Baylor Football Head Coach Matt Rhule
Weekly Press Conference
October 7, 2019

***Opening Statement***

“Alright, well, first of all, thank you guys all for being here and covering us as always. Obviously, very proud of our football team this past week coming off an emotional Iowa State win, going to Manhattan, Kansas, taking on a rough, physical, rugged veteran team, a lot of fifth year seniors on that football team and it wasn’t always perfect but I thought our guys weathered the storm, hung in there and most importantly, they played as a team and that’s what we really needed you know, intercepting the ball and giving it back to the offense, offense going down and scoring, special teams playing well, I just thought, especially in the fourth quarter, was a real emphasis for us and I was proud of the moxie and the toughness and the mindset of our football team especially in a hostile environment like that. A lot of credit to the fans in Manhattan, it was loud, it was raucous, it was a fun place to play and our guys came away with a win so we turn our attention now to Texas Tech and Matt Wells and a really good football team that’s going to be a heck of a challenge. We’re excited about homecoming, excited to play in front of all the former Baylor football players and general alumni coming back and hope that we can play our best football game. Against Oklahoma State on Saturday, they were dominant in all phases and they’ve got a lot of great players, Jett Duffey was spectacular, they’re averaging over 300 yards a game passing and they have a lot of weapons on the outside [T.J.] Vasher and many more. Defensively, they’re playing great defense right now, took five turnovers away from Oklahoma State, Jordyn Brooks is leading the Big 12 in tackles, think he had 19 on Saturday, Douglas Coleman has five picks so they’re a team to me that new coaching staff coming around, coming together, have a lot of veterans on defense and it clicked for them this past Saturday, they beat a really good Oklahoma State team and we’ll have one heck of a challenge for us. I know, in terms of injuries, Charlie’s [Brewer] up and ready to go this week, Connor Galvin is out 4-6 weeks, Christian Morgan is questionable, we’ll see how he does over the next couple days, and obviously Chris Miller’s out for the first half coming off the targeting penalty in the second half. Just on a very personal note, you know it’s obviously great to have Coach Wells and Texas Tech come to McLane for the first time, Coach Wells’ wife Jen [Wells] is a Baylor grad so hopefully she enjoys getting back to campus and their kids, Jadyn [Wells], Ella [Wells], and Wyatt [Wells], really a great family and a Baylor family so hopefully it’ll be a great football game but I want to make sure we welcome them to Waco so with that I’ll see what questions you guys have.”

***On Bohanon entering the game in a big moment in the fourth quarter…***

“Yeah, you know, if you look at the time, I can’t remember the score, maybe it was 17-6, something like that so it was still you know kind of a pivotal time and I think the way that moment felt you know we just had a pick six called back, we just had a touchdown called back and so third and 17, but I have the utmost confidence in Gerry [Bohanon] and we know what he can do you know and he’s got a chance to play in some games earlier in the season, one of things that we do is unique is we practice our ones and twos the same, some people do that, some people don’t, a lot of people don’t like to do that, they give them some reps, but Gerry gets a ton of reps, he does greats things in practice, he’s done really good things in the game and there’s no one that out prepares him on our team even though he’s maybe not starting, he’s going to prepare like he’s a starter so he went out there and executed and R.J. [Sneed] made a great play, had the zone read for a touchdown and then lead us to one more score so I was really proud of those things, I thought they were really good for our football team and I think you can see how much our team loves and appreciates Gerry and what he brings and the way he plays but most importantly the way he prepares and cares about his teammates cause there was a lot of celebration for him when he scored and so you know I think that tells us when the time comes whether it’s either in a package or whatever we hit, we have to continue to take advantage of Gerry and what he can do, we have a great quarterback in Charlie [Brewer] so we feel good about that and obviously we have [Jacob] Zeno who we think is going to be an outstanding player so the quarterback room for us is a very strong room and I think you need that in today’s college football with the injuries and things like that, you need to have a bunch of guys you trust.”

