**Baylor Football Head Coach Matt Rhule
Weekly Press Conference
December 2, 2019**

***Opening Statement***

Appreciate you guys being here, thank you guys very much for covering us, been covering us all season and it’s very much appreciated, the job you guys do is appreciated by me certainly and the relationships you guys have with our players and the university is special so thank you. First, I’d like to make sure I congratulate our women’s volleyball team, Big 12 Champions and #1 seed and I hope all the people go out and support Friday night and Saturday depending on where things are around our game, hopefully come watch us too but if not go watch them so, Coach [Ryan] McGuyre’s a great coach and one of the great things about being here is you have a chance to be around all the student athletes and I see those young women train, I see them come back from injury, I see them grind as do all of our sports so what a great place to be, what a great time to be at Baylor and hopefully we can do our part on Saturday to contribute to the championship culture that is here both on and off the field. I’d like to talk about the season first because I think I always have a what’s next mentality but it is the end of the season and so I just am tremendously grateful to our staff, to the support staff and to our players for their work and their trust and their just, not just living the process but defending the process and staying focused. I think what they’ve done the last two weeks is amazing, to lose that game against Oklahoma in the way that they did and to come back and bounce back the way that they did, go out the next week and play such a complete game against Texas and then to practice last week with no students on campus, to deal with Thanksgiving, to go home and have everyone back and go up and to play a Kansas team that was beating Iowa State the week before with three minutes left in the game and to play that well, complete of a game I thought was awesome and I just thought it showed amazing maturity and focus and just a team and so I’m very proud to be the coach of those young men and I think it’s the first time in power five history a team’s ever gone from 1-11 to 11-1 in two years and it’s not even just the guys who are here now, it’s all the people, the staff and players along the way that enabled us to get to this point and so I’m very, very grateful for that. I just want to make sure I say this, it’s a little awkward cause he’s in the room, but I don’t know that, I get a lot of credit and I don’t do very much, I’m the head coach., Coach [Phil] Snow does the defense and Jeff [Nixon] and those guys do the offense, I just kinda stand up front and answer your questions and make decisions here and there, but none of this is possible without Mack Rhoades and it really hit me last night, I’m seeing guys get fired after two years and three years and I’m seeing upheaval at places and every place is different, I heard a comment about those things, but for football coaches out there you better find an AD that you believe in, you better find someone that’s in it with you and that’s the difference about our place, we have an associate AD here, I don’t know what the terms are, Jeramiah Dickey that like I call at 2:00 in the morning and he picks up the phone, we have an AD in Mack Rhoades, it’s Wednesday of Thanksgiving, there’s not a person on campus and he’s out there watching practice, he’s in the corners room asking our corners ‘where are you going for Thanksgiving?,’ our players know him by name, there’s not many places where the players know the AD by name, where the deputy AD or the senior women’s administrator, they know our people and so I’m just so grateful for that part of this and that’s why this getting to 11-1 and going to the conference championship game means a lot to me because there’s just so many people that believed when it was hard to believe and there’s so many people that have supported us all along the way and so I just want to make sure I say that I’m grateful for all those people and that’s why we are where we are. Now, we have an opportunity to play this week and play against a great team in Oklahoma and as I told our guys, let’s not make this about the Big 12 Championship, let’s not make this about the College Football Playoff, let’s not make this about a ranking, let’s not even make this about Oklahoma, they’re a great team, or a rematch, let’s just make it about us, let’s try to go 1-0 this week just like we did all year and see what we do and so we’re gonna go out there and play our best game against a great game in a cool atmosphere and see what happens and so I’m excited, I’ve been a head coach for 7 years and when I say I that’s Phil Snow, Mike Siravo, we’ve all been together for 7 years, it’s our third championship game in 7 years and to me that shows a lot of kids who have bought in and gotten to this point and so hopefully we can go play our best game and see what happens so that was long I’m sorry but appreciate you guys allowing me to thank those people.”

