

Baylor University Football Media Conference

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Matt Rhule Press Conference

TCU - 16, Baylor - 9

MATT RHULE: Well, obviously disappointed in the result today. As I told our seniors, I thought it was a game that we had every opportunity to win. As I told our team, and a game that I know how badly we wanted to win for our seniors. We wanted to send them off the right way. That being said, we turned the ball over three times, penalties, had nine penalties and really penalties at crucial, crucial times, and I thought that really interrupted any opportunity we had to score and get a lead because we felt like if we got a lead, we would hopefully be in control of the game.

I thought our defense, except for two plays, played a fantastic football game. But obviously it wasn't quite enough for us.

We have one more opportunity next week to go out and finish this thing off the right way, try to get our sixth win. As I said to our team, we're a team for seven more days, and hopefully we can find a way to win that game and extend our season for another month or so.

I'm sad for the seniors because as I told them, not many people in the history of college football have been through what they've been through and done what they've done, and I've seen it, part of it, on the inside. They've stayed when they could have run. They've stayed. And they took a lot of flak, and they were loyal, and they were strong. They showed courage. They were just men.

Even today, I thought they availed themselves like the winners that they are. So I'm sad, deeply sad that we couldn't have them walk off the field winning the football game the way we wanted them to. But that certainly is not their legacy, and we'll try one more week to get them the win that they need. With that, I'll see what questions you have.

Q. Can you talk about last week, trying a little too hard, did you see some of that today?



MATT RHULE: I thought that was all I talked about at halftime. I'm not going to say trying too hard, just tense. You always know on senior day the seniors are going to have a little bit of tears in their eyes, and they're always going to be a little bit tight, but I thought there was a lot of that from a lot of different people. You know, we started off the game, we fumble, it looked like we were going to be able to run the ball, we score, we get the ball down in the red zone, we fumble. But I thought, especially on defense, they just kept playing and they kept fighting.

Everything is sort of a work in progress. We kept talking about, hey, this is the same as last week, and we had a chance to come back and win. You know what, let's hang in there. And I thought they hung in there, and at the end of the day, we had the ball with a chance to go tie the game. They never let it get away from them, and just too many plays that beat ourselves.

Q. How costly were those turnovers, especially on your goal line --

MATT RHULE: Yeah, I can't necessarily remember how many points they led to, but certainly we had a 1st and goal at the 6-yard line, we just blocked a punt, we felt good about that, so that's four chances to run the football in. So sort of our red zone has always been sort of out a little bit further, and we thought, hey, we're going to be able to take a shot with hurt or throw the ball on the flat or something and score, and just a missed snap. That's something that you do every day.

That certainly hurt. The one on the first drive hurt. But I thought our defense responded, held them to a field goal, I believe, and in the second half, I think it was the second half, the pick, I thought our guys hung in there. They hung in there. I thought our defense, they just wanted to keep playing, and all the way down to that last drive when they got the ball back for the offense with a chance to go win it.

We were able to overcome, though, I thought.

Q. Was this game almost maybe just too much on the line? Did they think too much about being bowl eligible as you try to -- was this almost as if they hyperventilated?

MATT RHULE: I don't know. I mean, I'd have to really think about that. I thought the match-up that we

thought was going to be difficult for us was going to be our offensive line versus their defensive line. They had 10 sacks against us last year, so we've improved. But a lot of those penalties came from holds and things inside, and I haven't seen those plays, so I can't comment on them.

But it looked early like we were going to be able to run the football. We hit some explosive runs or at least some decent runs. Lovett was running the ball well, but I thought in pass protection and things, Charlie kind of dropped back and would have to get out of there now. I'd have to watch the tape to see exactly what it was. But that was the match-up. I thought a lot of the penalties then came from that.

You know, I just know that they wanted to win. It was like -- I told them at halftime, you guys are worried about winning instead of beating the other team. Just go play. You can keep saying that until finally it clicks, right. I thought it was better in the second half. I thought defensively it was certainly better in the second half. They had a lot of energy on the sideline. We have one more week to try to do it.

Q. You've had to say that at halftime almost every game this year. When will they get it?

MATT RHULE: You know, I don't know. I think they get a few more things -- it's easy to say, it's hard to do, right. Most games in college football today, you watch, unless it's like an absolute blowout, it's like 7-3 or 14-7 or 10-3 in the first quarter, you know. Not many games kind of get -- it's really the second half where teams start to open up the score, and over time wear people out. We thought we were going to be able to wear them out to a degree, and we weren't able to do so.

