

Baylor University Football Media Conference

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Matt Rhule Postgame Press Conference

Baylor - 63, UTSA - 14

MATT RHULE: Obviously a good win for us. Proud of our guys for the way they played. I thought it was a pretty complete game, clean game, not a lot of penalties. Didn't turn the football over. Not a lot of missed assignments or errors or things of that nature, so we looked like we knew what we were doing in a lot of different areas.

Offensively I thought we were efficient, especially in the first half. Defensively our ones I thought played really well, and special teams wise, to score a touchdown, obviously, that's a pretty complete game.

Really, really pleased with our off-the-field support staff, our medical staff, Andrew Althoff and Matt Kuehl and Julie Anna Buzzard, and we had no one cramp. I've never played in a game that hot in my life and had no one cramp. It's amazing. So a testament to our players but also the wonderful people we have surrounding them to make sure that we're healthy and make sure we have every advantage possible, and at the end maybe you saw we sent the players over to the sideline. I just thought it was amazing that those young people in the Baylor line, those freshman stayed there that long and cheered to the very end, and then at the end of the game didn't leave, they still were out there after we were doing praying.

Really appreciate everyone that came today, but a special thanks to the people that sat in the sun and watched that whole game because that really means a lot to us, and hopefully they saw a team that tried to play for as long and hard as they could.

We have a lot of respect for UTSA. We know they're a good football team, but it was a challenge that we undertook today, and I was proud to see the way we played.

Q. Is Charlie okay health-wise?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, he wanted to go, but at that point



we were up 35-0. I can't tell you what it was other than -- because I don't know what it was other than his feet were really hot, so they X-rayed him and he was fine, and his feet just felt hot and discomfort. Maybe a sprain, maybe something.

But it was 35-0 and he wanted to go out there and play, and he was limping around. So I sat him a series and let Gary go, and Gary looked like he was ready for primetime, and then told them to take him inside and get him into street clothes and see how he feels. So he was moving around a little bit better at the end. That's one of those things we'll wake up tomorrow and see how he looks.

Q. So much has been talked about with Denzel becoming, quote-unquote, the alpha, but it looked like today the complete package of blocking downfield, especially on Ebner's run and the three score, is that kind of what you want, and if you're going to get that type of receiver, he has to do all of those things to fit that package, or what do you want to see from Denzel moving forward?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, I mean, I want all of our players, I want them to be developed into all-around pro players, and so we don't want them to be one dimensional, because if you take away a man's strength you leave him weak. We want to have him to be well-rounded and strong in lots of different areas. If you take one thing away, he has something else to go to.

Denzel has embraced being -- he's always been a physical player, but he's embraced the effort, the preparation, and even some of those catches he made today going back for the ball, all the different types of catches and ball skills required. He was on the punt return team when the touchdown was scored. Not a lot of guys that have his type of stats in a game also played on the special teams, as well, and he certainly did. Pleased with him in a lot of different areas.

And you know, he has a lot more to do. We all have a lot more to do. We're going to play a lot more games and have to keep improving. But so far, I think he's come a long way.

Q. Charlie Brewer's feet were hot? What was going on?

MATT RHULE: His feet were hot, yeah. He just said his

feet were burning. Was there something broken, a sprain, is there -- know what I mean? So he just had discomfort, a burning sensation in his feet. Maybe it was just one foot, I don't know. I kind of got it as we were leaving the locker room and got outside. I saw we were up 35-0, he said, I'm playing, so then I went out there and I said, No, you're not, and he said, I'm playing, and I said, No, you're not. So finally I won. I really don't know what it is. I would tell you, hey, I can't tell you if I didn't know. I had no idea what was going on there.

Q. But an X-ray was done and --

MATT RHULE: He's fine, yeah.

Q. You guys rushed for 368 yards. Can you describe how well the offensive line played in the first and second unit, as well?

MATT RHULE: Like anything else, there was some good things, there was some bad things. There was some great, great, great runs made maybe without great blocking and there were probably some average runs with great blocking. I think just overall in the run game, we saw a lot of guys committed to making plays, and then -- I thought you saw a lot of great single efforts, whether it was a six-yard run here or an eight-yard run here, the long run by Ebner, the long run Lovett. Qualan's running made a guy miss in the hole.

The thing that I liked was in the second quarter we were able to -- we put two tight ends on the field, and if they single covered us, we threw it up to Denzel or whomever, and if they double covered those guys we ran the football and just tried to put the other team in conflict, and Charlie did a great job of managing that, getting us in the right plays. It's nice we have some spread things and some tempo things, but we can also line up and try to run the football with power and authority and play action off of it.

