Baylor Football Head Coach Matt Rhule
Weekly Press Conference
October 14, 2019

***Opening Statement***

“Appreciate everyone being here, thank you. First of all, just wanted, very proud of our football team for the win this past Saturday on homecoming against an excellent Texas Tech team, lot of credit to Texas Tech, I thought that Jett Duffey was spectacular as their quarterback leading them back in the 4th quarter. I thought Jordan Brooks, their linebacker, was the best player that I’ve seen in quite some time, on defense I thought he was a really, really, really a special player all over the field. Proud of our guys, obviously we have a lot of improvement to do, but in the end they found a way and lost Clay [Johnston], lost one of our great leaders and players and Terrel [Bernard] stepped up and the team stepped up and with a 1:19 and 99 yards to go they found a way to get it done so proud of them, we’ll have to try to improve our starts on offense, we’re starting way too slow on offense and then defensively, our finishes on defense, we’ve got to improve on those two areas, we have to start punting and kicking the ball just a little bit better and so there’s a lot of work to be done and we’re working at it right now. With that, we’re excited to get ready for Oklahoma State, an excellent team, an outstanding team, great players, and in my opinion and I truly, truly, truly, truly mean this year after year, I’m just amazed at the level of coaching from Coach [Mike] Gundy, I think he’s the best and he wins with different players, he wins with different ways, different offenses, different schemes, but he does it tried and true year in and year out and so obviously they’re coming off a bye week, we’re going to their homecoming, there’s a lot of things that are, you know, stacked against us and we’ll do our best just to try to play football and try to have fun doing it so we have a lot of preparation to do this week to get ready for [Chuba] Hubbard and [Tylan] Wallace and [Spencer] Sanders and all the great players that they have but we’ll focus on us and try to get ourselves a little bit better.

***On how do you replace Clay’s leadership…***

“Well, I think the great thing about, you know, Clay [Johnston], Clay’ll still be able to lead, he’ll still be able to coach, he’ll still be around, you know, all he keeps saying to me is ‘I just don’t want to be a distraction’. What kind of distraction can you be? But you know we got a lot of leaders, especially on the defensive side of the ball J Will [Jordan Williams] and Chris Miller and Henry Black and you know Lock [James Lockhart] and [James] Lynch and Bravvion [Roy], there’s a bunch of guys out there that do it at a high level and Terrel’s an excellent player so Terrel will go out and play, he started the first three or four games this year anyway so he’ll go out and play at a high level. The biggest thing is that Clay was going sideline to sideline and making up for a lot of other guys’ mistakes and so as I told the team, let’s not add, Terrel’s not going to go out there and try to replace Clay, everyone replace Clay, you know, everyone do your job a little bit better like you know if you’re supposed to be in the B Gap be in the B Gap don’t be in the C and say oh Clay’ll make me right, be in the B so that Terrel can just go out there and play and so I think it’ll take all of us, take everybody to be able to go out there and you know Matt Jones is a freshman linebacker who’s an outstanding player, he’s played in three games so far this year so he’ll be ready, we have a lot of good players. To me, it’s the experience and the wisdom and the all things that Clay is seeing that are hard to replace so we’ll just kind of count on everyone to do it.”

***On the importance of depth…***

“Yeah, I think if you look across really college football and the Big 12, most people lose, you know, players and you have to have other guys prepared to step up, you know, it’s why we practice the way we practice and try to prepare young guys for their moments and you hope that other guys as a set they just kind of pick it up around them, right, so Casey [Phillips] has to go play left tackle, he’s been trained as a right tackle, Connor [Galvin] gets hurt, he goes out there, maybe [JaMycal] Hasty has to chip the end one more time, maybe Charlie [Brewer] has to slide a little bit more, but what you need is you need other guys to pick up the slack, but I do think we have enough young players that you know if we have to go down, there’s going to be a day this year I put Yusuf Terry out at wide receiver and he’s in the middle of a redshirt year and everyone’s going to say ‘Wow where’s he been?’ I mean we’ve got some special young guys that are just kind of waiting their turn and have played maybe a game or two so I think we have enough guys to get it done, I think the biggest thing is just, you know, everybody when your opportunity comes, be ready for it and when we need your best, produce your best and so I think it’s a mindset and I think it’s from the coaches, you know, from me to the coaches, everybody, we all have to be elite at what we do.”