But you know, Lovett fumbled. He's a sophomore. Charlie threw a pick. He's a sophomore. Keep coaching them, and these things are hard when they happen, but you hope that they just grow from them and learn from them, and when it does click, it clicks for good.

It's frustrating to say that every week, but that's where we are. We were able to hang in the game with a chance to win, we just didn't make the psychotic, explosive, crazy play that they made, you know, the play that Reagor made. Four guys hit him and he runs around the edge and scores a touchdown. We never made one of those plays. We came close, but never made that play. And even down to the last play of the game, we throw it up, we've still got a chance to go catch that ball maybe, and they made the play. We've just got to maybe make one more play.

Q. Could you tell on that snap, did Charlie just come out early --

MATT RHULE: I can't tell that, yeah I had have to see it because my eyes were over on where the run was going to be, just trying to see how they blocked it. We had a chance again later, we had 3rd and 1 at whatever yard line with a chance to go, thinking, hey, we're going to run it twice and see what happens here, and we miss a block, key block at the point of attack, and don't get that one. So there were a lot of things like that you could point to today.

Q. After this week of practice, did you feel like y'all were prepared?

MATT RHULE: Oh, yeah, yeah. I don't think we'd have played defense the way we played today if you weren't. Again, there's sometimes you can go out there and play and you know there's a match-up that's going to be one that you're nervous about, and I thought we knew what happened last year, O-line versus D-line, we thought, hey, this is going to be one we're going to have to negate. Just I don't think we were able to play up front the way we wanted to in terms of pass protection and running the football, and the penalties were the -- mainly came from that. We didn't have a lot of things down the field. We had one where Christoph -- Charlie was scrambling so he turned to block and we threw it, like just keep playing, right, but a lot of them came up inside.

Q. Their pass rush notwithstanding, was there anything about what they were doing that didn't allow you guys to stretch the field like you wanted, like you could have or maybe hoped to?

MATT RHULE: No, I think we took that one shot to Mims early, took another shot down the field to him, and it was out of bounds. Took a couple ones called, and then Charlie had to run. The ones we played -- when Denzel was alone in the boundary, they doubled him, so they were going to make sure that Denzel didn't beat them, and we were able to get Hurd the ball a couple times, but they were able to take those guys away, which was a good play. If you want to play us, that's what you should do. I think that's why we had some runs that hit, but we just weren't able to be kind of quite consistent. When we did get a big run, it got called back. But I thought their plan of taking away Denzel was a good one probably.

Q. Did they take away the middle of the field, too, in the second half?

MATT RHULE: Well, we were playing with a little more four receivers, they put an extra guy in the field. They put an extra guy in, so they took out a D-lineman a lot of the game and put an extra guy in the middle of the field, so they played -- even at the end of the game, we're running routes that should be open in the middle of the field, and they just sort of had an extra guy there. It was a good plan, and you'd like to think if they have

fewer guys rushing you could hang in there, and some plays we did, and some plays we didn't. Good plan. Coach Patterson is obviously a defensive coach, so good plan by those guys.

Still have plenty of options and places to go with the football, right. You just have to kind of make those plays. 4th and 7 we throw the ball to Jalen Hurd, he makes the play. You know, all of us probably look back and say, dang, I wish would have done that differently or made this play or all that.

Q. You mentioned coming to the game the O-line was the issue you were most worried about. Does that kind of hamstringing you in terms of play calling?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, and I don't want to say, like we were ham -- I don't want to make it sound like -- all I'm saying is we knew the area we would have to have the most success in would be the offensive line. I just think when you have penalties it kills any sort of vibe that you have, does that make sense? So we had some crucial key penalties and some crucial key turnovers. So when a drive was pretty clean, it was pretty clean, and when we didn't, it wasn't.

Then what happens, whether it's offense, defense, special teams, you end up kind of trying to figure something out as opposed to just getting in a rhythm. They've been able to really keep people kind of hamstrung early in games. They've turned the ball over a lot in the second half and people have gotten leads on them, and they protected the football today, and we didn't make enough plays on offense to make them have to drop back and throw the ball. They were able to sort of sit there and hand the ball off, hand the ball off, and that was their game plan, I'm sure, to run the ball and keep it close and make a play or two with Jalen, and they did, and we didn't make those plays.