I'd have to watch the tape to tell you exactly how I feel to be quite honest, but I liked their effort and their demeanor, and those are the things that really matter to me on game day. Nothing is ever going to be perfect, but if you have a great attitude and you keep coming back play after play, usually good things happen, and they certainly had the right look in their eye on the sideline.

Q. You talked about being close last week on a couple of the punt returns; possible they just missed it. What was the difference today? It looked like there were guys blocking way downfield.

MATT RHULE: Yeah, we had a couple guys last week that were blocking, blocking, blocking, and they kind of let up, they thought the play was dead and then it wasn't dead, and what we saw today was guys

blocking all the way to the whistle. And what's cool is it's Chris Platt, Blake Lynch, R.J. -- not R.J., but Tyquan, all those guys that play on offense and defense. We had an NFL -- not even scout but just general manager type person in the other day and he was just talking about the commitment of our seniors to playing special teams and how you don't see that everywhere, and that's not me, that's not Coach Siravo, that's our seniors. Those guys, they're not just playing special teams by returning, they're out blocking for Grayland and all those things. I just think they learned from last week and they improved in terms of making those blocks.

Q. In your home stadium against that program, two years later, does that game kind you show y'all how far y'all have come?

MATT RHULE: You know, certainly I think I'd be remiss if I didn't say we've come a long way in two years. But each game is its own game. You know, they had a -- they're a different team than we were two years ago. Two years ago. To me biggest thing is how we bounced back from last year. We weren't sloppy, we weren't -- the first drive we didn't move the ball on offense and the defense went right back out there. The biggest thing for me is we're not being -- we're not beating ourselves. We don't look sloppy, we're not trash talking, we're not doing all those things, we're playing football. And so I probably think it kind of stands on its own merits.

I've tried to forget the game from two years ago, but at the same time it's also created us into who we are. I tried to forget the emotion of it maybe, but I also recognize that those losses that first season taught our guys a lot of lessons and helped our guys mature so when they're out there playing now they really appreciate what it takes to win a football game.

Q. You mentioned it being the hottest game you've ever been a part of. What were just some of the challenges of that?

MATT RHULE: Just guys taking care of themselves and hydrating because you can't do it on Thursday and Friday, you have to do it all week; having your twos be ready. You want to play your starters on special teams because they're the best at them, but then they play too much. But I thought we managed it. There wasn't a time during the game where I felt like, hey, we can't play this guy right now because he's overheated. I thought part of that was because our defense was getting off the field on 3rd down, and I think our offense was 6 of 9 on 3rd down. You know, the offense was able to stay on the field, the defense was able to get off the field, and so those things obviously help.

But yeah, I was pleased with our ability to handle the

heat. It was certainly discomfort -- it wasn't comfortable, but we're not here to be comfortable, we're here to play, and we appreciate the opportunity to play.

Q. UTSA completed one more pass, they ran four more plays and had the ball on offense three more minutes than we did. What does that say about the efficiency of your team to still go out and win by 49?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, I mean, you know, those kind of stats to me only really matter when the game is close. You know, if we have long explosive touchdowns we're not probably going to win the time of possession. I always look at it like score, but if it's close, then I worry about time of possession and rushing yards and all those things. So I think the biggest thing for us today was maybe the efficiency of our defense that we didn't give up explosive plays. We didn't give up -- even the drives they had, I can't really remember too much about them other than they had to kind of make a lot of plays to make those things happen. If you do that eventually someone usually makes a mistake and you can get off the field.

I'm just pleased with -- the long run with the young guys at the end, obviously that's not what we want, but with our starting defense and kind of the immediate twos, I'm just pleased with the efficiency they were showing in terms of you're going to make a 1st down, you're going to make a 1st down, but they're not going to give up the, oh, no, 70-yard touchdown, at least through two games. We'd love to continue that.

And then offensively I think we had some big-play capability, had some big-play strikes, and then obviously the punt return kind of helped flip that for them.

Q. You were concerned about Frank Harris coming in. What did y'all do to contain him like you did?

MATT RHULE: I thought we did a nice job of blitzing. We had some blitzes where we got some sacks. We spied him with some different people and we just played some zone coverages where when he did escape, we had zone defenders instead of man. Man defenders could have their back turned. He could run for 60, so we tried to play zone defenses. We did some special things today that we haven't done. I thought Phil had a great game plan. A couple of them went out there we were struggling in, so we went back to some base stuff, and I thought we did a nice job of handling those things, playing the deep ball, even Kalon at the end playing the deep ball on the go route, so it didn't give them anything other than that one run.

