

Baylor University Football Media Conference

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Matt Rhule Press Conference

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Thank you guys for being here. Obviously it was a great win. It was a great football game. A lot of respect to Oklahoma State. They are a tough, physical team, competitive, even on the last play. I think they might have had a chance to score and they fought to the end. That's what we told our players it was going to be.

To me, this game is 1,000 percent about our players and I know you're going to talk about this guy and that guy, but I thought it was a complete and total team effort. Some guys played one or two plays. Some guys played a ton. But it really worked this week.

They went full pads Monday, full pads Tuesday, helmets and shoulder pads Wednesday. We've never done that. Walk-through Thursday and the fast Friday at 7:00 yesterday morning. They put the work in. To come off the way we played against West Virginia, for them to go out win, lose or draw, if we had dropped that ball and lost the game, I still would have been proud of the effort and toughness.

And as I told them, we want to be the toughest team on the field. Can't always be. But we can certainly be as tough as we can possibly be.

To go out there and play that game, and really to play a team that beat us 59-16 last year; for our kids to see how hard they have worked. And that's a good football team that beat the No. 6 team in the country last week and for our guys to see how far they have come in a year, is awesome.

I also reminded them, it doesn't mean anything for next week. We have to go back through the process. I was just proud of them, and I thought it was awesome to do it on Homecoming. Just to be a part of something special, be a part of people coming back.

I thought the crowd was awesome. That's two great games, the last two games at home, down to the wire. Wish they were weren't down to the wire but they were.



I wish they were blowouts and we could all enjoy the fourth quarter.

I thought it was awesome for our crowd, our fans, for everyone to see a bunch of young people going out and playing together.

And even Denzel at the end, he didn't start the game, but as I said to the team, he certainly finished it making that play. Lots of storylines and plot lines and things you guys will ask. We certainly didn't play our best game. We had the first two drives, we could have scored. We didn't score. We turned it over in the red zone. Missed a field goal. We false started on fourth and inches. I got my second penalty of the year, so obviously I'm going to have to become more disciplined, but we're fighters. Today we were, and I thought it was a great rebound and hopefully we can continue going forward.

Q. What made you go to Charlie at that point?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Well, I hadn't planned on playing him. I told him, I'll play you when I can and once we're actually rolling I'd love to keep you out. But he was cleared.

But Jalen had taken all the first team reps and I'm one of those guys that just believe if you take the reps, you deserve to start.

I thought early on, we went right down the field the first drive, and yeah, the interception wasn't on him, and he took the ball right down the field again. So I thought we were moving the football and you know, took a little bit of a lull and I thought about putting Charlie in, one more series and went down and scored.

So I thought Jalen was doing a good job and we weren't getting production from the point, but I didn't think that was real him.

Finally, fourth quarter, I just thought, you know what, this is the time. It has nothing to do with Jalen. Just thought this is the time that maybe we needed a spark, and maybe him running around would make some plays and it certainly did. He extended a ton of drives there with his feet and certainly made the plays at the end.

We got a lot of production from a lot of guys who don't normally start with the long run. We put Bralen Taylor out there for the first time. Gerry Bohanon got a carry. I thought Josh Fleeks was really a key figure early for us making some explosive plays.

But yeah, I just thought it was the time.

Q. You've seen Charlie do this three out of the last four games with late drives. Is it the years of training, just the way that he handles himself, what do you see there from him?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Well, I think it's everybody. I think it's the offensive line. It's the receivers. It's all those guys.

You know, the play on sideline by Hurd to get us in position, they ran the wrong route. Supposed to run a post and Charlie just adjusted and threw it to him.

But you know what, good players make good plays. I thought our ability to run the ball, keep people off balance, guys were making catches for him, but you know, the moment is the moment.

I try to pay attention sometimes to what they say to you guys when you ask them questions to see what's in their brain. He said something that stuck out to me against Kansas State. It was good to get a win like this at the end of the game, because in the Big 12 most of our games are going to come down to the end.

So I think when the game comes down to the end, Charlie is not too rattled. He's not too high, he's not too low and he just keeps playing and I think the rest of our team does that.

Even that last play we're going to run quarterback draw, hope to walk in and if he didn't walk in, we talked about spiking it, kicking the field goal. There was enough time that we just called a play, throw the ball up and scored. He went to Denzel.

Two weeks ago we're playing Texas with the same situation at the end and we couldn't come down with it. Just a heck of a play by Denzel, but a heck of a play by 11, 12, 13 guys, all the guys in there, I thought they all went down -- the biggest story really I'm talking about -- sorry, just the defense, the second and six --

Q. Can you talk about that fourth and three, were you surprised that Gundy went for it at that point?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: You know, I'd question him -- I mean, just more like -- I thought they wouldn't kick the field goal because it was into the wind, you know, and that was a decision I made to take the wind in the fourth quarter, some of my coaches, they

disagreed with me and some agreed with me.

It's not a textbook case because the wind was so violent down there that they struggled with ball the first drive in the second half at the 35-yard line. I said, hey, we have the lead, let's take the wind in the fourth. They had it and they probably kicked it.

