

Baylor University Football Media Conference

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Matt Rhule Press Conference

Baylor 17 - West Virginia 14

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Proud. I thought the guys showed a lot of resolve. Give a lot of credit to West Virginia. Thought they played a great game and fought.

I want to say this first. Even the feeling in the locker room, just kind of like, hey, that was a tremendous, tremendous defensive game. When you hold someone in modern college football to 64 yards in one half to 219 in the game, it's really hard to do. 83 of those coming on one play, hold them to 7 points. Really proud of our defense.

Thought it was a special, special day from them even after we had that muffed punt, they are field goal range to stop them on I think third and three or third and four to block the kick, just breeds excellence and just really proud of those guys.

They are a tough, resilient group. We are still learning that it's okay just to play defense and not worry; if the offense is not clicking, it doesn't matter, keep playing defense. Had a fourth quarter shutout which is important to us.

Really disappointed in the special teams tonight. Obviously made a field goal and blocked a field goal to win it but to have two possessions extended for them on -- by our punt return team, running into the punter and dropping a punt. We dropped punts in the pregame and dropped them all game and have to get better at that. RJ has been so stellar at that. Tonight we took a step backwards and obviously the kickoff return for a touchdown. It was a little bit of a recipe for disaster, some of those things we don't ever do, we did and.

And then offensively, I could talk about a lot of things, but I thought the penalties were just crippling. Obviously our inability to get the ball in from the one-yard line with multiple shots was one thing, but at the



same time, also, any time we got something going, I thought the penalties really hurt us.

So we didn't play good enough. We didn't play a great game in those two phases, but I do think we played a great game on the defensive side of the football.

So that's what we want to be, a team that complements each other, but we have to get a lot of things figured out and fixed. I thought Charlie had a great night, 20 of 26. We turned the ball over too much. Had the ball for 36 minutes, but obviously couldn't get a lot of points.

We have to improve, especially heading to TCU next week, but as I told the guys, don't apologize for going 8-0 for winning this game. Just have to continue to improve as we try to move forward.

Q. What did you like about the 43-yard pass?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: It was zero blitzing. They were bringing the house so we were just going to kind of throw it up and let Tyquan make a play or maybe get a pass interference. Either way, they had a time-out in their pocket. So an incomplete pass was just going to save four seconds, right.

If it's incomplete, he saves a time-out. If it's not incomplete he calls time out -- if we catch it, he calls time out. Felt like we had to take a shot. I tried to do a good job talking back and forth between the offense and playing. Phil was saying throw it.

Really the offense wanted to throw it every down. They were saying we have the ability to throw it and go score but it's my job to moderate it, so we took that shot, got it down, and then what a great punt by Isaac Power to put the ball to the four-yard line.

Q. When you moderated it, you didn't say, hey, what are we doing --

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: I called that play.

Q. You called it?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Yeah, I said throw it. Throw it to Tyquan. I think for that reason, third down and long to, me, Tommy Tupperville (ph) did that to me ten years ago, six years ago and I always put it away in my head. I did it last year against Texas Tech at the end of the game. I threw it up to Denzel. I don't call the

plays, but every once in a while I'll come in and say, do this. Said throw it up to Denzel down the right sideline.

So it's four-minute. They have a time-out. If we, you know, all we're going to save is one less time out for them, so to me, there's a time where you have to take a shot.

Q. You said you wanted to clean up some stuff, but the grittiness of this team to win, do you take pride that?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: We won a lot of our games like that check run away games at home or on the road, they are all close.

I don't think you see any panic from our guys. That's nothing at all. I think we're just kind of still learning how to do this at a high level, right, and I don't say -- I mean, as I told them, the hunter becomes the hunted and like you're not surprising anybody anymore. Like they are going to come out and give you your best game. Be prepared for it. I'm not saying they weren't prepared.

Again it's like miss, whatever, like it's a game like that, I'm frustrated with two sides of the ball and in awe of the third side and those things will happen.

The whole key is don't try to hold on to winning. Don't try to say like we won -- you just have to keep trying to improve and get better and get better and get better, and a lot of ways we didn't get bet they are game but a lot we did.

