make it. So I like the management of those things and Denzel came up big on that one fourth and six, catching the slant. So I think those were, those were some high level things that Charlie got to us that were good.

Q. You talked about the penalties, lack of penalties. How good was it to see that discipline from this team?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, we put it on their shirts. We said we got to win with discipline. And you can't compartmentalize discipline, you need discipline in your life, you need discipline when we travel, you need discipline in terms of doing your assignments, you need discipline with your effort and you need discipline with penalties. So I was pleased with our lack of penalties. When we did get them they hurt us. We had the block in the back that put us in first and 25. But we'll clean those things up. The biggest key for me is, as I told them, there's some teams out there that lost to FCS schools or had big losses or heartbreaking losses and they're going to go in tomorrow and they're going to be beside themselves and they're going to learn a lot as a team and get better. We can't come in in the next couple days and think we have figured it out because the scoreboard said we scored a lot of points. We got to go in there and fix -- and I think that's what the guys got. I think they realized that wasn't good enough. But I do like, I do like the improvement on penalties and I think we certainly scored a lot of touchdowns in the red zone.

Q. Can you touch on the special teams play. A blocked punt, blocked field goal, how that served as a catalyst and really shifted the momentum for

you guys?

MATT RHULE: Well I think it's -- there's not many times where some of those guys who are in those positions have a chance to really affect and change the game. So for us to block a field goal, for us to block a punt, those are chances for big D-linemen and guys like that to go really change the game. So I was pleased to see that obviously and one of the reasons why we're good at it is because we practice it a lot. And not everyone wants to practice that. Like we line up the first team field goal block versus the first team field goal and we do it live and guys are laying on the ground and the O line hates it. But we do it enough, more than most, and it shows up though and they realize, okay, this is why we do it. So I always want them to understand my why and our why, but those are huge, huge, huge moments in the game. They're just moments of momentum change, which is really just energy. What's momentum? It's just energy and positive vibes. So if someone just drove the ball down the field on you and they're going to score and all of a sudden you block the kick, it just changes everything. So I'm pleased with all those things, hopefully we can keep them going.