***On facing adversity…***

“Yeah, I think the biggest thing about our guys is they stay really calm in the face of adversity, you know, I think we’ve made things sometimes harder than they have to be and we could maybe improve some of those things, but I think at the end of the day, but I think our guys truly feel alive when it’s competition, right, like when it’s the end of the game and they have to go score, they go score. Even defensively, like it was kinda, they went 90 yards on us to score a touchdown then they got the ball in overtime and it’s 3rd and 10 and the kid scrambles and they get it to the 4th and 2 and they get it and they score, we’re tired, I mean, we are tired and they come to me and you know the right play is to put the defense right back out there, but I’m looking at them and I’m like ‘Man should I go offense first?’ which is not what you’re supposed to do, but I’m looking at how tired they are and I just always say you have to trust the football and so I put the defense out there and they get the stop, right, they hold them to a field goal and so I just think that when they’re in big moments, those guys, they kind of relax and play and I think that’s really, if you want to be in these games, you have to have that and not everyone has it, lots of guys like to play when they’re frontrunners, these guys like to play when it’s a crucial, crucial moment.”

[question about defense]

***On forcing more turnovers on defense…***

“Yes, start to, it’s still got a lot further to go, you know, but I think it’s coming, I think we’re getting our hands on more balls in passing lanes, we recovered a fumble the other day, I just think there’s so much more that we could be, you know, I think we could be striking and knock more balls out but, I mean, we’re way ahead of where we were, I think we had 9 last year and had 3 on Saturday so, you know, a lot better, so, you know, that to me is something like you can coach, you can coach, you can coach but you kinda just need guys to go out and do it. Play fast and physical, knock the ball out, pick the ball off and so I think our guys are starting to get that so we have to continue it, you know, we have to continue, you know, we’re kind of a little more of a zone defense this year and we’ll give up some throws here and there, but we have to tip some balls and make some picks and continue to to get to the quarterback, so I am pleased with the evolution in those areas.”

***On Oklahoma State’s defense…***

“Well, Oklahoma State’s defense, schematically they are a four-down team that also plays three down without changing people, so on any play the defense could be completely different. From an identification perspective and, ‘hey, what are they doing,’ they present some challenges that way. They have two great corners, they will play man. Texas Tech came out and decided they were going to try and take away Denzel [Mims] and those guys with press and they did it for most of the day. So, these guys will blitz us, they will challenge us, they will play man against us, give us different looks, so I think all of those things are challenges for us. And they have good players, and they run to the ball and are physical, so for us, I think we have to keep it simple and they are going to do a lot of things, but let our players play and not overthink it as coaches.”

***On the play of OSU running back Chuba Hubbard…***

“I mean, elite, in every sense of the word. What is kinda cool about Oklahoma State is they have an NFL-style run game. They are not a spread offense, they are a pro-style offense in terms of the things they do run-game wise. He runs the stretch outside zone and he runs it as well as anyone in college football. He will put his foot in the ground and get vertical. He can outrun you if you are not careful, they do it in tempo and outrun people and he’s getting 12 yards a carry. Then he has the ability to run insert plays, he’s physical, he’s got breakaway speed. I think he is a dominant player. Not a good player, a dominant player. The numbers support it. Sometimes guys have gaudy numbers and the tape doesn’t support it, but he’s got the tape too. Like you watch the tape and you say wow. Part of it is that Sanders is such a dual threat as well. They can RPO off of it, and run the quarterback off it, so you have to be whole in all these different areas because they have a great wideout, they have a great tailback and they have a great quarterback and they have a great scheme, so you have to be whole across the board.”

***On if having seen mobile quarterbacks already this year helpful to face Sanders…***

“The league is full of them right now, guys who can run. So, whether you spy them or pressure them or your zone-read game, you have to be elite in all the things that you do. You aren’t going to see a guy in all of college football with more arm talent of the guy we are going to see on Saturday. He is sensational. The ball jumps off his hand and I think he is going to be a really, really special player. So, we have seen some really good quarterbacks and he is no exception.”

