



Baylor Quotes Coach Matt Rhule

Baylor vs. Texas Tech
Saturday, November 24, 2018
AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas



COACH RHULE: Thank you. Dr. [Linda] Livingstone, thank you for being here. Obviously, very proud of our football team. You know, not perfect. We still have those penalties that drive you crazy when you have a chance to put games away.

But I thought our team showed the toughness and the discipline and the courage to make the plays down the stretch that you have to make to win a game. And I thought they showed that all this week, putting last week behind them, going home for Thanksgiving, you know, getting back on time, being focused and playing the game. And just really proud of them as a whole, proud of them as a team, you know.

Jalen Hurd got hurt in the first drive, and we had a whole game plan set up around him. I told him, Jalen, it was something in his knee, something in his ankle. He just got invited to Senior Bowl. Probably a first-round draft pick.

"Jalen, you should sit this one out." He was like, "No, Coach. I'm playing."

So just special kids. And JaMycal Hasty had something at home yesterday. I told him to go home and miss the game. He went home, and his mom dropped him off at 9:00 this morning to be here even though he knew he wasn't playing.

I'm happy for them and happy for the locker room and happy we have a chance to move forward.

I have a lot of respect for Kliff Kingsbury and that Texas Tech team. I thought it was fitting we ended the game with running the football, finally getting an interception. Great play by Blake Lynch and a key sack by B.J. Thompson. It wasn't perfect, but it was a step forward. And, as I told our team, they have to deal with me for another couple of weeks because we get to have bowl practice now and do the things they've worked so hard to do.

Q. Touchdown drive early in the fourth. What did that tell you about this team, its focus in this game?

COACH RHULE: I thought they had tremendous focus. The biggest issue is we had seven penalties in the first half. We haven't asked Christoph [Henle] to play on the ball as an on-the-ball tight end. Even on the last drives he had three or four false starts. He's a freshman. There's a fine balance between getting after him and also being positive with him. So I think we knew -- we thought we could control a lot of things we were doing.



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But I thought Jeff Nixon called a great game today. Just the penalties. So we just kept saying hey, to the offense, no matter what happens, go respond. And, to the defense, kept saying hang in there. Go make some plays. Really the story of the second half to me -- sorry, guys -- I'm not feelin' really great -- our kicking game -- twice now, we allowed them to return the opening kickoff back to the 30. We punted the ball, and they ran it back. The kicking game hurt us. We had to shore that up there at the end.

You know, there's no question to me about these young men's ability to overcome adversity. There's not a tougher group. And, you know, we know that we're a fourth quarter team. That's where we do our best work. We just kept trying to hang in the game and keep building, building, building, until we got to the fourth quarter.

Q. Matt, I know -- I think you said a couple of times, but definitely at the spring game, this team would be going to a bowl this year. You kind of promised the fans in Waco that after winning 11 seasons. What gave you that belief? And what does it say now about the progress that you guys have made in year two here going to that bowl?

COACH RHULE: Well, I think it speaks to the character and who those guys are. You know, I just said on the radio, no one really knows what it's like when you win one game or two games. Unfortunately, I've been there. I was on a 2-9 Buffalo team. I was on a 2-10 Temple team that got bowl-eligible the next year and on a 1-11 team that got bowl-eligible. When you win one game, you preach the message all day about patience and progress and faith.

All you hear is negativity, and it is natural. Even as the head coach, you start to question is that work? Is that really work? Either you break, fracture, or come together.

What I saw last year was a team that was coming together. And, you know, when you win a game like today after Thanksgiving when both teams are 5-6 and fighting to go to a bowl, it really comes down to me. It comes down to which team loves and respects each other enough -- not that they don't -- we knew we had to love and respect each other enough to play for each other.

I saw that last year. I saw the guys getting better as the year went on. I saw them block out the noise and hanging in there. I saw them all off-season. I thought it was important to take the pressure off them and speak it into existence. And this is where we'll have to be. We'll go back at the end of the year and look back on some missed opportunities and say, Dang, we think we could have done better.



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But we also are going to look back at key wins, like beating Oklahoma State team that's beaten some top ten teams and say we did some big things, too. None bigger than this. To go out there, put pressure on, you know, and to win a game with pressure, that, to me, is hard to do. I just saw that resolve in the players last year. I knew if we could just put a couple more pieces together, hopefully, we could get to this point. They were able to do it.