***On the team now being ranked in the top 25…***

“I don’t pay attention to it you know I don’t address it you know I try to model for our players and I really believe, it’s not just something I say, I really believe it. I’m the same guys at 5-0 that I was at 0-5 and I know that you’re only as good as your next game so we are deeply committed to just trying to go 1-0 this week and I think if our team’s learned anything they’ve learned that and it really helps to have a bunch of seniors who were on a team that was 6-0 then struggled so they know like you know what it’s all about this week, we didn’t work all year to be 5-0 and No. 23 in the country, that’s not the high point, if this is the high point, then we had a bad year so we’re going to fight to just try to be 1-0 this week, the best thing that we have is you just got to turn the tape on and see what Texas Tech did and you know Oklahoma State is a great football team and for Texas Tech to take the ball away like they did, to get to the quarterback the way that they did on defense and then for them to just literally throw the ball the way they did it’s a real challenge and so our players are off today and I’m getting texts from players talking about this, that, about the football and that’s my biggest thing I always want it to be about the football, I don’t want it to be about the uniforms, I don’t want it to be about the crowd, I don’t want it be about anything other than the football for our players, for everybody else it should be about everything else, the pageantry of college football, but for our guys it’s about block him, just block him, do your job man and so we’re trying to just always get it back to that. What’s really cool is we have a bunch of seniors now that have been through and juniors who have been through you know they’ve been 6-0, they’ve been 0-5, they’ve been 5-0, that’s, not many people have had these experiences they’ve had and so you know what you aren’t what people say you are, you are what you put on tape and how you play this week. I was really pleased with our preparation last week, I hope I feel the same way this week.”

***On the team’s third down conversions at K-State…***

“We were in manageable third downs too. That was really the tale of the game. I told our team, that they were the No. 1 or No. 2 third down defense in the country going into the game. And they did what they did. I think we were able to pick up a lot of things we didn’t think we were going to be able to pick up. They just played better than us in those downs. We emphasized it, but obviously not enough. As a coach either what you do works or it doesn’t and what we did on third down didn’t work. How we have been able to convert third downs, to have a 99-yd drive and a 98-yd drive in a game is really hard to do. But we just didn’t convert enough third downs to really be efficient. Now we were only in third down nine times, so that means that on a lot of other drives we head explosive plays, so we have to get better at it. We were really good at it early and the last two weeks we were kind of average and then this week was just ok, so we have to get back to it. I think for us, maybe it’s simplifying, maybe it’s running the ball more and that’s what those guys are up there studying right now. It’s going to be the same this week, Coach Patterson at Texas Tech, they do a little bit of everything on defense. It is a challenging defense to go against with really good players.”

***On the differences in Texas Tech’s defense under new staff…***

“Schematically they have gone to more like what we are, they have gone to a 3-3, 3-2 stack, dime, pressure, blitz, max drop, whereas before they were more of a true 3-4. They just do a lot of defense. There is just a lot you need to deal with. When you do that, you have to make decisions. Do we do a lot to try to get into the right play or do we simplify. It is a real challenge, but it’s a good challenge. You want to play against really good defenses and you turn on the tape from Saturday and they were really special on Saturday. I know they played Oklahoma the week before and they probably didn’t play the way that they wanted. To me, they are a team that is clicking right now and we need to make sure we are a team that is clicking on Saturday to play against them.”

***On Casey Phillips having to move from the right side to the left side after Galvin’s injury…***

“That is about as hard of a move as there is. You think about this, you are a freshman, a redshirt freshman, but you’re about to get your first-ever college start. All week you are probably doing extra. You’re pass setting on the right side, you are studying that defensive end and you go to a place where you can’t hear and then three plays in we say, ‘Oh by the way, go to the left side.’ It is like driving on the left side of the road, but in the Indy 500, not like down the street. It’s as fast as you can get it. And the muscle movements are different. All the assignments are the same, but all the muscle movements are different. So, when they say 35 ISO instead of 34 ISO, you have to flip everything in your brain, your body is different, so I thought all those things considered, I thought he did a good job. Casey [Phillips] has all the talent in the world to be a dominant, dominant, dominant offensive lineman. And he is a freshman. Our program is designed for seniors to play their best football. You are going to get better and better over the course of four years. And you watch our seniors now, with Chris Miller Jameson [Houston], Denzel [Mims], Teck [Sam Tecklenburg] or Clay [Johnston] or Bravvion [Roy], they are all playing their best football. We just need some freshmen to play their best football too. I think Casey is figuring out, ‘You know, I can do this.’ I was pleased with [Blake] Bedier, I think he stepped up. We are a little beat up on the offensive line, and that’s an area we did not want to be beat up, but we need some guys to step up for us this week. And it is always just next man up for us. I was glad to see that Connor [Galvin] will be back. I was afraid it was going to be a year-long, ACL type deal, but it wasn’t, so what a blessing that is.”