***On if he talks to the team about making the CFP…***

“I don’t, I think you probably know me well enough to know I don’t say those things. We haven’t had a lot of success when we’ve talked about ‘hey if we do this we get this’, last year I did that and we played really tight against Iowa State and TCU so we play way better when it’s been like let’s just go play and here’s what’s special about our players, I think we have, it’s the most competitive group of young people I’ve ever been around, I’ll probably start getting a bunch of calls from former players now but, saying what about me coach but, literally if at the end of a practice I said ‘I’m not sure who’s faster Tyquan [Thornton] or Boogie [Barnes], they would literally race for an hour but then [Josh] Fleeks would say ‘no I’m faster’ and then [Jackson] Gleeson would say ‘wait a minute, I ran this and I’, they would be out there racing for like an hour, Bravvion [Roy] would probably say ‘I’m the fastest guy over 300’, it’s amazing the competitive nature of our guys so what I found works with our players is just to say hey let’s go compete, to go to Kansas and play in that weather and there weren’t very many people in the stands, it was less people maybe than Rice, just cause of Thanksgiving, I’m not saying that in a disrespectful way, and our guys went out and competed and in the fourth quarter that defense wanted a fourth quarter shutout, J Will [Jordan Williams] was screaming at the guys that were out there playing and we finally stopped them at the two and got the fourth quarter shutout, just a competitive group so to me when I start talking about CFP, it becomes a whole bunch of stuff, when I say let’s go play, man, we have a special group of kids when we do that.”

***On fixing mistakes from the last game against OU…***

“Yeah, a couple of those were quarterback draws so we’re kind of running Charlie [Brewer] anyway, but [Ronnie] Perkins is a great player and [Neville] Gallimore’s a great player and Kenneth Murray’s a great player and they do a lot on defense, they stem and they move so their defense is built to create negative plays and so really the story of that game was we played really well on offense in the first half and then just kind of couldn’t make a play in the second half, even that first long run we fumbled on and couldn’t quite catch a ball on third down so to me I think, they’ll make some negative plays cause they’re built to do that so we won’t try to neutralize them, don’t get me wrong, but to me it’s about us creating explosive plays and we understand that Coach [Alex] Grinch is a really good defensive coordinator, they move and they stunt and they blitz and they pressure so we’ve got to get the ball to our best players and let them go make some plays and that’s when we’re at our best when we just kinda isolate some guys and get them the ball and we have to find a semblance of a run game, they are built to take away the run game and make you throw it, we threw it pretty well the first game, we just have to have some runs to go along with that.”

***On parallels to other seasons…***

“Yeah, I think there’s a lot of those parallels and storylines. I think we’re staying at the Omni Fort Worth, it’s like the fourth time in three years we’re staying there, TCU twice, AT&T twice, so, TCU this year we had to stay somewhere else though right, so there’s a lot, we’re kind of familiar with the drive, I said Sean [Padden] ‘are we going to Hard Eight BBQ please?’, he said ‘yes, that’s all set up’, ‘are we going to that same movie theater?’, ‘yes’ and so it’s a place we’re familiar with, but OU’s familiar with it too, they’ve been to this game three years in a row so this is their third year so I talk about those things just to make sure our players learn the lessons of them and not really our old players, their lessons have been learned, it’s the young players like I expect us to come back to this game at some point, hopefully next year, if not the year after, we’re gonna battle and come back to this game year in and year out and so really I’m trying to teach the young guys in the room hey this is what it takes to get back here and this is the focus you have to have and here’s how you have to handle Thanksgiving and so hopefully this is just the start of many successful attempts at this game.”

***On recruiting…***

“All the other staffs in the country are on the road recruiting today. They’re in houses, and we’re not. So, that puts maybe us and Oklahoma a little bit behind. I think our recruits know why we’re not there. Luckily, we had two huge home games at the end of the season where a lot of our recruits were able to come that weren’t still in the playoffs.

