

# Baylor University Football Media Conference

Saturday, September 28 2019  
Waco, Texas



## Matt Rhule

### Postgame Press Conference

Baylor - 23, Iowa State - 21

MATT RHULE: Well, in the words of Maximus the gladiator, are you not entertained? What a great, great football game and what a great, great performance by both teams, and I want to make sure I give credit and deserved credit to Iowa State. I thought the way they played in the fourth quarter was amazing, and Brock Purdy was special. Their team is a team of winners and tough guys, and they found a way to come back. They made everything hard. Their defense made everything hard against our offense today, and their offense fought back and took the lead, and even after we scored that last field goal, they still had a chance to go win the football game.

But I thought today was our day, and I'm proud of our guys. As I said to them in the locker room, I'm so proud of our players, not just because they won, though. I thought the way they played the game, I thought the composure, the class, the toughness, they never cracked, they stayed together. They looked like the class of college football, and I said that to ESPN at the end of the game. I wanted the whole country to see the men of Baylor football.

It wasn't perfect. We have a lot of things to correct. Offensively there wasn't a lot of consistency. They blitzed us. I don't think there was a down they didn't blitz us in the game. I mean, it was constant duress. And offensively I thought our defense played three of the best quarters you could expect to see them play, and then at the end in the fourth quarter, they found some rhythm.

We obviously have things to improve upon, things to get better at, and one of the biggest things for us is I think just figuring -- we're playing a lot of guys right now, who we're going to play consistently and make some decisions that way. But for one day I was really proud of the effort, and it was a great, great game. Hope the fans had a great time, hope you guys had a great time seeing a really good college football game.

**Q. It looked like early in the game you were reluctant to put Mayers in to kick. How good was it to see him come through?**

MATT RHULE: Yeah, I put him out for that first field goal and he missed it, so the second field goal was into the wind, there was a pretty strong wind out there, the wind he made the game-winning field goal in, so I went for that 4th and 5 and we got it, and I felt good about just taking a shot at it because we had been open on 3rd down. The first half we were one for seven on 3rd down, and a lot of our issues in the first half were drops. Not easy catches but catches we have to make, and we were dropping the football.

I'm so -- I went with it, and I just said, hey, I'm not going to play really that 3rd drive in the fourth quarter. The drive before that, normally I would try to kick that and take the lead, and I just didn't feel good about it, and we had a good play, and unfortunately they came through, Charlie took a sack, lost some yardage or else maybe I would have kicked it. Put us in a tough position there. So I was kind of reluctant just because of the wind and all that stuff. I didn't want to keep putting the kid out there.

But you know what, to his credit, he went out there and made that kick. The guys were joking because I said this morning, we do a little walk-through and I said, Mayers is going to come out and kick the game-winning field goal today; he's going to make it. So they all think I have something figured out, where I was just guessing to be quite honest. But proud of him.

At the end of the day, everyone is celebrating and we kick off, and we trust our guys. Not a lot of people kick it deep there. We kicked it deep because we knew we had to hold a field goal, and they made the play.

Purdy was running around, and we finally got one out on him, and James Lynch could have scooped it and scored and just fell on the ball and won the game. So I was really proud of our composure. But proud of Mayers, went out there and made the kick, and that's what we needed from him.

**Q. What's the atmosphere like postgame in the locker room?**

MATT RHULE: Just a lot of tired but really happy guys.

I think really I thought it was pretty cool the way they were on the field. They went over and they shook hands, they prayed, but then they went over and thanked the student section, then went over to the band, and I think there's a lot of happiness and pride, and we've worked hard to get to this point.

Again, they also realize that it's a tough road ahead. Every week is going to be like this. We're not the type of team that's just going to roll people right now. We have a lot of improving to do. But I think they enjoyed it.

And the other part I said, and I said it to you guys, was now they knew why I was kind of happy after last week. I felt like we needed last week to prepare us for this week. We needed a close game in the fourth quarter last week so we wouldn't panic, and there was no panic on the sidelines. JaMycal Hasty, I thought he was going to punch me on the sidelines; he's just walking up and down, saying, we're winning this game, we're winning this game, we're winning this game. And it was great to see that kind of will. There was something powerful about the will, and they found a way to get it done.