Q. When you said you thought you could use your offensive line to make the difference --

MATT RHULE: That's not what I said. I think I said something to the effect of we knew we'd have to negate their defensive line. That was a couple drives with some tempo. So when we didn't have penalties, we were up against the chains. We knew we weren't going to kick a lot of field goals, so we were going to go two downs, down in the red zone. But there was just a couple times where we maybe had a good play and then all of a sudden it was 1st and 15 and that sort of puts you up against it.

Q. What do you have to do to get your line to the point where you can feel comfortable against a defensive line like this?

MATT RHULE: Oh, I probably made this a little too much about the line. I think they'll just keep getting

better and better and better. I thought we probably did a lot of great things playing up front, playing with a freshman tight end, a freshman left tackle. They'll get better. We're playing with two seniors on the right side who are warriors, and I love them. Tech is going to be one of the best linemen in the Big 12 next year, and so I just think at the end of the day, just some of those penalties that happened up front kind of got us away. Again, we went into the game knowing that their strength would be their defensive line. L.J. Collier I think is really a special player. Banogu is a special player, so we said, hey, we'll have to have a plan for them. We went in there, we thought we did, we had some -- when we did, we had some success. But there were some other times where we had holes and stuff that kept us out of whack.

So if that's really what I'm trying to say, maybe I'm not saying it real great.

So the penalties weren't coming from everywhere. They weren't coming from the wide outs, they were coming just kind of inside and up front, and that was a match-up we had to win, and again, today we scored nine points, so we didn't win it enough. No one really won it enough.

Q. B.J. with two blocked kicks, is that a knack thing or is that a scheme thing?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, they put him in a position. Mike Siravo and Fran Brown put him in a position, and he went and got it. It was just kind of him running through and getting his hand up, which was a big deal for us. We thought maybe we had a chance to get one in there. Unfortunately it went out of bounds. We had a backwards pass by them that was about that far from staying inbounds. We had a blocked kick that was about that far from staying inbounds. But B.J. is a talented young man and helped us on defense, and then that was a big play for us on special teams.

Q. This was one of the few games (indiscernible) how did that impact (indiscernible)?

MATT RHULE: Well, I think we were 2 of 15 on 3rd down, so I think really the time of possession was probably a little more on our end, not being able to extend drives. So we've been pretty decent on 3rd down. I think we've been -- I don't know what the exact number is off the top, whatever. But there were just too many 3rd and longs, too many 3rd and unmanageables. And then they came out and they zero pressured us in the second half. They were coming after us, and this play it's this, this play it's that. We just didn't quite execute at the level we needed to to get those plays.

You know, defensively we had -- like we had a couple times where like we had a 3rd and 7, then we had -- we

jumped offsides for the third time in the game, made a 3rd and 2 and extended the drive, so there were some self-inflicted wounds on defense that maybe extended some drives. Maybe their desire to really sort of run the football and run the clock out might have contributed to it, but I also think it was just really our 3rd down. We just weren't efficient enough on 3rd down tonight.

Q. Going back to the blocked kicks on special teams, is there anything -- has there been anything that you've seen has contributed to your special teams success with the blocked kicks this season?

MATT RHULE: Player buy-in and the way we practice it and the PAT field goals and all that, we do it. We do it a lot, and we do it live on Tuesdays, which a lot of people won't do. And then punt-wise, I think blocking punts is all about players. B.J. is getting them, Christian Morgan is getting them. So we're not drawing cool things up, it's just good players are kind of running in there, making the play and blocking it. And that's their gift.

Q. I know not to look ahead, but you guys are much improved from last season, obviously, but if for some reason you aren't able to make it to a bowl, how would you categorize this season? Would you categorize it as a success?

MATT RHULE: It's hard for me to say that because I'd hate to think about losing next week. I would say that I'm really proud of our players and coaches for how far they've come from last year, and I'm really proud of our seniors and just the things they've overcome. And people might say, yeah, I can understand -- when you're on the inside of it and you've seen everything from the beginning, no one can ever understand what was -- has been presented in front of these guys, what they've been through, what was here when we got here, the things they've overcome. So I'm proud of them. I told the seniors, man, I mean it when I say, like not many people have been through what they've been through. So yeah, I mean, we want to win next week. We want to go to a bowl game, and I want to extend the season. And I don't know, maybe it's fitting that it comes down to the last game, and can they go -- I can sit here and talk all day about playing under pressure as if there's no pressure, but you've got to go do it. So maybe this is what has to happen. They have to go play a last game and play a championship-caliber game and can you go win when everything is riding on it. So maybe that's the ending we need.