“I think the young people who are thinking about Baylor or committed to Baylor understand two things: No. 1, that we have things going in the right direction, academically, athletically and socially. And then No. 2, we don’t recruit a lot of other people. I don’t spend all night on the phone with recruits. I spend time with my players that are here. Sometimes in recruiting, people want to go to a logo, or sometimes they want to go to the coach that shows them the most love. It’s like, my son is having a procedure done today, so he went up to Cook’s Children Hospital – not a big deal, like a little thing. But, my wife and I were trying to figure out what to do with my son. I didn’t send him to the doctor that showed him the most love. I didn’t send him to the doctor with the coolest-looking hospital building. I sent him to the best. I sent him to the doctor that was the best. And I think what recruits will find out about us is if you come here, you’re going to get our best. We’re going to develop you and take care of you and grow you and help you and have your back when things go wrong. We are loyalty above everything else. So, we’re maybe not as flashy or swaggy as some other guys, but we are family over everything. So, recruits that are committed to us right now, I think they feel part of the family. And it’s a business. If I go there, and I go play for Coach [Phil] Snow, I go play for Glenn Thomas, I’m going to get a great education, I’m going to get pushed outside of my comfort zone, I’m going to come back different than when I left. I see kids go off to college, and they come back four years later, and they’re the same guy. You don’t come here and go back home the same as you were. You go back better. And then, I’m going to be a really good football player. I said when I got here, we’ll have a chance to play for championships, you’re going to get developed into a pro. You watch how many guys we have play in all-star games this year; you watch how many guys we have at the (NFL) Combine this year; you watch how many guys get drafted this year. And none of them, except for maybe one or two, were on many radars. That’s the biggest recruiting we can do is that. It takes time for people to see that. But, you know what, when you realize that you have one shot at going to college and picking the right college and getting developed, you better go to the person that has the best credentials and can do it the best. There’s a lot of great schools out there, this isn’t for everyone, but if you come here it’s going to be a great opportunity for you.”

***On how different is OU’s offense with CeeDee Lamb in there…***

“It’s the same offense. They’ve got great players after great players after great players. It’s a great offense, and they’ve got a great offensive coordinator in Coach (Lincoln) Riley. They’ve got a great offensive line coach in Bill Bedenbaugh. They turned over their offensive line, and they’re right back where they were. They do what they do. Now, CeeDee Lamb is one of the greatest players in college football. He’s a future star in the NFL. But Charleston Rambo is really good, too. A bunch of them are really good. To me, it’s not about just one guy. They have a well thought out offense with a great offensive line with great backs, great receivers, great tight ends and they play a lot of people. They’re not a tempo team, they change personnel every play. Lincoln Riley has one of the most NFL-style offenses in the world. He’s one of the most pro-style offenses. I took this job, and everybody was worried about my offense at Temple. He’s running what I did at Temple, I’m running something different. I love what we’re doing. I love what Lincoln is doing because he takes the players he has and says, ‘How can I be successful with these guys?’ And he puts together an offense and he gets everyone involved, and they’re tremendously hard to defend, because the ball could be there, it could be there. He’s doing a great job. And they play with a nastiness that I really like. Those offensive linemen at Oklahoma, they’re going to grab you and throw you on the ground and hit you and hold you down and get back up and then do it again the next play. They’re a tough, tough group.

“I think CeeDee is an amazing football player, great run after catch. But they have a bunch of guys that can play, so you can’t just say, ‘Oh, we’re going to take him away.’ This guy will eat you alive. We’ve just got to go out and play our defense. We’re not going to be able to invent something new this week. We’re going to go out and play our defense and just try to play it better than we did last time. And I’m pretty sure they’re going to come out and run their offense. He’ll have some wrinkles, maybe Phil (Snow) will have some wrinkles, I don’t know. But I just think everybody will do what they do, and let the players go settle it on the field.”

***On if he’s ever played a rematch this quickly…***

“Just in the NFL. When I was with the (New York) Giants, we would play the (Dallas) Cowboys twice, we’d play the (Philadelphia) Eagles twice, we’d play the (Washington) Redskins twice. But, that’s really it. Both years I was in the championship game at Temple, we played teams from the other side that we hadn’t played that year. So, I’ve never had this rematch other than being in the NFL.”

***On how different is the preparation when you’ve already played them once…***

“That’s a great question. We’re creatures of habit, we go back to the same, exact process. We just factor this game in, but we still watch last year’s game. Obviously, they played Oklahoma State, they played TCU, we played some other teams. But, I think for us, we just go right back to our same, exact process. We came in on Sunday, maybe we didn’t quite pay as much attention to the Kansas game. We were just kind of like, ‘Hey, let’s move on to the game, guys.’ But other than that, we do the same things every week.”

