

Baylor University Football Media Conference

Saturday, October 12 2019
Waco, Texas

Matt Rhule Press Conference

Baylor-33, Texas Tech-30, OT

MATT RHULE: First of all, appreciate everyone being here. I would like to say we lost a friend of our program. I lost a personal friend yesterday. Tommy Davidson, alum, team chiropractor, passed away yesterday. He was just a great, great, great friend and a great person. I know my heart is heavy, thinking of his wife Nina and his three kids.

In spite of all that joy that was out there, I want to make sure I give thanks for his life first. I know he would have been happy celebrating with those guys. He loved those guys, JaMycal, Jay, all those guys. Our hearts are with him.

I want to make sure I give a lot of credit to Texas Tech, Matt Wells had that team ready to go. They battled and fought. We had our hands full today versus a very good team, a team that beat Oklahoma State.

We had a lot of major injuries tonight. I'm not sure where they are all are. A lot of guys went down. Tonight was a story of guys having to step up. Sure not the way we wanted to work in the first half. I take full responsibility for that at halftime.

Might have had the wrong approach, we had our best week of practice. Might have had the wrong approach going into the game with the players, what we expected.

I thought you saw the resolve, grit and toughness from our team. To take it 99 yards, go down there and have a chance to score. Take it 96 yards, whatever it was, with 1 minute 20 left. Ebner hasn't been able to play, banged up, stepped upped and made plays. Defense not letting them score, go out there and get the stop. Really proud of those guys.

It was truly a shootout out in every sense of the word. Proud that we won it.



Q. Charlie has made so many of those drives. Do you have the utmost confidence in him?

MATT RHULE: I have a lot of confidence in Charlie. Even after today, first interception he's thrown all year. But I have a lot of confidence in him.

Sometimes when you have to go score and you're behind, it's kind of freeing. There's nothing to lose. He throws that ball to Denzel. They held Denzel to one catch. That was a big, big catch down to the one yard line.

They came out, credit to Coach Patterson, they changed their defense. They're a 3-4 defense, came out in 4-3. Took us a while to get adjusted to some things.

In the end, Charlie made the plays he had to make. He scrambled, ran. JaMycal made the play he had to make at the end of the game, got it done.

Q. (Question about practice.)

MATT RHULE: I said we had our best week of practice. I think maybe my approach with the guys. At the end of the day we looked good on defense in the first half, but we looked tight. So any time we look like that, at the end of the day it's my responsibility. I'm not a guru. I am not an offensive or defensive guru.

I take pride in the way we play. When we're not playing the way we are capable of playing... I went in at halftime, said, Let's get back to the basics, boys. Everybody go out there, play hard, do your job. Boom, the kickoff return. I thought we were rolling from there.

Even the end, I think the first half kind of weighed on us. Guys had to play a lot of football in the first half. Dahlen goes down, Clay goes down, Bravvion is cramping. I think first half really kind wore on us at the end of the game. We have to be better. For one day we found a way.

Q. Bowl eligible now, what does that mean with a lot of season left?

MATT RHULE: I'll tell you the truth, first of all, it's a great thing. It's an honor to be bowl eligible. I think the furor of that game, for it to go like that, at the end of the game I'm just thinking about this game, proud of our guys, proud of the guys stepping up.

But one of our first goals every season is to be bowl champions. It's a tremendous honor any time someone invites us to come play in their bowl game. To be bowl eligible at this point in the season, I'll talk about it now since we did it. We achieved half of that goal. We want to be bowl champions. We go into bowl games to win.

It is an accomplishment. It is an honor. We're proud of that.

Q. Is this the epitome of 'find a way'? It was not always pretty, like you said.

MATT RHULE: We're just one of those teams right now, we're not steamrolling you. We just find a way to make enough plays to kind of win so far. I don't think we're playing poorly. I think we're playing well. I think we're playing good teams, find a way to do it.

