Baylor Football Head Coach Matt Rhule
Weekly Press Conference
October 1, 2018

***Opening Statement***
“I appreciate you guys all coming. I’ll make a quick statement. Obviously, disappointed about the game on Saturday, disappointed in the result. I thought our guys went out there and at times played really good football. I haven’t talked to the team yet, but we went out there and spotted them 14 points and kind of settled down. I was really proud of some guys. We had some guys like Greg Roberts really lead the way and settle our group down. And for the next 31 minutes of the game, from spotting them that 14-point lead, for the next 31 minutes, we outscored OU, 23-21. I thought our guys fought, I thought they hung in there. Scored right before the half, came out of the half, went down and scored. They scored, we scored again. Unfortunately, at the end, it got away from us. They were able to make a few more plays than we were able to make. It was a 12-point game with 6-something left in the third quarter. As I sat here with you guys last week, that’s what I talked about. Surviving that early rally, trying to push the game to the fourth quarter. We did that, we just weren’t able to quite short it up at the end. As I told the team, we probably could have gone out there at the end and run the ball and tried to keep the score close. But, I didn’t care if we lost 34-33 or 66-33. It’s not about how we look. We wanted to compete to the end, we wanted to fight to the end. We were going to go for it. We were going to onside kick it, and we did that. And I was proud of a lot of guys on our team. As I told them, I wasn’t happy with the result. But as I stood there on the field, there were a bunch of guys that wanted to playing and wanted to finish the game and wanted to go play one more play on that field. I truly respect that.

I’d like to say just two things, because I’ve had some people text me and ask. I don’t even know if this is out there, but they said, ‘Hey, it looked like you and Coach Riley had a heated conversation at the end.’ I don’t know if that’s out there, I don’t really pay attention. But, I thanked him for his class. I think Lincoln Riley is a classy individual. And when he won the Big 12 last year, I called to congratulate him. When his tailback, (Rodney) Anderson, got hurt, I texted him and said, ‘Please, let him know we’re thinking about him.’ I just thought, a hard-fought game, lots of flags, lots of penalties. But, at the end of the day, when I took that 15-yard penalty he could have tried to pile on or whatever. But, he didn’t. And I respected that. And at the same time, we played to the end. And as I told him, ‘I hope you understand that we’re trying to build a program where we’re going to play to the last second on the clock.’ And he certainly understood that. So, I just want to make sure that’s out there, because I have a lot of respect for him and I have a lot of respect for the game.

I got my first penalty that I’ve ever gotten. And as you guys know, my father is on the sideline with me and my son is on the sideline with me. And my son asked me afterward, he said, ‘Dad, how come you got a penalty?’ He’s never seen that from me before. And I explained it to him. It’s called an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. And I’ll just say this, I’m not unsportsmanlike. I got that penalty because I thought it was time to stand up for our players. As I told you after the game, Charlie walked off the field, and he said, ‘Coach, thank you, that means a lot.’ And you know, he shouldn’t have to feel that way. But sometimes in life, enough is enough, and you have to stand up for your players. That’s the biggest thing for me. We’re sitting here 3-2 and we’re getting ready to play a Kansas State team to try to get to 4-2, and I think about our seniors and I think about everything that they’ve been through, all the stuff. And Greg Roberts played his best football game on Saturday. And a lot of guys played their best football on Saturday, at times, not all of them. But those seniors, what’s their experience been like?

I don’t complain about officiating. We played Duke, and not a penalty was thrown on the other team. I didn’t say a word about that. I respect the officials so much, because we’re allowed to play this game – those guys, they have other jobs and other lives, and they allow us to play this game. They’re good men. But, I have to defend our players, especially when it comes to like physically. We’re not an undisciplined team, we’re not. We had 13 penalties last week. We’ve got a bunch of young kids out there, some of them are playing maybe a little bit before they’re ready, and some of them are getting some holding calls and they’re playing really hard. But, we’re not an undisciplined team. We’re holding about as much as the rest of college football. We’re playing the same as the other team across from us is. I just feel for our players, sometimes. As I said after the game, I hated getting 15 yards. I hated my son seeing that. My father was kind of walking up and down. But, someone has to stand up for our players. At some point, it needs to be about the seniors and the juniors and the kids on our team in terms of everything. Outside noise, everyone has a different agenda. My agenda is the Baylor football players and the 120 guys that are in there, and making sure that they have the best experience possible.