***On all the success of other teams, including volleyball, is it inspiring…***

“It’s been that way since I got here. It’s been that way since before I was here. I want to make sure I say that. The first year, we weren’t very good, as you well remember, and everyone else. I was going to basketball games, and were No. 1 in both men’s and women’s basketball that first year. I’m sitting here going, ‘We better start doing our part here, now.’ We have head coaches’ meetings, and you sit there and you look around the room, and the best of the best are there. It just makes you want to do your part.

“But the other part I’ll say is because our building is over there, and I see the kids parking and walking in. I see them over there. I put on like 30 pounds every season.  ’Im just a stressful guy, but I still go down there every day and I walk on the treadmill or walk on the elliptical. And I see the student-athletes walk back and forth. And just their dedication is unreal. I watch the track workouts, and their attention to detail and their unity and their work ethic, that’s what’s inspiring. In the offseason, the baseball team is in there and they’re working out. Or, you see kids when they’re hurt and they’re in rehab every day, and you build a relationship with them, even though they’re different sports. ‘How’s it coming? Are you getting better?’ And you see the grind. And I think that’s one of the cool things about the community of sports here with where we’re located, that I get to see all these student-athletes, I get to see them doing all the work that then leads to them having the success that they have. That, to me, is really cool. And it reminds me, we’re going to play in this game and then we’re going to go play in a bowl game or whatever, but I’m already planning the spring and the offseason program. We have got to continue to grow and evolve and develop. You see that day-in and day-out. It’s really cool with what’s happening here, and it happens in all sports.”

***On the development process of Coach Snow’s defense…***

“It was year two at Temple. Obviously, we had to evolve a little bit in terms of what we were doing. Coach had to evolve in terms of getting the best guys on the field. But, it’s the same players as last year. That’s the cool thing. It’s Chris Miller, it’s Henry Black, it’s Jameson Houston, it’s pretty much the same players. And they get developed, they get coached and they accept coaching. You can coach all you want, but if the player doesn’t want to get better or doesn’t trust you or doesn’t have a relationship with you, it doesn’t matter. And you watch them evolve and play their best. That’s when it takes hold is because the young players know nothing else. Garmon Randolph is in the middle of his redshirt year. He knows nothing else other than this is what we do here. We practice this way, and they learn from the older guys. That’s what was great about the game on Saturday is we have Matt Jones out there, who’s redshirting, playing the whole fourth quarter at Mike linebacker. And he’s got Ross (Matiscik) and Terrell Bernard and those guys yelling and screaming at him, ‘Make this fit, do this.’ He comes off the field, they’re coaching him. He’s in his redshirt year. I think he has one more game left and then he’ll fight for a starting job next year. It takes time, but once it takes hold, to me then it’s kind of cultural. The guys understand, ‘Hey, this is what we’re doing.’

“That’s kind of where we’re at in the offensive line, too. We’ve got guys, hey, he’s the backup at three positions because of injuries. We’ve kind of moved guys around all year. But once it takes root in those positions where you’re really strong on the offensive and defensive lines, you can be really good. And that’s why Oklahoma is so good. They’re so good on the offensive and defensive lines as well.”

***On teaching Chris Miller about how to handle the targeting…***

“He had three different kinds. It wasn’t like it was the same thing. So, the first one, I think they call it 913, it was the crown of the helmet, they said he hit with the top of the helmet. And it wasn’t even flagged on the field, it was reviewed, and it wasn’t our conference. And it was the right call. We don’t want us to hit with the top of our helmet, anyway. That’s where you get hurt. We don’t want to hit with our helmet. We actually have a company that we use that monitors helmet contact for us because we’re trying to keep our numbers really low. We don’t want to make contact with the helmet. We use this company, Atavus, same foot, same shoulder. Then we said, hey, you’ve got to change this. Then he hits the guy at Oklahoma State, and doesn’t knock him down. So, it wasn’t like this big, vicious, blow-up hit. It doesn’t knock him down, but he crouched his head again and he hit the guy in the head. So, we said, you’ve got to lower your strike zone here. So, the next one he lowers the strike zone, and the guy slides and he hits him.