But make no mistake, this is -- I'm proud to death of these guys. They're all graduating, they're doing things right. They've improved beyond measure. I mean, we were getting laughed off the field sometimes. We got laughed off the field this year last year in this game

against TCU, and so they made a major step, just need to make one more next week. We'd like to find a way to finish it the right way.

Q. Did you have any concerns about emotionally this week, getting this team back for Texas Tech?

MATT RHULE: No, I don't think so. I thought last week was emotional. Last week there was all that stuff coming out of that, and I thought they showed up for that, for this game. This game wasn't obviously the game we wanted it to be, but you know, again, when we play good defense, when we hold people, that was a step forward. So I think they'll show up this week. I mean, there's too many guys in there that have pride and that are competitive and that want to win, and there's too many kids in there that want to win for the seniors and want to finish it the right way, and I think we're all excited to play Texas Tech. We're all excited to have a Thanksgiving week game.

So I would be -- I know they'll be ready to go this week. We've got too many guys of high caliber that have picked themselves up off the mat too many times, and they're hurting today because they couldn't leave senior day, but I think they'll quickly refocus and say, hey, I want to go win this game next week.

Q. Emotions aside, how do you get this team technically over the hump when it comes down to just football (indiscernible) more than nine points?

MATT RHULE: Yeah, I mean, that's our job as coaches is to just keep coaching. It's always a fine line when you sit up here because you never want to sound like you're blaming the players, because I'm not. I point out like, hey, we have to do this better, that better, but at the end of the day, I think it's our job just to keep improving and keep getting better, and so we have one more game to try to put it all together and get a win.

And then if we win that game, then we'll go try to win the bowl game. You know, and then we have a whole other off-season. You know, I just think that over time you just keep doing it, you just keep doing it, and you watch -- you're sitting out there today and you watch Charlie and you watch Lovett and you watch Ebner and you watch Mims and they're fighting like heck for the seniors, but they'll be seniors some day, too, and you hate the mistakes right now as they happen, but as long as they continue to learn from them, we'll get better.

We have to get better in terms of technically, we have to get better in terms of schematically, we have to get better in terms of no penalties, we need to get better in terms of not giving up big plays. We need to get better in terms of not turning the ball over, and at some point we have to take the ball away. We haven't won the turnover battle all year. You couldn't find many teams

that have won five games and they're minus 13, whatever we are, minus 10, whatever we are. That's just our job. You know, we'll just pick up again. We won't feel sorry for ourselves. We'll go to bed tonight, wake up tomorrow, we get to work for next week and see if we can't right it next week.

Q. Coach, how are you feeling personally?

MATT RHULE: In terms of?

Q. In terms of the game and the pressure of the bowl game.

MATT RHULE: Oh, there's no -- I mean, my whole life is pressure, know what I'm saying? Our coaches, their whole lives are pressure. But I also feel pressure to be a good husband, a good father, a good everything, right, so I'm upset right now. But what am I going to do? I'm going to go home and play with my daughters, and I'm going to talk to my son who was on the sideline with us. He's probably devastated right now, and I'm going to go home and smile at my wife, and I'm going to text our players all night, I'm going to talk to them, and then I'll show up tomorrow and I'll work -- I'd work the same whether we won or lost today. I think that's probably why Mack hired me. If you were an emotional position, you wouldn't have made it through three weeks here. I just try to be the same guy every day, and when I stop being the same guy every day, George DeLeon or Phil Snow reminds me to be the same guy every day, and so that's my job. My job is not to be emotional, but would I be happy if we won? Absolutely. But everything happens for a reason, man, and like I said, maybe we're supposed to go win it on the last game of the year. I mean, my second year at Temple we went 2-10 my first year, my second year at Temple we were 5-6 and had to go win the last game to be bowl eligible, and we did it, so I plan on trying to go do it next week versus Coach Kingsbury, who I respect and a good team. But these players, they don't deserve anything from me other than my best, and from each other, other than their best. It's not pressure. I gave them my best this week, so I'm disappointed, but I can look them in the eye. I told the seniors, I'm sorry I couldn't have done more. But that's my job, to give them the best I have, and all of us give each other the best, and we'll move forward.