**Q. If every day is an opportunity to learn, what do you learn about your team after a day like this?**

MATT RHULE: That -- I think I learned a lot of things. I think I learned that we have the chance to be pretty good on defense. Also I think I learned that they enjoy the battle. I told them before the game, just remember the Vanderbilt game in the fourth quarter. I kept saying to the guys, this is Vanderbilt. That bowl game, no one was panicked. The offense was like, hurry up, defense, and get off the field so we can go score again. Just go kind of -- I thought once they kind of got loose like that and played loose, they scored two touchdowns in the third quarter. The fourth quarter we were on the run towards one and we kind of faltered in the red zone and I was afraid to kick it. Probably should have kicked it. And then that last one.

I think when they're loose and they're kind of just out there playing together, they're much better. But I think the biggest thing was we were all in. Like the guys were all into it, and I was really proud of that part of it. You know, even to the very end, how much it meant to them to get that win.

**Q. A game like this, what can it do for your team moving forward because they put it on film that they can win games like this.**

MATT RHULE: Yeah, we haven't had a ton of -- you go back to last year, we've had a lot of games come down to the last play of the game. You know what's funny is when you get ahead and have a blowout, it just -- you're just sitting there in the fourth quarter like let's not mess this up, let's try to -- there's such joy when you win at the very end. Like your stomach is like this, like

this, like this and then you win the game, and it's joy. You know, it's excitement. It's energy.

But I think the biggest thing is you learn not just that we can do it but how do we do it, and we did it by making one more play than the other team. It just really comes down to that. Even in the first half, you know, the way we jumped up and caught the fades when we got behind and we made the big plays, we were explosive. When we dropped the ball or when we can't get a run going, we're not. So I think it was our guys realized that, that players win games.

The biggest thing I've tried to do is make it where our players understand that they win the games. I don't win the games, the coaches don't win the games, uniforms don't win the games, the crowd doesn't win the games. Nothing wins the games but the players. So for our players to go win those games, to get the ball down the field, converting on 3rd down, and literally the coach he caught for them is such a brilliant defensive coordinator. Like the one drive where we down the field and scored, they were bringing field blitz. The next drive it's -- it's like every play, like 90 percent of the game was blitz, and it was different blitzes.

In that last drive, I mean, Glenn and Nixon calling the plays, they had to go to a bunch of different steps; we catch the ball close to the middle of the field now, and for Charlie to be able to immediately adapt in the middle of the game and go to some -- attack the middle of the field, I was really proud. They started playing man on Mims with a guy over the top, so other guys had to step up.

I know I'm saying a lot, but the biggest thing is they adapted game went on to a really good defense, and then defensively they got the big stop to win the game, which was really cool.

**Q. When you've got a quarterback like Charlie who's done this before with Oklahoma State, Kansas State, he gets the ball with about 3:40 to go, what's that say because he's been in that situation?**

MATT RHULE: Yeah, I told our guys, this is what we do. We do it every Wednesday. We go out there and we do two-minute. We know we can do it. In many ways the game gets simplified. It's not like -- as a coach you have to make hard decisions on 4th down; should we punt it, should we not punt it? It's 4th and 2 -- you're going to go for it on 4th down. So I think that's really confidence, where Charlie is at his best. He scrambled around some other times in the game, and we weren't really able to connect on some of those balls, but he was able to get it done there.

So to me, as long as we're within scoring range in the

fourth quarter I feel good about our quarterback, I feel like he has a chance to go make some plays and make something happen.

**Q. With John Mayers, you were saying before the game he was going to score the game-winning field goal, did you actually tell him that?**

MATT RHULE: I told the team that this morning. We were in walk-through. I said, Mayers is going to come out and win the game-winning field goal. Again, I'm not saying I predicted it, I just kind of like -- I kind of said that just as I introduced the PAT field goal team, and he went out and made it happen.

Again, the message is I don't care that you missed last week. I don't care that you missed this week. It's always about what's next, and he went out there and it was a pretty strong wind, there was a time-out, a lot of time to think about it. He's got everybody going up to him saying, you can do it, you can do it, you can do it, and I said everybody get away from him. I told Jay Sedgwick, Jay pray for him, please, and he prayed on him -- I said, you're going to make the kick, and Jay prayed on him and he went out there and he made the kick. And everyone was celebrating, and I was saying, hey, it's not over yet. Great end to a game, though.

