

# Baylor University Football Media Conference

Saturday, November 16 2019  
Waco, Texas

## Matt Rhule Press Conference

Oklahoma 34, Baylor 31

MATT RHULE: Obviously extremely disappointed at the way that game turned out at the end. I thought obviously it was a great first half. Credit to Oklahoma, they made the plays in the second half to come back. At the end of the game made one more play than we made.

Had our opportunity to win the football game. Did some things to hurt ourselves. Two turnovers in the second half. Can't win games like that.

We told our guys it's going to have to bother us, hurt us, but hopefully we'll come back next week rejuvenated, learn from it, with a chance to play these guys again sometime down the road.

### **Q. Offensively why do you feel like y'all couldn't get it going?**

MATT RHULE: Well, had a fumble on a big run. Had a drop. Only had four plays in the third quarter. I think first play, they had a long drive, we had a fumble, they had another lung drive, got the ball back, went three-and-out.

I thought really that third quarter is what led to the defense sort of falling apart, getting gassed. Offensively no rhythm. I thought there at the end we started to get some rhythm back. Just weren't really able to execute.

That last play, we're down there close to field goal range. Unfortunately just snapped the ball early. Charlie wasn't ready. We'd love to have that play back, but...

### **Q. What adjustments did you see them make at halftime?**

MATT RHULE: Ran a lot of tempo in the second half. Ran the quarterback. I mean, basically at the end of the day, he was their leading rusher. Quarterback draw, quarterback run. Just kind of kept drives going. Made a



big play when they had to.

The tale of the second half was third down, had a hard time getting off the field. Our offense had a hard time staying on the field.

### **Q. What did you like seeing against Jalen Hurts?**

MATT RHULE: A couple key turnovers. We got to him, hit him. He's a really, really good player. Just think at the end of the day we had a couple chances to sack him, but couldn't get him down there at the end.

It was a battle. I mean, he's a great player. At the end of the day, they just made one more play.

### **Q. Thinking about where this team was a couple years ago, even last year, what does it say about what you've been able to do here?**

MATT RHULE: I'm disappointed at the result. I'm extremely proud everything this meant. We had this national stage, we performed well at times on it. Our goal was to hold them under 30. We were right there.

As I said to our guys, a lot of credit to them, if we had just done this, this, and this. We'll either play them again next year or in a couple of weeks. Hopefully we can learn from that.

Like I said, we'll be disappointed, but nothing other than that.

### **Q. What did you say at halftime, to have that kind of lead, make sure your guys are locked in?**

MATT RHULE: Just keep playing. If you want this game to be over, you're not a competitor. Keep playing, keep playing, keep playing.

I knew who they are. You don't win that many championships in a row without fighting back. I expected it to be a battle. I thought we would be the better team at the end. First half two turnovers, we went up 31-10. They had two turnovers, we went down.

I thought that touchdown right before the half for them, we felt we were off the field, they put the ball back on the field, they score. We went right back down and kicked a field goal. I thought we had some momentum going into the half.

When you get in these types of games, you have to kind of learn how to step up and make one more play. We've done that in all the games up till now. Tonight we came up on the short end, unfortunately.

**Q. The defense in the second half, they were out there on the field to long?**

MATT RHULE: Yeah, collaborating with each other. You have a long drive, like I said, you turn the ball over, have another long drive, three-and-out, another long drive. I think we were really good on first down in the first half. Offensively in the second half we weren't. It was just a matter of that kind of starting to compound.

At the end of the day there were no big plays. Wasn't like we were giving up these huge, massive big plays like they're used to. It was them methodically making plays down the field, us really not making a play that stemmed the tide.

**Q. When James Lynch got the strip for the touchback, were you hoping that would turn the tide a little bit?**

MATT RHULE: Yeah, great stop. You're hoping you go down there and make something happen. When those things happen, that's what they did against Kansas State, came roaring back. They're good at that.

You don't want to sit there and say let's get one stop. You want to go out there, compete, fly around, play, see what happens.

A lot of our guys started to go down. I lot of our backups stepped on and tried to play. I don't want to take any credit away from them. They stayed at it. We just needed to make a play on defense or on offense or special teams. Just quite never really did that. Didn't block the kick, didn't have a big kickoff return.

The last drive, even then we have a chance to go kick a field goal. Like I said, the ball snapped early. I'll put that on me. I'm not going to put that on Charlie. He's trying to get the ball out of his hand, he wasn't quite ready for it.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

MATT RHULE: Yeah, I mean, when you go through this, it's supposed to be disappointing. It's supposed to hurt. You want to do those things.

My message to them was simply, like any time you lose, don't start saying, He should have done that, he should have done that. Everyone look at yourself and say, I'm going to come in tomorrow, I probably could have done something better, focus on that.

Know that we're going to be right back in this moment

next week. We have to go play Texas next week. They come here. It will be a big game. I don't know what happened, they were in a back-and-forth game. It will probably be a back-and-forth game, come down to the wire, we'll have to make one more play.

Just learn it from, grow from it. Let it bother you, but let it fuel you, don't let it make you start to make excuses or be hard on yourself.