During that game, there were two touchdowns where the tackle false-started. I didn’t say a word about that. There were probably three touchdowns that should have been called back. I don’t care about that. Officials have a job to do, and they’ve got to work their tails off. But, when we go play Kansas, and Charlie runs a quarterback sneak and he gets face-masked. When they’re overturning a targeting. When we’re getting shoved into the bench, when Charlie’s getting shoved out of bounds and falls down. When Ebner gets his facemask pulled, someone’s got to stand up. If I have to take 15, if that puts us in a bad position, so be it. But, I want to protect the players. The first drive, Clay came around, got shoved in the back, hits the quarterback low, that’s not a penalty. But, I understood why they called it. They have a job to do, and they have to protect the players. Well, I want Charlie protected and I want Trestan protected and I want Platt and all of our seniors protected.

I’m saying that from an on-the-field perspective, but I’m also saying that in general. My focus is our team and our players. It wasn’t good enough on Saturday, you can’t spot a team like that 14 points. But, we played a lot better than the score indicated. And we’re not just wantonly out there grabbing people. We’re playing just like everyone else does.

It’s time, in my opinion, for Baylor to stand up and fight for itself. It’s time for our players to go fight. So, I wanted to stand up for our players, and I wanted to stand up for Charlie and Jalen and all the guys that go out there and lay it on the line. And I’ll do that again this week. I’ll fight my tail off here. I’m doing that right now. I’ll probably hear about it. But, our players deserve this and they deserve more. They deserve to leave here being proud of the school they went to, the experience had, and what they did in the wins and losses. And I was proud of our team. I wish we would have fought a little bit more in the fourth quarter with some of the young kids. But, a lot of guys gained a lot of valuable experience.

We’ll look ahead to Kansas State, a very disciplined football team that had no penalties last week, a team that’s stout on defense, plays two quarterbacks. And we’ll try to shore up our defense, try to play a little bit better on special teams and try to continue to improve our running game as we get ready to face Coach Snyder and the coaching legend he is.”

***On Charlie was on the run, how much better does the offensive line have to improve protection…***

“I thought the o-line played pretty well at times. You start throwing 60 passes, you’re going to scramble around. A lot of those sacks kind of happened at the end, though some were in the middle. Johncarlo’s first start, he has to get a lot better. He knows that. Johncarlo [Valentin] has to get a lot better. And Fruhmorgen’s second start, he’s got to get a lot better. I thought Pat [Lawrence] and Blake [Blackmar] and Teck [Tecklenburg] were good. I thought at times, the run game was coming along. That first drive the second half, where we went right down the field and scored, we were running the football. A hole here, a hole there. The score got away from us, and it became a little bit more of a drop-back passing game.

Really, it’s not even one-on-one battles, it’s just those guys having the veteran presence to kind of pass off some twists. And it’s also part of what Charlie does. He likes to get outside the pocket and make things happen, and some of those big plays were throws on the run. Platt turned one up. So, we have to improve in every area, in a lot of areas. But really, the offensive line protection is probably one of the main ones and really more on that left side. Those guys just need more time. We don’t have time, but they just need to keep playing. I love our second line, normally I’d put them in there at the end of that game, but I just thought those guys needed to play. So, I played them. I wish I would have got some of the other younger kids in there. They work hard, they deserve to play, but they’ll get a chance to get in here some more. Johncarlo’s second start, hopefully he’ll take another step. And Fruhmorgen third start, I’m sure he’ll take another step.”