You know, we've had so many chances in that game on third and fourth down to make the play. And you know, they threw the ball on the swing, and they threw the swing and threw it back and then the quarterback read, and Greg hits them for a loss and we don't make the play.

So to finally make that play was awesome. I think a lot had to do with as the game went on, our corners and coaches got way more aggressive than our corners (ph). They were coming in and they were killing people, No. 2, great player. And as the game went on, we just played a little bit more rump (ph) and took away some of the easier throws -- and really, in the last drive, went out there and competed and made the final play.

Q. You mentioned the last two plays, Charlie on the run, the clock is ticking and you have to set up quickly. Did the fact that they are scrambling to get set up on defense, did that help that play a little bit?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: You know, they had -- it's one of those plays where it's quarterback draw but if they blitz you. You have to throw.

They were just mixing up all outlets, coverage. Everyone doing some different things. A couple times the crowd was getting upset because we're letting the clock get down to five, because when we would try to check, we would wait to see if they checked and that's what led to the one touchdown.

But I didn't think -- if you said, hey, it's an all-purpose play and Charlie will have a chance to go in and win the game for us, if not we can either clock it or we can throw it. We tried to use some tempo in certain situation. You go tempo all the time, they kind of get used to it. We tried to use tempo to surprise them, a couple quarterback sneaks, and that helped throughout the game.

Q. How important was the running game and maybe that helped slowdown the pass rush. What did that do for you guys?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Well, I think the thing is we had some big ones. One thing, we hit five, six, seven yards to keep yourself moving but we had some big runs. The run by 11 was an answer.

That's what good teams do. I talk a lot about not letting a bad play become worse. We didn't have that quarter, you know what I mean. Like it was here, there. I thought our defense bowed up in the red zone and we bowed up and tried to stop field goals, and then we also answer and that long run by Lovett was an answer.

And so we knew the running game would get better and better and better and we were able to get just enough plays and had a bunch of people carry the ball, quarterbacks carry the ball, Jalen Hurd carried the ball, Michael (ph) had a big run at the end. It's nice for us to be able to mix those things.

Q. What does it mean for you guys to come off what was -- whatever that was in Morgantown and regroup and play the way they did today?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: It means we have tough men on our team, players. As coaches, it's not going to be my first ever clunker. It's not the first one I have ever been a part of. That's what the game was.

So we have the mental capacity to just like -- I don't have to like walk to campus or go -- I can just like go from my house to work, you know, and just kind of lock myself in.

Our players, you know, they are on social media. They have to have the toughness to say, I'm going to overcome that. I thought West Virginia though, all credit, they taught us a lesson. Because they got embarrassed by Ohio State, and whereas we thought we played okay against Texas, we had our best week of practice getting ready for West Virginia. We went there, we weren't ready for what ended up coming. I thought we ready physically but once it started to get really hard and tough, we didn't respond. And that's to me what we did today. You saw a bunch of players responding.

You know, when our players came back that Friday and had that team meeting, I thought our coaches did a great job just talking to guys one-on-one, and then we challenged guys. Today was the first day some of our guys really coached them the way I want.

Like I love Drew Galitz and I think he's going to be a great one. But when we kicked the ball out of bounds, I didn't say, "That's okay, Buddy."

I said, "Do you want me to put someone else in or are you going to kick it?" You know, and he came back and made a huge kick. Because it's a lot of confidence I had in Drue with the game, seven seconds left to kick the ball deep. That's a lot of confidence most people would squib it.

We're at a point where our seniors are so tough that

you can challenge them and they love it, and then they go out and they led the young guys.

Just shows that our team is tough and that they were able to respond from disappointment and let it motivate them, and not let make them feel like, oh, there's nothing I can do.

Q. That 15-play drive with nine minutes left what was the difference in the final nine minutes?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Well, I thought they had moments, you know and they had a lot of yards rushing but didn't feel like they were running the football. They were doing such a nice job with their RPOs, but I think as we got tighter in our coverages, we just said, you know what, we can handle these guys. We let them off the took a couple time on third down. You know, the first third down of the game, the kid just didn't blitz and they scrambled for 20.

An offense like that, once you let them get up and running, after two first downs, they are hard to stop. First thing was we didn't give up explosive plays and made a couple plays when it mattered.

Still didn't get any turnovers. So it's hard to win a game against a Big 12 offense when you don't take the ball away from them. They showed resolve and they made just enough stops in the red zone and held to enough field goals to give us a chance.

Q. What does it say about Mims that his only catch of the game is the game winner?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: You know, he didn't play the way he probably wanted to play last week and Tyquan did, so we just said, we're going to start Tyquan and play both.

And he got on the field -- he wasn't feeling well, had a stomach bug and a couple of our guys cramped up a little bit and so we didn't play him early because he just wasn't feeling well.

But the thing I've challenged Denzel with, and I love that young man, he's a special, special person, is to go become the most competitive guy on the field. Great receivers, they think they are open every play and they want the ball every play and that's been the challenge to him.