**Q. Tyquan Thornton, you talked about Denzel being doubled, the way he stepped up, particularly on that last drive?**

MATT RHULE: Yeah, he had the big long ball down the middle of the field. The funny thing is we were barely 50 percent in the passing game, but we had so many explosive plays, we just aren't real efficient right now. But Tyquan, he about two weeks ago started practicing at a really high level, and the plays are now coming. But you're right, he was really efficient in that last drive, making a lot of plays and getting himself open, and R.J. did that all day, and Sneed did that, as well.

**Q. Is that one of the best performances by your D-line since you've been here?**

MATT RHULE: Yeah, and what was cool about it was there was a lot of young guys playing. Zouzoua was out there, Bralen Taylor was playing receiver up until the first day of training camp, and he's out there playing D-line. Like we're still trying to kind of get some of those positions replenished. So Gabe Hall is out there as a true freshman. Cole Maxwell was out there, and he went down with a pretty bad injury it looked like, unfortunately.

But a lot of those guys had to step up in the game. We got a lot of pressure. We weren't always able to get there. A couple times maybe if we would have gotten there, the game would have been not quite so easy. But they played hard, took away the run game, and

turned it into a drop-back pass game, and we made some plays, some plays we left out there.

**Q. Do you believe in signature wins?**

MATT RHULE: Man, I don't know. I mean, to be honest with you, you know me well enough to know my mind is already thinking about like Kansas State, Kansas State, have to go to Manhattan. What I believe in, again, is I believe in this was really important for our players because like our seniors, they won there a couple years ago, and it was pretty cool. I went back and watched that game and Blake Lynch catches a post down the middle of the field, and he's out there playing Sam linebacker today. Grayland is the left tackle on kickoff return, and he's out there today -- Jordan Williams, what a great pick by Jordan today.

We talk about winning the turnover battle, we finally won the turnover battle, and so for Iowa State to be the type of team that they are and for Coach Campbell to be the type of coach he is and brought -- I'm really proud of our players because they needed to get this win. We've been working really hard. This was a year's worth of work to get to this game. Now I have to kind of let it go. I'm going to enjoy it for a little bit more, then let it go.

**Q. Does it feel more special to win after losing the lead and then coming back to win?**

MATT RHULE: I would have loved to have just won it outright. But again, like you watch football nowadays, you watch basketball, everyone always trash talks to each other and everyone degrades the opponent, and we try -- we always put compete on everything we do, and I try to tell our guys that compete doesn't mean to strive against, it means to strive with. What we want to do is we want to play against the best composition because great competition allows us to be great, and it was 20-0 going into the fourth quarter; had they not fought back, we wouldn't have this great feeling right now. We wouldn't have had a chance to go -- it would have been a good win, but the fact that they fought back allowed us to be great, and so that's what was cool to me is that we had a chance to see for ourselves what we could do.

Now, my job is to go in there and say, why did we let them get back in it, why did we not score 40 points. There's a lot of things that have improve to be a good team in this league.

But they found a way to get it done today. The odds were against us there at the end, and they found a way to make it happen.

**Q. At the end of the first half, what were some of the changes that you made that allowed your**

**offense to come back and score twice and take the lead?**

MATT RHULE: You know, we didn't really make -- that's a great question. We didn't make many changes. That drive at the end of the half, we just kind of caught the ball. But again, they were kind of bringing field pressure, so that drive right after the half, we put Josh Fleeks in and we run the bubble with him, and just kind of reading the guy that they were blitzing. They were doing something a little different than they had done and Lovett got a good drive going and we were able to get down the field and score, and then we just said, hey, we're going to take shots. If they're going to leave us one-on-one outside, we're going to throw it up, so Ben is one, the next drive Tyquan one, and they kind of said, all right, that's it, and started running out and staying deep over the top of us. So that's why we had to kind of adjust to some more middle-of-the-field stuff.

We struggled a little bit inside. I have to see maybe there was the back, maybe it was the tight end in protection because we had to keep them in, but we know Jon Heacock, we know he's going to come after us all day, and so I thought our coaches did a good job of adjusting to the things that they were doing.