I think this was a deal where we kind of got behind. They were a high-motor offense. They scored 600 yards of offense last week against a good Oklahoma State team, ranked Oklahoma State team. Going into the game I said, They've clicked, found themselves. We didn't do enough early to flip the game.

We had a lot of really bad penalties today that hurt us. Some penalties at the wrong times for us. We have to continue to correct all those things.

I look at it like we're a work in progress. George DeLeone said, (indiscernible) right now. You can still get there. You can get there. We're trying to get better as we go.

Again, I think the injuries were a real thing today. We had to have guys step up. At the end of the day I'm proud of that. That was a total comprehensive everyone. We made the plays on special teams, we made the field goal kicks, big hit on kickoff, long kickoff return. We did all the things on special teams, the hidden things, that allowed us to play well.

Q. You challenged the fans to come out. Talk about that.

MATT RHULE: I thought they were awesome. At the end I thought they were awesome. Here is all I'll say. I had a decision to make. Sorry about my demeanor right now. I'm in another place right now. It was fun. Even on the field, I'm really into the game.

I made the decision to either play into the scoreboard where the speakers are or play into the band and the bowl. I played into the band and the bowl to start the first overtime, which means I trusted the fans. The fans were loud, they were there. We had just scored there. I thought the fans were awesome.

I thought the jump around at the end, I give credit where credit is due. That's a Wisconsin thing. That was awesome, too. That was pretty cool. Our team was playing while the fans jumped around. I thought it was a great, great, great crowd. That's what it should be. It was entertaining, I'm assuming. Was it good (laughter)? I mean, it was a lot of theater right there, a lot of drama.

I'll say this. I said to Matt at the end of the game, I hate for you that you lost this game because they played so hard. He said to me, You know what, it's two teams out there spilling their guts. That's what it was.

We were able to come away with the win. I thought the crowd was a huge part of that.

Q. You mentioned Ebner. To have him in there for the last drive, two catches for 47 yards.

MATT RHULE: Only in there for two plays. He's dealing with some things right now. Really weren't going to have him play. He said, Coach, I can do it. He went in there and made those two plays. Great job by Nick and some of those guys. Saw they were in two man, ran the tailback down the middle, Ebner went out there and did it, made the play we needed.

We're a team that has a lot of guys contributing. Doesn't go through just one guy. A lot of guys make their one or two plays to help us win. Denzel made his, Platt, Tyquan made the great diving catch down the middle of the field. We'll try to put those plays together, be way more efficient. Defense took the ball away, had some sacks. Maybe a little bit better we can do on third down.

Q. After Charlie took the sack on the final possession in regular play, you called timeout. What was the thought process of how do you try to negotiate to get the back?

MATT RHULE: In terms of why I took the timeout?

Q. How you had to change.

MATT RHULE: The clock was running and the guys were down the field. We had three timeouts. I thought we did a good job in the second half, we didn't use any timeouts on silly things. We saved them for the end of the game so we could have three.

Ball on the one yard line. You can't spike it on the one foot line. Receivers run back. Called the timeout. Again, credit to Coach Patterson. They called what we call two man, two deep safeties, man underneath. They were going to take away Denzel and Tyquan in some way. We put Ebner in, had him run linebacker, flipped the field. Two or three or four plays later, Ebner made the catch.

Thought we were going to win in overtime. Had a chance to catch that. Three seconds left, those are the decisions I have to make. Hasty sitting there screaming at me to go for it at the end of the game. Everyone has suggestions in those moments.

What about the field? What about the fake field goal? I almost ran that. I'm going to trust our team, kick the field goal, let them play overtime, keep playing.

I thought it was a courageous, courageous game. Two backed up drives this game we had to make. But in the end Charlie and those guys made those plays, the O-line protected them when they needed to.

Q. On a scale of 1 to 10, kick to send it to overtime, what do you think about going for it?

MATT RHULE: That's what I was saying. A lot of guys saying for me to do that. At the end of the day, when you get to those things, I always think about I just trust the football. The football says to kick it at home, go play.