**Q. When you play a game like this, when this team plays a game like this, do you think it helps instill some belief when you go into a game the next time?**

MATT RHULE: I think there was no doubt in our minds that we are one of the better teams in the country. Obviously we wish we could have the second half back. I'm not sure, but I am sure Oklahoma, they wish they could have the first half back, right?

I don't think there's a lack of confidence. For us, we got to this moment, we still haven't put a full game together. Kind of played half of a game. What do we have to do to put a full game together? It's our first foray into November championship games, right?

We might not want to remember that game. I'm sure they'll remember that game for a long time. I got a lot of respect for Coach Riley and them. They were hugging, celebrating on the sidelines. It was a big win for them. It was a big win for them because they played us, too.

I don't think we're going to lack any confidence. We're going to learn from it, come right back, go battle. This is a top-10 team. We played it to the wire. Feel like we could have made one more play, but we didn't. We are going to hurt, come back, play another game.

**Q. What did you see from the 95-yard drive that the Sooners had? What did that do as far as momentum of the game?**

MATT RHULE: The story of the whole second half was just that. It was long drive, couldn't get off the field. Not really getting anything going on the offense. I think we played four plays on offense in the third quarter. That's unheard of.

The fumble, then the three-and-out. One of those games where like the offense did a couple first downs, let the defense catch their breath. Even the defense get a sack or something, get up the field on third down. Didn't happen.

They made really nice plays. I think our tackling started falling apart. Guys were beating us in tackling. That's what I said this week, We're going to take away Jalen Hurts in the run game, run the tackle on the perimeter.

We did it the first half, not quite as well in the second half. The offense could have made some plays. Special teams wasn't really a difference maker for us.

Again, we learn from it, move on. Hopefully we have a chance to play in a game like this soon.

**Q. Going through these kind of losses, you put together two great quarters, two not-so-good quarters. Is that part of learning how to be a championship team?**

MATT RHULE: Not many teams put together four great quarters. There's not many of those out there, right? My message to our guys is, a lot of talk will be like, They came back, they came back. That will be the talk. You came into November, played a top-10 team. Everyone picked you to lose. The nation probably thought, They're underdogs.

You got up, you battled, had a chance to win. Even at the end, the defense, you got a stop, held them to a field goal. It was a great game. We didn't win.

We should be really disappointed. But at the end of the day, I do believe we had to learn, first, how not to lose. Then Smoke would always ask me, You need to learn how to win? Then we have to learn how to win consistently. Now we have to learn how to win in November.

We didn't do it this week. Played in a heavyweight bout last week we thought. We won that game. We didn't win this game. Now we have to go play the next one.

People all week asked me about starting fast, starting fast. I say, I don't care, I want to finish. Heavyweight bouts are not won in the first rounds, they're won at the end of the game.

We started fast, but we didn't finish. As bad as that was, at the end we had a chance to win it. That will be my message to our guys, You still had the ball, a chance to win it. Denzel catches that ball, he has chances to go and score.

We'll be back. It will be painstaking. If we do this, this. It's not going to be, If you made this play. I'm not talking about that. Don't look at the clock and say, Someone do something. Just play the game. That's how you win in these key, down-the-stretch times.

**Q. What would you differently if you play them again?**

MATT RHULE: I don't know that. No idea. Not disrespectful. Have to watch so much tape. I'm going to have to really spend tomorrow looking at myself, all the things we did. I want all the players and coaches to do

that. I think what will be really good for us.

I'm not saying we'll play them again, we'll see their back to the wall. Coach Riley come out and see what they did. We'll study it. Look at ourselves, where could we have done something different.

Really at the end of the day I'm going to say everything comes down to blocking, tackling. Third down, we catch the ball, we're rolling. We didn't catch it. I'm not putting it on that play.

My point is we had every right to be in that game, win that game. We just had to go make a couple more plays. When I say that, coaches, players, everyone. We all had to do a little bit more. We didn't. I still think it was a disappointment, but it's something we'll learn from.

**Q. Was there any thought declining that penalty?**

MATT RHULE: That was a hard one. I have to think about that tomorrow and see if I should have. After I did that, I say, Boy... Next play they hit us on a shallow cross and scored. Wish I would have made them kick it.

I can't say. There's like an analytics thing. Sitting here right now, most coaches only say like this, but it didn't work. I wish I could take that back, to be quite honest.

**Q. What is more difficult, a gut wrenching loss or exhilarating wins where everybody talks about it for two or three days?**

MATT RHULE: We'll find out. I'll say this. I thought we played better today than we have. I thought our guys are were ready to go. I thought they competed.

I think Texas coming into town next week, we have two games left. I'll tell our guys tomorrow, 13 days together. Let's go battle and see if we can get another game.

I would expect our guys to come back ready to go. For a long portion of that game, it was fun. If you're a competitor, I didn't like them coming back and winning, but it was a fun, competitive game. A lot better than what it has been over the past couple years.

I'm sure we'll battle back. There's always things when you lose, things happen, right? A lot of other teams had to figure out how to lose early in the year. We were tough enough to get to this point to do it. I don't want them to forget that, be proud of that.

At the same time they have to go do it, fight, scratch and claw to get a win next week.