**Q. Is there anything different you would have done in the fourth quarter?**

MATT RHULE: Yeah, if I could go back, that one drive, they called like a three-step pass thinking we were going to catch it and go for it on 4th down and we took a sack on it. So maybe I'd have kicked it there, maybe I'd have run it. Even the last drive when we kicked the field goal was 3rd and 2, and we ran quarterback draw with throw. If they blitzed us we were going to throw it, and they blitzed us, we just didn't get the ball off. So I'll probably agonize a little bit about those decisions. But he made the kick, so I don't have to think about it too much.

**Q. Mayers in terms of never making a field goal in a college game, what about his practice performance or his mental makeup had you sold on that guy in that situation?**

MATT RHULE: Well, he's just such a wonderful young man. He really is. I said to him when he missed the first one, do you think you can do this, because there was a great thing this week David Cutcliffe said; you can't give -- parents always think -- I always think I can give my kids confidence. I can't give my kids confidence. And I said, do you think you can do this. He said, yes, I can do this.

And so it was funny, one of our goals today was to get him to make a field goal so he would make his first college field goal, kind of ironic, and just the football gods aligned. If that was 4th and inches, maybe I would

have said, you know what, we're going to go for it, but it just was there and it was the right call, and I said, you know what, trust your players. Trust your players. It's never about us as coaches. It's always about the players. And so part of it, people always say that, then you have to trust your players to make the plays, and he went out and he nailed it. I don't know what else to say to be quite honest with you. He found a way to get it done, and I was proud of him for that.

**Q. Was there a distance, five yards, another three, four yards back, would you --**

MATT RHULE: If the ball would have been outside the 30, I would have probably put Rauschenberg in. He's dealing with an injury, and I told him, if it's outside the 30 -- like that drive, at the start of that drive, I said, tell Rauschenberg to be ready. So we really had two field goal kickers warming up, which you don't see very often in college football, right. But you know what, it was there, and like the drive before I agonized over whether I should go for it or not, and we didn't, so I said, you know what, we've got to give him a chance to make this kick, and he made it.

**Q. Can you talk about the penalties that really allowed Iowa State to move down the field and score 20 points?**

MATT RHULE: Yeah, the two facemasks were facemasks, you know, and I thought the defense had to play too much in the first half, played 41 plays, offense wasn't good enough, right, so that hurt our defense. I think they were tired at the end of the game. We had one driving the guy in the ground. I was looking for the one on Charlie when Charlie got hit.

But that crew is so good because they communicate to you. They're just so good, they'll come over and say, Coach, I didn't see it that way. Got it. They're just the best of the best. We can't beat ourselves. We had a little self-destruction in the fourth quarter. But a lot of it had to do with the way Iowa State as playing, as well.

**Q. Another kick blocked; that's become almost a trademark for you guys. What's going so well with that aspect of your special teams?**

MATT RHULE: We practice it, and we talk about it. It had been a couple games since we had done it. That was another thing that we talked about this morning. We said we're going to block a kick and Mayers is going to make the game-winning field goal, and those guys found a way to make it happen. And so we got big powerful guys that take a lot of pride, so they got after one, they missed it, and then we blocked one. We're playing pretty good special teams. It's not always the huge, huge, huge plays that you see. Sometimes it's those little plays like that. For us to block a kick and for them to miss a kick and for us to make a kick to win the

game, there's a lot of hidden things that allowed us to win this football game.

**Q. What did that comeback tell the players, and what kind of message does that send to the players about finishing your game and kind of going all the way through all four quarters until the last second?**

MATT RHULE: Yeah, I think there's two lessons we can learn. A, having been better in the fourth quarter, it wouldn't have been that close. We always talk about fourth quarter struggles. We certainly didn't have one of those. We gave up 21 points. But on the flipside, man, just keep playing. I use the word process. All that means is just play as hard as you can play one play at a time and don't start -- we're up by 7 and guys are looking like this, like oh, no, oh, no, they're coming back. Just play the next play. That's easy to say, hard to do. I was doing that a little bit, like oh, no. So just play the next play, and that's why Charlie -- you asked me about Charlie in two-minute. That's why he's so good. He's like, give me the ball. That's why JaMycaal Hasty is so good. That's why Mims and Tyquan and Platt -- Platt had some plays maybe he could have made early, and then all of a sudden it's 4th down and we come to a 4th and 6 and he makes a big diving catch. Proud lot of our guys stepping up and making a lot of plays.