Q. Gary had nearly 100 yards rushing. On that long

run he had where he tripped up at the end, what was your reaction while that was going on?

MATT RHULE: You know, I'm fired up for him. He's just such a likable guy, and I think you see some of the dynamic nature of some of the runs he was making. But yeah, I thought he was going to have a -- and then later on he had a touchdown, and he cut right when the guy made a tackle. I was making fun of him on the headset that he doesn't like to get in the end zone. But you see when he comes in, he gives us a run game element that's going to be hard for people. We're not really playing him in the package right now, he's waiting his turn, but when he does go in there, you can see some good things from him, I think.

Q. How valuable are these two games for him in particular?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, he's had a lot of football. To play a quarter and a half last game, a quarter and whatever it was, and almost a whole half this game -- 3rd down we allowed him to drop back and throw it. It wasn't always -- didn't always work out, but pleased with it. So just keep letting him get more and more confidence so when the time comes he's ready to go, and I think he's learning a lot.

Q. You looked really complete as a team in all three phases through the first two games. Now going into a bye week what, if anything, are you planning or trying to focus on in the off week?

MATT RHULE: Well, to be quite honest, I'll have to watch this tape, right, so I think what you always want to do is there's always issues everywhere, and before every accident there's a warning, and usually we're blind to those until after the season. We watch the cutups at the end of the season, and we're like, oh, my goodness, we're terrible at this, but you don't really recognize them during the season. So we try to do like a self-autopsy, go back and look at the things that we're not doing well. I learned that when I worked for Coach Coughlin; try to go from worst to first in certain areas. It's only a two-game segment, but there's obviously a lot of things that we still need to work on, so we'll go back and just try to look at ourselves and see what can we improve on, and then we have to get ready for Rice. So we won't worry about Rice maybe until later in the week, but at the beginning of the week really look at ourselves.

Q. I'm not trying to bait you with this question, but if you could have played this one at 6:00, would that have been your preference?

MATT RHULE: I'd have played it at 8:00 a.m. (Laughter.)

You know, I don't know. Because here's why: I think I'm one who you can ask, and I'm like, let's play early, let's

play early, let's play early. But then being out there, I was like, my goodness, let's play at 7:00. I don't know that I've ever been like that before. But I thought, again, we only ran 63 plays, we didn't -- whatever, ran 63 plays -- 62 plays we ran. It felt like we ran 100. So it wasn't like it was out of control. Again, I thought all the people around our program did a great job of keeping our guys fresh. But yeah, probably -- but it's not really my -- I'll play whenever.

But he wanted to play. All our guys wanted to play. We've got a lot of unselfish guys out there. We played 62 plays and you score a lot of points early, there's not a lot of touches for a lot of good guys, but we're winning and I think those guys all were happy to see us win.

Q. Is it tough having the bye week so early?

MATT RHULE: You know, this is one of those unique seasons. This is a week-zero year, so there's two bye weeks for every team. This is the one true bye week we get. The other one we get is like that 10 days, then West Virginia and then 10 days deal. But I think it's good. I think it comes at the right place. I think we did a good job of really trying to have a long, hard training camp and knowing that it was kind of training camp into the first two games and then a bye week. And so I always like having a bye week early in the season. Guys get a chance to catch their breath, really get locked in on -- we can make sure everyone is doing well in school, getting off to a great start.

And then we have the second bye week to really focus maybe a little more on recruiting and at the same time kind of catch our breath before the stretch run of the season. So we've played two games. I think it's a great time for us to look at ourselves, and also try to let our guys physically heal up a little bit before we head into this next part of the season.

Q. There was a play Denzel caught a 1st down and you were going to bring in Tyquan to get him off the field and Denzel waved him off and then caught a touchdown the very next throw. Can you describe his toughness now compared to -- not that he wasn't tough, but how much he's grown up in that role wanting to take every single snap?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, so Denzel was one of those guys who was very physically tough in terms of he can line up and knock you back. He can line up -- he was very confident in the things that he was good at and was always a little reticent when it was something that he maybe wasn't sure he could do, and what he's done is he's worked himself into somebody that works on his weaknesses and realizes like, not to hide from them but to fight through them, and he's become someone who will play through discomfort. He'll play when he's hot, he'll play when he's tired. There was times before where he wouldn't do those things. There's no one whose shown more growth in three years, but really a year, than him. He's done a tremendous job. That's why he's in a single digit, and he'll hopefully continue to do those things.