***On the play of Bravvion Roy…***

“Well, it’s like baseball, you want to be strong up the middle. When you take an extra d-lineman off the field and you play with three d-lineman, you are saying we are going to be lighter in the box so you need dominant play in the middle. I thought he made some plays on Saturday that if he doesn’t make it, they are going to be explosive plays for them. He’s doing a great job with his movement and his pass rush, but really he is just playing on the other side of the line of scrimmage. And he is doing it for a lot of snaps. I am really, really pleased with him. He is a guy to me who has battled through some nagging injuries and is really playing well. It’s allowing us to play a little more pass coverage because we feel like we can stop the run with lesser guys in the box at times.”

***On the defense getting to the backfield, racking up TFLs….***

“I thought we were really disruptive. We ran through gaps, I thought our linebackers ran through gaps. The thought process is try to get a lead and then you can turn the guys loose to gets sacks. The week before, Brock [Purdy] did a great job of running around on us and this week they ran around on us, but we were a lot more disciplined in our coverage. Still not perfect, but I think we learned a lot from Iowa State. We are in game five of this defense. It’s not like we have been playing some of these techniques for a long, long time. I thought guys learned from the Iowa State game. Anytime we can be disruptive and get tackles for loss, we were one of the worst teams in the country last couple of years in terms of disruptive plays in the backfield, so to now be trending the way we are trending is something. Now that being said, Texas Tech is an offense built on not allowing those things. It’s tempo, get the ball out of your hand, it’s wear you down and take shots, it’s run the football, so we will have to really take another step defensively.”

***On if the team has an expectation to win now…***

“I think they expected to win year one. They had won a lot of games. I just think right now we are an older group. I remember telling them after we lost to Oklahoma State, you guys are puppies, you are sophomores and freshmen. Just wait your turn, keep working hard and eventually you will be better. So now we are better. We are not perfect, but we are a lot better than what we were, just because of age, just because of numbers. That first year we had a ton of injuries and so we are out there now and we still playing with freshmen d-lineman and o-lineman. It is not like we are a veteran team yet or anything, Gabe Hall is a true freshman, he’s going to play his sixth college game this week. TJ Franklin is a true freshman, Niadré Zouzoua is a junior college transfer, so there is a still a lot of young guys out there playing. The story of the season so far to me is a bunch of juniors and seniors who weathered the storm and now we are playing much better football. I think our approach and our mindset is the same at 5-0 as it was the first year at 0-5. Taylor Young, Brian Nance, Taion Sells, Mo Porter, those guys went out there every week expecting to win and those guys deserved to win, there just wasn’t enough other guys, they were just too young. Now these guys have grown up and hopefully they have learned lessons from that. So, when Texas Tech comes to town, we are as prepared as we can possibly be to play our best game.”

***On the play of Texas Tech QB Jett Duffey…***

“He is an outstanding player and he has played a dynamite game. He’s got to be up for some awards based upon what he did in that game. We haven’t really played against him a ton. Last year he got hurt before we played them so we played against McLane [Carter]. Watching him on tape, obviously [Alan] Bowman was the quarterback and they have been splitting time the last few weeks, but he’s a guy that can beat you with his feet, he can beat you with his arm. I think the thing he showed on Saturday was that he has the ability to throw the deep ball and throw it into tight, tight windows. They have really good receivers, guys that can go up and make plays. They have really big receivers on the outside, so to me, he looks like the complete deal, the complete quarterback. He is one of those guys who has waited for his time, waited for his opportunity, there have been other guys there but now he has his opportunity and he is making the most of it right now.”

***On when the players tell you in the locker room that “No, Coach, we’re 1-0 this week,” does that tell you they’re listening to the message….***