And so he waited his turn. He did his job. He played hard, but when the time came he went and made the play. People tell you in life: I believe in you. Well, that's showing. We showed Galitz, we trust him by letting him kick it deep. We trust Mims; that a lot of times, if we didn't trust him, we would have just taken a knee, kicked a field goal, caught the ball and gone to overtime. He handled a small bit of adversity by not

starting but as I said finding a way to finish.

Q. You guys are now 5-4 and one game away from being Bowl eligible, that has to be a thought in the back of your mind. How is the team feeling about that?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Well, they probably feel differently than me. I'm going to go home with a 13-year-old who is going to say one more game all night. (Laughter) I'm going to say, process, process, process.

You know, I just don't -- I just want to go win next week. That was the one thing I told our team before the game: Win that game -- we're just going to have to keep saying what's next and handling what's in front of us.

Now what's next is a game to get Bowl eligible. That's realistic. I hope that we have -- what's next is really how we come pose ourselves tonight. Let our players go out and have a great time and that we are models of citizenship on campus and that we treat people well and go out and have a good time and celebrate with our family and friends and then everyone gets up tomorrow and goes to church and does what they do and comes in later and studies and we have a great week.

That's how my mind thinks. We have to be elite tonight, elite tomorrow. Yes, I want them to go to a Bowl game, but I don't want to minimize what it means, Dr. Livingstone and Brad, they were on a plane coming back last year after that game and we got beat up.

Now I'm not going to talk about that too much because they are going to try to beat us 59-16 again. That's a great football team. But it just shows our guys, hey, it's working. Not what I'm doing, what you guys are doing is working and we have to do it better this week.

I'd like to go try to win this game. Excited to come back home and I'm excited to go out and play at AT&T. So we have three more chances.

You know what was really cool today, the first time ever in the history of me being a head coach, which isn't real long, I let a player talk to the team before play. Taylor Young was here and I said, "Hey, you got them" and he was awesome.

It's like, it means a lot to me because these guys are in a position they are in because of what Taylor did.

And then I want them to go to a Bowl game not for me, not for -- maybe for my son, you know, for our coaches, families who do give so much.

But I want to go for our seniors, because we are going to have a chance somewhere down the line to go fight

for and win championships because of what these guys have sacrificed and I want to go for our families.

We endure a lot and it's not woe it me. I'm not home to endure it. When people are saying something about my family, you know, my wife puts up with a lot and so I'm just happy when our kids, our players, they have a chance to go celebrate like that. Being in that locker room is way more fun for me than a Bowl game, you know.

And so, but that is what's next, so we are going to go fight, scratch, claw to get a win. Not one more win, we are going to try to get a win next week; and win, lose or draw, we talk about what's next and try to do it the week after. There's a lot of people that sacrifice a lot to get us here in a year and if this is the high point of the year, we had a bad year. We have to do more.

Q. You talk about players just needing to make plays -- Morgan with the blocked punt and return, could not have come at a more opportune time. How huge was that?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Yeah, that was the message to our guys last night. I showed teams against these guys making plays. The end of the day, the good Lord blessed these guys with talent and put people in their lives to train the talent and gave them the opportunity.

I wanted them to go out there and play fearless and not worry about the results, but just go do what they are capable of doing. You saw a lot of guys make a lot of plays and they made plays, too. Some of them were small. Some might just be a pass break. Some might be something little, but I thought we made a lot of plays today, many more than we have.

It's nice to see when it comes from young guys and nice to see when it comes from old guys.

Even on the last play of the game, the other team with a chance for a Hail Mary and us running around and we found a way to make the play.

Q. You have to bring back the helmet --

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: Did you like that --

Q. Pretty big win?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: As you know, I'm a Penn Stater, one helmet -- I thought was really cool in that, something that's unique to Baylor and something that comes from a time ago. Every year I reminds our players that Homecoming, it's for us to show everyone that comes back, everyone that came before us, that we are being good stewards of their resources and we are standing on their shoulders and they can proud of

what we are doing.

To wear anything that comes from way back when is cool and I just haven't been given anything with a bare on it -- (Laughter) try not to read Twitter on game day. Hopefully people liked it. Seemed like our players liked it. We could have worn anything after that win today.

Q. What are your comments on how he's playing and his leadership role with the team?

HEAD COACH MATT RHULE: I think he's a sophomore, he's a work-in-progress. He's getting better and better. Best thing I can say about Charlie is when I brought him to my office yesterday, I said, hey, I'm not going to start you, he didn't act entitled. He didn't act made. He was happy for Jalen.

He said, "I'll be ready when you need me."

And when I said to him in the middle of the second quarter, are you ready to go, he's like, I'm ready if you need me. It wasn't about him, and so when you have that, that's important, right.

And so that's the way Jalen was about it. I told him, I'm not going to start you. He's like, I'm ready, if you need me or whatever, if you or not. I just want to have guys like that.

If you have guys like that -- and Gary gets one play, right, but it's his first college play. Kind of a big deal. Carried the football. Got his four or five yards. When your best players are selfless and work hard, you'll always have a chance, and that's what I want people to know about this team.