***On how he handles the officials…***

“I am probably in the game pretty boisterous with the officials, I argue and fight and scratch and claw for our team, but I don’t say things about it. There is a process in place, you are not supposed to say anything about it and you know, I have a lot of respect for the officials. That is a hard job. You have to make things in a bang-bang way in today’s digital age where you can zoom in on anything and be second guessed, so there have been plays over the last couple of years that I thought cost us the chance to win a game, but I go through that process, but I could never disrespect the process or the officials by saying something. I say what I have to say on the field and a lot of times I look back and say, like I thought the game was over, I thought we had won the game on the intentional grounding and all of a sudden they say, ‘no, no, no.” And you look over at me and I am acting a fool, saying that’s terrible, I mean the ball hit the cheerleader. And the guy on our sideline, great guy, he says, ‘hey coach, there was a guy in the area.’ And at the end of the day, I said to myself, I don’t know if that’s the right call or not, that’s not my job, but the officials were trying to let the game be settled on the field. Now was I disappointed the game wasn’t over, yeah, I thought the game was over. I thought they were going to punt it to us, we were going to run the ball, game’s over. But they also were going to let us settle it on the field. They went 90 yards on us, that’s on me. I am not going to sit there after they went 90 yards on me and complain about that call. We had the ball, 2nd and 17 at our own 1-yard line. That was of our own doing. I respect officials and the process and the transparency, like when you send something in and they are wrong they will say, ‘hey we missed this.’ But there were 180 plays on Saturday and there were a lot of things I could say I don’t like this or I don’t like that, I am not going to get caught up on one for us or one that went against us. You know what I am mad about? I am mad about us giving up 3 picks, I am mad about us giving up a 30-yard run, I am mad about the football and I think that is my job as a coach, to never give our guys excuses or blame anything else. My job as a coach is to tell our guys, you had a chance to win a football game. If we had lost that game I wouldn’t have been talking about that safety, intentional grounding, I would be talking about three picks, not protecting the quarterback, all those things, so that is how we are going to do it here.”

***On Baylor offensive lineman and captain Sam Tecklenburg…***

“He’s awesome. He’s a winner in every sense of the word. He’s a leader. He’s the best of the best. He’s as classy as they come. I will say this, we ran a play earlier in the game and he missed the linebacker. Then we ran it again and he missed the linebacker and on the sideline I got into him and I literally thought he was going to fight me, he said, ‘I got it.” And I was kind of walking away like, ‘Yeah, you better.’ And that is the play we won the game on. He snapped off on the backer and we scored. And he came running at me, ‘I got that backer this time.” He’s just fun to coach. Coaching is supposed to be a symbiotic relationship. I want to coach the guys who want to be coached and there is this give and take. So, Teck is one of those guys who makes you love coaching because you pour so much into him and then he just wants more and more. He demands the best out of you because he is going to ask me a real question and I can’t just give him some fake answer. I can give a fake answer to a young guy, but I better know the answer. He makes me prepare better. He makes [Coach] Bell prepare better. When he’s gone someday he will be a great coach if he ever wants to be and I think he has a great future in the NFL as well.”

***On Sam Tecklenburg’s versatility…***

“If we have and injury he is going to go play tackle for us. We started this thing where we throw one pass to every skill guy before the game just to make sure we are locked in and we finish it by throwing it to him since he’s an old tight end we throw him a stick route. He can still catch the football. He is just versatile in all those areas. He is probably best suited at center, but to get the best five out there he goes over and plays guard and he is playing it at a very high level. He can play tackle, he can play guard, he is an extremely versatile player.”

***On the play of OSU QB Spencer Sanders…***

“I think Sanders is going to be one of the next ones who is up for all the awards. I think he is unbelievably special. He is throws like 18-yard digs sidearm sometimes. The things he can do are really special. He is young, he is playing and he’s got Coach Gundy training him and their staff. His ability to run, his ability to improvise, his ability to make all the throws, he reminds me of [Patrick] Mahomes, he’s got all those ability levels and so he is a guy that can hurt you any which way and you have to account for him on every play. Not every quarterback you can say that. Sometimes you only have to account for the quarterback on like 30 plays. This guy you have to account for him on every play because he will do it in many different ways.”

***On the play of OSU wide receiver Tylan Wallace…***

“He is as good of a 50/50 deep ball as there is. His ability to go up there and track the ball is beyond elite. He plays as hard as any receiver you’ll see. They changed the crack back rule and that kinda hurt him because he is as physical a guy as there is. He de-cleated Verkedric [Vaughns] last year, he had one this year against Texas Tech, he is a physical guy. I love receivers, when he knows he’s not getting the ball he runs posts and clears guys out. He plays really, really hard. I think he is physical, but he is also a game breaker. He can go get the deep ball. Anytime you give him a one-on-one and you’ve got a quarterback that can throw the ball 60, 70 yards and you have a guy who can go get it, you have to account for hey they are going to take a shot with him.”