“At least some of them. That was like J-Will [Jordan Williams] and maybe one or two guys. They hear it. It’s like anything else, we all need people around us checking us and keeping us in check about this, that and the third. Like if I ever got a text from you after the game that said, “Hey, great game!” I would feel good. But, what does that mean? Like, is that going to change the way I prepare that week?  So, that’s what they’re starting to understand. Yeah, you should feel good. We won! We’ll watch the highlight videos, go do all that stuff. But then come in on Sunday and deal with the reality of the game, and say to yourself, “OK, what do we need to get better at?” And then come out this week and kill ourselves to be the best team that we can be. I feel like they’ve got that. My point is, I appreciate when people say, “Great job!” But, we try to teach our guys early, and it’s something from like business: Why are there so few great schools, because there are so many good schools. Why are there so few great hospitals and so few great teams, because there are so many good teams. So, good is the enemy of great. I’m stealing that, obviously. But, people get excited about being good. So, I tell our d-line, “You’re 335, you’re supposed to 320. You get to 328, what do you guys all do.” “We go out and we get the Golden Chick, because we feel like, ‘Hey, I lost seven pounds.’’’ But, you have eight more to go. So, that’s all we’re at right now, 5-0 and No. 23 in the country. Congratulations! Is that what you worked all year for? No. So, what are we going to work on this week? We get a chance to play Texas Tech, and they’re an awesome, awesome, awesome team. Let’s go play as well as we can possibly play. And you know what, if we win this week, we’ll come in on Sunday and we’ll do the same thing. And if we happen to lose this week, guess what? We’ll come in on Sunday and we’ll do the same thing. That’s easy to say and hard to do is I guess what I’m trying to say. But, we have a bunch of guys that have been through a lot together. So, if I’m not doing it, I can promise you Phil Snow is going to shake me up. And if Phil Snow’s not doing it, George DeLeone is going to shake him up.  And it’s the same way with our players. So, for J-Will to do that was really cool, to me. It was a great lesson that, you know what, this isn’t real. All that’s real is the game this week.”

***On if there is enough film on this new Texas Tech staff and personnel, or do you have to go back to watch what they did at Utah State…***

“We’ve watched Utah State, we studied them this summer. They were a dominant team last year at Utah State. But, we’ve got four or five films, whatever it is now, and we’ve watched all of them. So, we have enough film to look at what they’re doing. And knowing at the same time, they’ve got great coaches. Coach [David] Yost, Coach [Keith] Patterson, they’re going to do different things. So, we’ve got to make sure that we’re doing what we do well at the highest level we can. We’re trying to take away the things that they do well, but also focus on the things we do well and not get too caught up on them and try to stay really focused on us. At the end of the day, on third-and-22, it was a five-yard stick route that RJ [Sneed] turned into a 38-yard gain. It wasn’t some guru play, it was our players. We believe here that players win games, so we have to make sure we give our kids a chance to go win the game.”

***On if it seems like points of emphasis going into the season, increasing turnovers and limiting big plays have been answered…***

 “It’s better. We feel we can get the ball out a little bit more. Coach [Joey] McGuire is in charge of turnovers for us, and he was getting after the guys at halftime because we had so many tipped balls we should have picked off, and we just weren’t quite running to the ball at the level we could. His point was, let’s stop talking about it and go do it. And then to go get the turnovers in the second half – had we scored that pick six, that would have been a big moment. But. we scored off of it anyway, which is just the same. To me, it’s like anything, it’s a work in progress. We’re good right now. We’re good at getting turnovers, we’re good at limiting big plays, it’s time to go try to be great, and that will start tomorrow morning at practice.”

 ***On rating last week’s fourth-quarter performance…***

“We don’t pay too much attention to the first quarter. We want to play well and we want to establish. We talk about the middle eight, which is the last four minutes of the first half and first four minutes of the second half. That’s where a lot of games are won and lost. We’ve been one of the best teams in the country in that area, which is much improved from last year. We really wanted to get a fourth-quarter shutout this week, that’s one of the goals of our program. We didn’t do it, but I thought we battled and we outscored the opponent in the fourth quarter. We had previously been outscored in the fourth quarter so far this year, and that’s not who we are. So, I was proud of our guys. We played better in the fourth quarter, still not at the level that we want to, especially offensively running the football and taking the air out of the clock.”

***On if McLane Stadium give you that same kind of environment that you’ve seen now at some of the Big 12 road venues…***

“It needs to this Saturday. There’s been some places we’ve gone where we can’t hear where our fans are sitting way up there or way over there, and you’ve got freshmen and sophomores playing on the o-line and they’re trying to hear the cadences and audibles. And you’re sitting there on the headsets, saying, “Hey, we can’t audible this game, it’s too loud.” I hope Homecoming, two really good football teams playing against each other – I’m all for the ‘Name that Tune’ – but it should be a raucous, raucous environment. Trying to play in other raucous environment, that’s why there’s an advantage in playing at home. I hope whoever comes is loud and respectful yet really rowdy. I hope it’s hard for the other team. We sat there last week, and Kansas State was behind us, and it was loud to hear. So, I hope it’s like that on Saturday.”