We certainly have a lot to improve upon. But the toughness and mindset and all those things, there's no question about that with our guys.

Q. What does this say about your quarterback, sacked eight times and still stands in the pocket and delivers?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Yeah, he's tough as could be. You know a lot of those ones early were ugly and then thinking some of the ones in the second half, he's just kind of running around trying to make a couple plays and took some sacks -- reverse in field like Fran Tarkenton back there.

There's just no quit in him. There's no complaining in him. He just keeps playing. We ran a lot of quarterback draw tonight at different times. He made some big runs for us in the quarterback draw game and you know, he's a winner. He protects the football, so gives you a lot of opportunities to do a lot of different things. He's getting better and we're all getting better, and we have to do a way better job in front of him.

Q. Do you still need to develop a killer instinct --

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Just for me, I'm always hesitant to say put a team away early -- because I think when you turn on college football, when you see teams try to put teams away early, when you see them in a fight like this, they get nervous, they get scared and so they panic.

What I would like is to see us play better football. We don't play well enough, long enough. We have those lulls. So even coming out of the half, the first big play, we have the ball, Denzel is back, we had the first big play, we hit a drift. I think it's going to go for a touchdown and we fumble and give them the ball back.

It's just things that we have to clean up. But you know, just like we had to learn, hey, here is how you deal with 0-6, last year, hey, you have to win one more game down the stretch. We had to learn tonight, we're still learning how to handle this.

We had more people on the sideline that had something to say to the officials than we've had all year. I spent half the night telling people just to be quiet. The officials are doing their job. Everyone be quiet and let them officiate and let's go play football. When you start worrying about winning more than you worry about playing -- I heard Lincoln Reilly say that last week after they lost. He said, "We were too busy."

That's why we are good sometimes in two-minute because there's no time to think other than just go play. We have a lot of maturing to do in a lot of different areas and we lost a lot of guys tonight. Lost Jamison, he went down. Chris Miller is going to be out next week for the new rule. A lot of guys had to step up and I'm sure they did, other than that one play.

Q. What you said, Chris Miller -- how do you coach that?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: First one was because he lowered his head. So where he hit. It wasn't a defenseless receiver. The second one last week, we had say, you have to lower your strike zone. You have to hit lower. So today he hit lower and he got one. I was saying, hey, it's a late slide -- they said it is a late slide but he had his head down.

I think we just have to tell him, he can't hit people quite as hard -- and not complaining, it's just the rule, right. Like I don't complain about the rules, because it's hard because you play so fast and so hard; that we're telling him, don't hit high, so he tries to hit lower and the kid slides and gets another tar getting. We have to work through it with him. I know he was upset but it's the rule and we'll follow rules obviously.

Q. Is he out just the half?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Out the next game.

Q. Seven sacks -- were they --

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Yeah, they did what they did. They just did it well. I want to make sure I say this: 56 is one of best players we've played against. I said that coming in. I told people -- sitting there kicking it and I said, hey, this kid 56, he's everything that I thought he was going to be, and 55 his brother, lights out. Some people say the Big 12, D-Linemen, that's a thing that's out there. Well watch 56 because he gets everybody and I love him.

That being said, we have to do better than we did, way better.

Q. Did you consider challenging any of the goal line plays?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: I thought the third one was a touchdown -- they confirmed it. It used to be the replay went upstairs and now it goes upstairs to Dallas. They replayed it and confirmed it. I probably could have just challenged it. But I said I want to challenge it and they said they confirmed it already. You know, challenging a confirmation -- but still, you can do it, but it just didn't seem smart in that type of a game.

I thought it was a touchdown. I looked at the replay on the board. I thought it was a touchdown. They said it wasn't. They said they blow it dead earlier because forward progress on the stop. I thought the one-yard line, just push in.

Make sure I say: This not here to complain about that. You don't get in from the six-inch line, you don't deserve to score. We handed off iso, we did three different things. Probably was a little stubborn, but the players were all saying let's run it and we ran it and they made the play and we didn't, and congratulations to them.