On liking the kind of atmosphere that will be at Oklahoma State on Saturday…

“I would much prefer playing at home, let me say that. But this is why you come to Baylor, to play in these kinds of games and play in front of these crowds. We went there two years ago and they’re smacking the paddles and the sideline is this big (holding hands not far apart). That’s what college football is all about. I wake up this week and not many people probably think we’ll win. What a great opportunity for our guys to go out there and go play. There’s no pressure on them. The only pressure is in our room. We have a standard we want to play at, we want to play at a certain level. So, go out there and play. People think we won’t be able to handle the noise and we won’t be able to handle the crowd and they’ve had two weeks off. To me, I look at it like this: They’re a great team with great players. And we’re coming in there and we didn’t play as well as we wanted to on Saturday. We’ve got to go get ourselves a little bit better. It will come down to blocking and tackling and covering and catching and all those things. But, the pageantry and everything else that’s around it, I love it. I think it’s an amazing place. It’s a hard place to play, it’s a hard place to win. But you know what, we like challenges and we’re going to do our best. And I can’t worry about them, I can only worry about us.”

***On just how big the crowd was down the stretch…***

“I thought it was huge. I thought the crowd was awesome. I thought they did an amazing job staying there. I thought they were loud. Even like our people here, like some of the stuff they did, like the in-game promotions and the music and all that stuff, I thought it was as big time as it could be. That was a great day, it was a fun experience. Even at the end, we’re sitting there praying, and they’re playing, “Jump Around.” We finished the prayer and we got up and I said, ‘Go jump around, go have fun, enjoy it.’ Because it was a joyous moment to win that game that way in that atmosphere. It was great to celebrate together. We celebrated with the students and with the fans. I thought it was a great, great moment. And now we have to flip and go play on the road where it’s really just kind of us. And that will be fun, too.”

***On if there are technique issues with freshman punter Issac Power…***

“Issac just has to punt his way through it. When he has a good drop, he crushes the ball. And when he hasn’t had a good drop, he hasn’t. It’s like anything else, if they say, ‘Hey, it’s your drop,’ then what do you start thinking about? Your drop. And then you think about your drop, your drop, your drop. So, he just has to punt his way through it. Every great player I know has gone through a period of self-doubt. Unfortunately, when you’re the punter, everyone sees it.  When you’re a receiver and you have a drop, it’s kind of like, ‘All right, come back.’ And he doesn’t have many chances to redeem himself. He did put one out at the 10-yard line. He did do some good things in that regard. So, I’m sure before no time he’ll be back.”

***On what gives you confidence that you can sustain this kind of success….***

“At the end of the day, I think our guys have done a really nice job of every week coming in there and being honest about what just happened and not being satisfied. There weren’t like jubilant meetings on Sunday watching the tape. There were a lot of guys saying, ‘Man, we can’t keep giving up leads. We can’t start this slow.’ I think when you have that honest group, then you have a chance. We’re going to face some really good teams. I approached each of these past six games as ‘Hey, just worry about this week and focus on this week.’ We’ve done it some week better than others. Thankfully, we have a bye week next week, and we know what we’re in for. This is going to be a battle, so I hope our guys have the energy and stamina and mentality to do it one more week. They came out last night, they looked energized. We know that we miss Clay, but we’re going to go out there and give it our best shot. I just think that their maturity . . . they remember going there two years ago. It was 59-16, and they threw a ball in the end zone that was almost caught that was going to be 66-16. There’s not a lot of young guys going on this trip. This is a lot of redshirt sophomores, juniors and seniors, guys who have been there before, so I think our guys understand how hard this is going to be and how much of a battle. But it’s also a challenge, and we like challenges. I like our maturity, to answer your question.”

***On what has been the difference in JaMycal Hasty…***

“I just think JaMycal has figured out who he is as a back. He’s not a dancer, he’s a get the ball, one cut, burst and go. And that’s producing for us. Even like on little plays, like we threw him a five-yard route, and the guy was there and he just kind of tried to run the guy over and get to the sticks. JaMycal is a physical, tough, hard-nosed, downhill runner, and he’s running that way. I think the combination of him and [John] Lovett, and [Trestan] Ebner when he’s healthy, neither one of them are taking on too many hits so that they’re able to stay healthy. But, I just think he’s doing a great job with that. And you watch Hasty, he’s running down on kickoffs, Lovett’s running down on kickoffs. They’re playing a lot of football for us.”