“So, I think what I said is, ‘Chris, the next one, you’re done for I don’t know how long.’ To me, I think that game really hurt him because he cares about this team so deeply. My challenge to him was, ‘Hey, these big, blow-up, knock-out shots you’re going for are going to result in you missing games, so we’re going to have to be physical, but we’re not going to be able to have a big hit.’ And then, I think Phil took it then and really just drilled it so that he would come in and have a little bit better angle, a little bit better strike zone, and the most importantly keep his head up. And that’s the rule. I don’t want to sound like I’m complaining about the rule. We want to keep players safe, both the opposing player and our player. But, we take it seriously. Every Sunday, we get a report, this is our tackling efficiency, things we can do better, but also most importantly is the percentage of helmet contact, because we don’t want to make contact with our helmet. And we’ve had to change that with Chris. I didn’t play him in the second half last week, I was like, ‘OK, he’s done, go stand over there,’ because we wanted to have him for this week.”

***On Charlie getting the second half off and only carrying the ball once other than the sack…***

“Yeah, we weren’t going to run him, unless need be. And I think last week was really good for him. He practiced a little bit on Tuesday, he practiced on Wednesday. But, it was really good for Gerry [Bohanon] and [Jacob] Zeno. They got a chance to be the guys, run the two-minute drills in practice, all that stuff, and then they got a chance to play in the game. So, we wanted to win and we wanted to play our best football. We thought running the quarterback was going to be a big part of the game, so we had a plan to have Gerry ready to go. And we also knew it was going to be 20-mph winds. The wind was unreal. To throw the ball the way we did, it was impressive by those guys with the wind and all that. I’m glad we were able to play that game, play really well. Denzel [Mims] didn’t play in the second half, the D-line didn’t play in the second half, Chris [Miller] didn’t play in the second half. Some positions, we needed guys to play in the second half. It was really good for our young players, though, to have a chance to play. I was happy that a lot of guys who have grinded all year long have had a chance to play.”

***On Bohanon having a good future at QB…***

“I think Gerry Bohanon is going to be an amazing quarterback for us. I think the same thing about Zeno. They both have great arms, they both can run. But most importantly, they’re both tough and really loyal guys. I’m going to walk in that building later today, and this is their day off and I don’t monitor it, but I can promise you that I’ll probably have 50 text messages from Garret McGuire about this should be in, this should be in, we should be doing this. Gerry Bohanon, Jacob Zeno, Bo Brewer. We have guys that come in and prepare at the highest levels on their own.

“I want to make sure I this, the reason why we are having the success we’re having is because of the guys who don’t play, like the guys on our scout teams. We have this kid, Kolby White, who played Jalen Reagor two weeks ago and last week he played Pooka (Williams). And literally, I could have made a highlight film from him making guys miss tackles. He walked on here, and I told him the other day in the team meeting, he’s going to end up playing here. And I mean, playing, playing. He’s going to be a really good player for us. But, it’s all the guys on the scout teams, to me, that do a great job. But, I love the quarterbacks because I love their preparation and I think they both have tremendous talent. They’ve had a chance to play this year, which it takes a lot of quarterbacks to play in college football nowadays.”

***On developing QBs…***

“Sometimes when you’re a quarterback, you want to play so much, and that’s why you see a lot of guys transfer really quickly. ‘I’m not playing.’ Only one quarterback can play at a time, but you can be getting developed. If you want to go be an NFL player, you better go somewhere as a quarterback that’s going to develop you into a complete and total player. And that development happens while you’re not playing. Now, you need to play at some point, don’t get me wrong. But, for Gerry’s redshirt year last year, he got developed. Glenn (Thomas) did an amazing job with him. He’s so much further ahead than where he was. And then you watch (Jacob) Zeno, Zeno got out there and whipped that ball to (Jared Atkinson) and threw a rope. You see their level of development. They’re getting developed even while Charlie (Brewer) is the starter and they’re improving, improving, improving. So, when it is their time, they’ll both play at a really high level. And then when the time comes to go to the NFL, those guys will hopefully be NFL players because of the things that they’re doing now as freshmen and sophomores that no one sees.

“That’s why I mention our scout teams. That’s the message for our team as we sit here with some gratitude about the season we’ve had. It’s all those players that . . . we had three players show up on Friday that weren’t even traveling. We had Will Williams, Hakeem Vance and Niadré Zouzoua, they weren’t traveling, and they showed up to practice just to help before we got on the plane and left. You don’t see that very often. There’s just a lot of people that have committed to sacrificing to being a part of the team that has allowed us to have success.”