***On going through film and sending plays in for review with the conference…***

 “There’s a great process we go through every week. I want to make sure my comment is not about officiating. Things happen, mistakes happen. What I don’t want is my son to look at me and think I’m a wild man on the sidelines. Like, why are you always yelling? At the end of the day, if you false start and score a touchdown, it should come back. Holds, things like that, that’s football. But, at the end of the day, my statement was about the players and the players’ safety. When flags start hitting the ground, that’s controlling the game. You start backing off how you’re playing. We started the game with three penalties on the first two drives, one on defense and two on offense. So, we’re a young team, we’ll kind of back off a little bit. We need to be more aggressive to have a chance. I just want to make sure my son understands why I’m out there fighting for my team. Because again, the guys that are out there, they’re there to work. So, I don’t let my talk to the officials, like we’re not a team where the players yapping. They have a job to do. It’s me. My first penalty in 19 years of coaching, I feel like I need to address it and say why.

The process is good, you send them in, it’s fair. If you asked me, I’d say there were three, four, five touchdowns that should have come back. But, I didn’t get a penalty for any of those. I got a penalty when . . . I feel like, hey, if we’re going to protect their quarterback, let’s protect ours as well. And I think that’s why Charlie said thank you. And I think that’s why I’ve had parents – not Charlie’s parents, other parents – text me and call me and say thank you. Because again, our players, this is what it should all be about. It should be about our players. I was sitting down there talking to the players. If I was worried about me, I would have tried to keep that game close and try to lose like 42-30, and everyone feels good. No, we went to win. So, it’s not about me, it’s not anybody else, it’s about our players. That’s why I did it. But, there’s a very fair process. You send them in, guys are great, they give you feedback, you learn stuff. You learn why isn’t this a penalty, why isn’t that a penalty. All those things, you learn them all.”

***On Oklahoma’s explosive plays, is it one missed assignment…***

 “A guy won his one-on-one on a couple of them, so it wasn’t really like missed assignments. It was just a guy catching the ball and running, and us not getting him down. They hit us on a long pass early in the game, and just ran by us. That’s like two-deep zone coverages where you’re saying hey, nobody’s going to throw the ball behind us. Two different guys, but on both plays they just outrun us down the middle of the field. The ones at the end, we had some missed tackles and stuff. But really, the ones in the meat of the game that hurt us were their guys catching the ball and making long runs and making big plays. And that’s a credit to them. We knew coming in what their guys were capable of, and we knew we had to get them on the ground. And in those plays, we weren’t able to.”

***On how important is it for Charlie to bounce up after taking big hits…***

 “Extremely vital. I mean, he took that big hit, I was going to take him out. He grabbed his helmet and said ‘I’m going back out there, we’re going to score again.’ That’s really what it is to me is I’m looking for the people that love to play and want to compete. A lot of our kids they have so much pressure on them. And I’m saying in general, not just this team, anywhere I’ve coached. They’re worried about the future, they’re worried about this, they’re worried about that. But, look at Chris Platt, coming off an injury, and he’s out there on the last drive catching a long ball. And Hurd, he’s going to get drafted, he’s out there, he’s catching a fade route late in the fourth quarter. Finding guys that love to compete so much that they want to play, and they’re not worried about anything else but play. That’s really, really important to me. And I thought Charlie was a tremendous example of that. He just wanted to playing, and he knew he was taking hits, he knew he was getting beat up. But, he was also moving the team, he was also throwing for a lot of yards, he was also competing. That’s all this game is about is competing. We can coach it, we can talk about it. But, at the end of the day, finding guys that love to do it is really, really important. And I thought we had a lot of them. In that offensive huddle, JaMycal Hasty, those guys, they wanted to keep playing all day. They wanted to fight.  And on defense, there were a lot of guys that wanted to keep going. So, it wasn’t good enough. But there were some things there that gave me hope for where our team is headed.”

***On how Charlie felt the next day…***

“He came into my office yesterday. I said, ‘How are you feeling?’ He said, ‘pretty good.’ I said, ‘How did you feel when you woke up?’ He said, ‘Well, I felt like I slept for two days.’ I’m sure he’s sore, banged-up, but I also know he’ll be ready to go today.”