Q. The ball 11 minutes -- 20 minutes overall in the second half. Was that the difference?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: I think the difference was the defensive stops. You know, like we fumbled that punt. The defense could have gone out -- talk about championship mindset, they went out there and made those stops. And it wasn't just the blocked field goal. They stopped him on third and three. I think it was third and three, third and four, I don't remember, but Grayland -- Grayland wasn't supposed to play tonight. He's out there playing. J.T. comes over the top, they try to double move, I think they are going to pick it off.

Just character, character, character plays and then you know at the end of the game, I punted the ball down there and said I trust our defense to go make the plays

and they are still just do you know a field goal and they went and made the plays. I think for me, the story was that.

Now we held the ball on offense and some things, but a lot of that is because we had penalties and we get a first down and get another first down.

Q. What went into the decision --

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: He said, "Coach, I'm playing." He just kept saying it to me, saying it to me. That's obviously really hard one for me. But he said it to me last night again. He's like, "Coach, I'm playing. I want to play." He said it again. So I played him.

Q. Do you feel like -- this is a guy you were thinking, trying to think long-term, when you're 7-0, trying to get 8-0, you have opportunities in front of you, does that cross your mind --

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: I would have preferred not to play him but at the same time you only have so many chances to be on teams like this and I understand where he's coming from and we were struggling and he wanted to go. There's a lot of football left. He has a chance to play a lot more games, but I can't say enough about who he is that he's literally like last night texting me saying, "Coach, I want to play."

We'll try to do the best we can for him in the future. If we have to redshirt him next year, we'll do that still or he has an injury, but he'll go down as one of the special guys to me.

Q. The play in the second half from some of those guys --

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Just our ability to handle, you know, four- and five-man twists. They are bringing it with linebackers and stuff. It's always hard for me to say without seeing it. I thought Khalil was playing really well. I thought the issue was some other people were having trouble with tackle. It's hard for me to say exactly. I'm reacting to what I'm hearing and seeing on the JumboTron, but a lot of plays just don't need to happen.

You know, those guys, I'll watch the tape and try to get them better. We'll try to make sure we're doing enough to help them. Part of playing the O-Line is getting some help and getting some chips and getting some things; I don't know how much we did of that, and also try to go back and look and see -- Connor will be back soon so we have some help in those regards. We'll just keep grinding away.

Q. The play that got blown up, RJ, what happened?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Kept running speed sweeps -- kept making tackles. We had Platt wide

open. We thought we had a touchdown and I think we missed a block on the perimeter. You know, I think the tailback came up and missed. Those things happen when you play, right.

You call a play like that, you're 50/50, don't think it's going to end up on the ground, but you deal with it when it happens, but yeah, we wanted to set a tone of aggressiveness, too, like hey, let's go be aggressive. That one didn't work out unfortunately.

Q. Adversity seems to find you on a weekly basis. What does that say about the resilience of your team?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Well, I love the group of guys we have. They are coachable, tough, selfless. They are awesome to be around day-in and day-out. Today was for some of them, one of their best days and for some of them wasn't their best days. I think -- I try to take some time in the locker room. Normally do a talk about what happened. But it's just you get a chance to teach them and continue to learn from them.

But they are great guys. They work hard. They are tough. They don't panic. I told them, there's a lot of teams that have had a bad loss in the last two or three weeks that would love to go back and say, oh, we found a way to win it. Hey, don't -- they are saying, hey, we lost, we better get this fixed. I'm saying, you guys better say, hey, we almost lost, get this fixed, and they still found a way to win.

We found a lot of ways to lose the first year. I'll take the ways to win but that being said we have to improve. They know that. I said, "Are we a great team yet?"

"No, Coach."

Try and become a great team -- I don't care -- I care about the record because I get paid to care about the record, but I don't care about the record. I care about: Are we playing great football or not. We didn't play great football tonight.

So I've got to get that fixed and we've got to get that fixed. The great thing is the recognize that. What is cool is the defense keeps losing guys and they keep playing great football which is a testament to the guys out there.