I told our guys, Hey, they're going to go for two at the end of that first overtime. I kept preparing for that. So I just said, You know what, it's on the two yard line, we have a play we really love on the left hash. Seven seconds left I did it again. There's a chance Charlie holds that ball, maybe it's incomplete. We were playing it close to the wire. Three seconds left I said, let's kick it, see what happens.

Q. (No microphone.)

MATT RHULE: Dynamic, dynamic catch by him. When they went to the change in the fourth quarter, we needed backs to get open on the linebackers. It was a great play. He finished it, which was awesome.

Q. How long will you take for you to get over a game like this? Do you pass out at some point tonight or you can't go to sleep?

MATT RHULE: I'll be honest. I will wake up at 4, wonder was that real. That usually happens, the good ones and the bad ones.

I was already talking about the next game in the locker room with our guys. I want our guys to go out and have fun tonight and celebrate, be amongst the students, be college students. But I want them to wake up tomorrow and know we have a big one next week. We have to go to a tough place to play, a team coming off of a bye on their homecoming. Not a lot of teams better on homecoming or coming off a bye than Oklahoma State.

Q. How good was Denzel, the catch?

MATT RHULE: We were trying to hurry up and

scramble, on a play before they could go to the replay. We haven't been real good with that, right? They held it and stopped it. Scored the one touchdown they called back to look at it.

But when I looked up at the Jumbotron, it looked like his toes were there. From the field, I was afraid it wasn't. But I'm seeing things fast. Those guys are pretty confident. I thought those two guys working our sideline were pretty good.

Q. At the pep rally last night you got animated for everyone there. Baylor needs to be going from a nice story, to a place where you're feared, be nationally recognized. How do you keep progressing to get where you want to get?

MATT RHULE: That's kind of what I meant earlier when I said I probably took the wrong approach with our team. I talked about we're a respected team, but we put people away when we have a chance. I don't think that was the right way for me to go. I think that was the right thing to say at the pep rally. I thought the crowd was ready to go, excited, I thought the students were awesome.

I thought it was loud. I can't hear anything. When you go to really loud places, even with the double thing, it was hard to hear. I thought it was great.

Yeah, I mean, that bonfire is one of the most spectacular things I've ever been to. When you stand up where I stand, stand up and see everybody, it gets you animated, you know what I mean? Gets you excited.

I don't ever worry about national recognition. I want teams to say, Man, we have to go play Baylor at McLane Stadium. That's a hard place to play, a tough team to play.

I talk about that a lot with our team. Somewhere along the way we kind of went out and were trying to do too much. Settled down at halftime, went out and played ball. I thought we were a much better football team in the second half.

Q. (Question about playing loose moving forward.)

MATT RHULE: Every week is different for me. Anything else in life, you get up and somebody gives a presentation, you look at everybody, you can tell the presentation is not working. Flip it in the middle.

Got to halftime. I certainly thought I was doing everything right. It wasn't going right. Hey guys, it's on me, let's change our approach.

We have a veteran group. Jordan was saying, That's

on us. That's what's fun about coaching this team. Luckily it was at halftime. A lot of times it happens at the end of the game where you come in and try to pick up the pieces after a game. We were trying to regroup at halftime. Luckily it was just a 6-3 game.

Q. 24 months ago, 0-6, today 6-0, national ranking.

What do you credit that to?

MATT RHULE: The players, administration, Dr. Livingstone, Mack, Jeremiah, all the people that work around us, the people that work with the players. Dr. D, all these wonderful, wonderful people behind the scenes that do all these little things to help the young people.

I was listening to some coaches talk today on some of those shows, you should come to our place, best place to play football. Our place is the best place to become developed as a football player, man. I think Baylor is that.

Baylor won before I got here. Different coaches have won. It's a place that deserves to win. It's supposed to win. The credit is to the people that are here. I think the credit is to our players.

Went in the locker room at the end, Mo Porter, guys on that first team, were in there celebrating with us. A lot of guys worked hard to get to this point.

You know what, we have a lot of guys banged up. Have to play six more games against some really good teams. A lot of work to be done.