***On K-State’s offense being a lot different than Oklahoma’s, how do you match up with them…***

 “The biggest thing about Kansas State is twofold. No. 1, they’re physical, tough, they run the ball downhill at you, they control the clock, and they don’t beat themselves. The second part is they have the added component of the quarterback run. We played them last year and they kept running the quarterback, kept running the quarterback, and that was the difference in the game. They have two quarterbacks that they’ll play, both can run, both can throw. So, it will come down to, in my opinion, if we want to play run defense, we’re going to have to be able to cover outside. And if we decide to play base defense, then some guys are going to have to make a play. Because anytime you run the quarterback, you add a blocker, the running back is now blocking for him, so you’re outnumbered at the point of attack. So, we’re going to have to make a step in that direction in terms of stopping the run, which has been sort of an Achilles’ heel at times for us. And when the quarterback runs, we can’t let it be an explosive. That will be the focus this week. It’s something new, it’s something different. And our guys in the front seven getting back to the basics of getting off blocks and making tackles. They’re not a team that gets a lot of negative plays, but trying to create some negative plays.”

**On explaining toxic differential…**“We have won the toxic differential in all the games except for the last one. Toxic differential is the number one stat in the NFL. It is when you take the turnover margin and then you also take the explosive plays margin. We say an explosive play is 20 yards or more. You take the explosive plays and the turnover battle and combine them, and you end up either plus or minus. It is amazing at how accurate it is. If you win the toxic differential, you win 90 percent of the time. We haven’t taken the ball away and with all the snaps we had on offense our only turnover was on special teams.”

**On the status of John Lovett…**“John left the game with a head injury and is in protocol right now. That is a day by day thing. So, we just have to see where he is at. I don’t know today if we will have him for Saturday.”

**On Greg Roberts motivation levels playing against his dads’ former school…**
“I think week in and week out he is constantly getting better. He has his first career sack the week before and had two on Saturday. I think Greg’s biggest thing is he works hard in practice. He never takes reps or days off. He goes until exhaustion and he certainly plays with that same attitude on Saturdays. He has been here for four years and this is his fifth. He never had a sack until this year. He has two against OU and one against Kansas the week before and he has played two and half or three and a half games and he has three sacks already.”

**On Denzel Mims big production against OU…**
“Denzel can do whatever he wants. He could have had four or five more catches. He a couple that were knocked away or dropped. He is a guy who is coming into his own right now. They gave him a lot of access. They played off of him and we were able to hit him on quick routes. And that has what has happened the past two years. They take away our explosive plays, so we have to make plays with what is given to us.”

**On what Marques Jones brings to the team…**
“Marques is a guy who one day we will look up and he will be playing for the Patriots. He is everything that is right about football. He works hard, he is not selfish, he will do what it takes to make sure someone else can have success. He will play whatever position even if he knows he is not going to get the ball. He runs to get the next guy open. He has dreams to be a rocket scientist for Tesla and I have dreams for him to be first team All-Big 12 his senior season.”

**On Kansas States play style…**“Kansas State plays great defense. They gave up 10 points to defense. Not including the punt return and the safety. They do a great job coaching their team. We just have to take advantage of our opportunities and make the most of our offensive possessions. We can’t go out and drop the ball and have penalties. We have to make the most of when we have the ball.”

**On if the defense has progressed the way he wanted too…**
“We need to be better on defense. Phil and I both feel that way. I thought against Kansas we played well defensively and against a top five team you have to step up and make plays. Football is a game of making plays and OU made a lot of great plays on Saturday. For me I think defensively we just need to take another step this week. We keep getting better and I think we will have a much better feeling of where we are when we get to the bye week.”

**On Blake Lynch’s play at outside linebacker…**
“He had some plays. He has had to bounce back and forth. I know with him there is not a doubt in my mind that if he continues through this process and taking it one day at a time like Greg Roberts, he has a chance to really be something special. He is doing it. This is his first time he can come back and watch the film and see what he needs to do to get better at the SAM position. At the bye week he can really assess where he is at and what he can do to continue to improve throughout the season.”