Q. In this day and age where everything is analyzed and everyone has to talk about how you look and how pretty you are, does that matter? How do you keep that from being a problem with the team?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Here is the problem. As you get good, people now, like you get in a conversation nationally, people now have to start

finding out -- they didn't talk about us before. So it was easy, oh, Baylor. Maybe if we were lucky they would do the final picks for us. Now they want to talk about you.

So now they say you're not this, you're not that. I don't care about those things. I want to be a great team. I want to be a great team.

And so a great team complements each other, collaborates with each other, works together well. There's a lot of things that we are not but also a lot of things that we are and what we are is tough, okay. What we are is we find a way to make things happen. We find a way to overcome adversity. We find a way to overcome injuries. Like we are a tough group and resilient group. We don't make excuses and so they are going to hear all that stuff.

My point to them, you've been hearing it -- I can tell you've been listening to it. How is it working out for you? Is this what you wanted? Well, can we get right back to -- process, process.

Coaches do a little bit of it. I'll probably do a little bit of it. They will do a little bit of it. It's like stop it. Let's get back to that humble, hungry team.

Now the defense looked like they were that tonight and I think we had some match-up issues tonight we didn't handle real well. I don't make it this global thing, I'm always trying to teach program lessons. Guys, everyone now is going to talk about what you're not and try to find things what you're doing wrong and they are going to try to pick everything apart.

When I played at Penn State, right, and I had a bunch of my friends who like went to the NFL. And I always give this analogy to our team. One of my friends, played in the NFL and they said, oh, you played in the league, that's cool -- were you All-Pro.

No.

Did you go to Pro Bowl.

No, didn't go to Pro Bowl -- didn't play. There's always something you didn't do -- oh -- hang out with a Pro Bowler -- oh, are you a Hall of Famer -- (indiscernible) geez -- first ballot -- they can always find something you didn't do. So don't worry about that. Just how about we worry about this week.

And so our goal is to go 1-0 this week and we executed the mission. Our standard is to play great, great football. I don't know if we did that. I like executing the mission. We found a way to do that. We'll try to get better next week.

Q. How do you encourage them to enjoy this one?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: I never said that they don't enjoy it. I don't know if I said -- maybe I have. I think they enjoy it. I think they are just really like analytical about it, you know what I'm saying and I want them to be that, right. I always bring it up, Kipling said in a poem, I always paraphrase -- he said if you can treat triumph and disaster as imposters -- I live by that in my brain.

Like when you're like triumphant and when you lose, they are both -- like it's just what people say. At the end of the day, only you know did you give all you had out there, right and only you know what you did, like only I know how hard I worked this week and the coaches worked this week.

So if I put everything on the line and they ran that last play back for a touchdown, I can live with myself and if we won and I didn't put it all in it, I'm a fraud. Just trying to get our guys to understand, hey, analyze it and enjoy the win. Go enjoy the win and I'll see you Sunday.

Coaches, we're on the road tomorrow at 7:00 a.m. we're out grinding and going to go recruit tomorrow. We'll see you guys on Sunday and enjoy this, and let's come in Sunday with a purpose to come in better and get better next week and we know we need to be.

We're going to TCU and TCU has had our number. Coach Patterson is a great coach, looks like the offense is coming on and we have to play better. We will try to get better and figure out who is healthy and go out there and play one more game.

Q. Contributing on your team -- had to climb those mountains before, what do you get from these close games? How much do you think having been through that helped give them that extra push?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Yeah it makes all the difference in the world, you know what I mean. Again, I'm tired, but with the (indiscernible) you have to accept death to go fight, like when you're worried about losing, you can't play well. When you've lost and been through wars, it didn't bother you, you can go in and fight, like unfettered. Man, you can go in there and fight and not worry about the result and go play.

Our guys have been through some battles. We've won some. We've lost some and they go out and play and they understand at the end of the day, the game is not going to be won in the first half. The game is going to be won in the third and fourth quarter. We're tough, find a way to win at the end of the game and have to get some better in some areas. You're never as good as you are when you win and never as bad as you are when you lose, and just keep doing this hopefully.