Q. Matt, y'all have been having trouble forcing turnovers all year. You got two big interceptions there late. How important were those and how good was it to see that?

COACH RHULE: It was awesome. You know, for Raleigh [Texada], he had the one in the Texas game. Raleigh's second one. You talk about a guy that's just improving, gotten better. That was a key play. They threw the ball up to their money guy. He went and made the play.

The one at the end, Blake Lynch had his hand on a couple. We had our hands on a bunch. You know, the thing that started to happen, when we drop, everyone would put their head down. We were starting to laugh about it. We'll get it. We hung in. There that was the key play by Blake. And the key return. And I thought the sack right before that by B.J. Thompson, one-handed sack was an extraordinary play.

I don't know if I said earlier, one thing I want to do -- I don't know how many questions I'll get -- what a day by Chris Platt to step up. Coming off the knee. And things haven't always gone to him this year the way he wanted. I thought he made some unbelievable plays. That was the key to me today. We made key plays at key times to go win the football game.

Q. Matt, you talked about the resiliency, the grit you all showed and overcoming a lot of adversity. What does it mean for this program to get to a bowl and especially going forward?

COACH RHULE: I think there's really two things. Really three things maybe.

First one is the tangible of that we get another month to play. We have a bunch of guys under the red-shirt rule. We had Garret [McGuire] and another one to not get Garret in, which isn't fair to him. Josh Fleeks. We have guys that are banged up. And they'll have to -- I'm sorry -- they'll have to step up. And so they get more time. Even the guys redshirting get more time.

So that, to me, will really help our team move forward. Sometimes take some guys and try them in other positions. That's the benefit of bowl. The intangible is that those seniors, you know, they get to be part of the team for another month. We get to kind of hang in there a little bit longer together.

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The third thing is now there is some faith. I've asked them to do some hard things, and they've done them. And they sometimes probably wanted to ask why they've done them. We went from one win to a bowl. The freshmen will know a bowl is what you're supposed to expect. They'll see this as the bare minimum. And you better -- my daughter is raising her hand -- and then they'll see some of those players go off to the NFL this year.

They'll say okay, this does work for me personally. And they'll see other guys graduate, in graduate school have success. All of the things we do, all of the things they say -- why do I have to get up for breakfast, Coach? Why can't I wear my hat? Why can't I have a cell phone in the hotel? They now start to, hopefully, say it works. We're a tough, disciplined team. That's what you hope.

Q. Matt, you talked about this team not being able to just go play and -- relax and go play. Did they do that in the second half, especially the way that you guys did it with running the block, running the ball and doing it that way?

COACH RHULE: I thought we did it in the first half, too. That first score, that was on the coaching staff. We ran one coverage. They looked to the sideline to check. We checked. Perfect call. Half of them got it, half of them didn't.

Phil Snow, who is a really intense man, said, "That's all me." I thought that was key. So you know, he put his ego aside, which he probably did. Maybe us signaling in. We didn't get it in fast enough. But we just put that behind us. That, to me, was key, was knowing they were going to throw a flurry.

Kliff [Kingsbury] is one of the great offensive minds in football. He's going on the first 20 plays to come after you. You have to withstand that and then answer, and so for us to go right down and score a touchdown was real progress for us.

So I thought today, like we just said, hey, let's go play for each other, one snap at a time. Let's not play for the bowl. Let's play for each other, and the bowl will come. I thought you saw a team -- I talked about Jalen and Michael. But there were other guys who laid it on the line for the team today.

Q. A year ago this weekend, after losing to TCU, you said this team will be a bowl team. What made you think that was going to happen? And you did ever doubt yourself?

COACH RHULE: Just kind of what I said to Chuck, you know. I just thought, after seeing the way they improved, they would get there.

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I don't know that I doubted it. I kind of woke up this morning like, all right now, you know -- I look back at all of the things I could maybe have done differently. Boy, I wish I would have done that differently and that differently.

But I preach this message to our team that all of the things happen to you, happen to you for a reason. And they prepare you for the next opportunity. So all of the things that have happened to us throughout the course of the year prepared us for this opportunity today. That's why I thought it was fitting to run the ball in the fourth quarter. It was fitting for [Chris] Platt to make the plays. It was fitting for us to get a turnover at the end, to get a sack, to finish it in four minutes.

I just believe in the players. I just believe in the way they've handled adversity. Sometimes you look back at the wins and losses. And a lot of times, you know the story lines and block out things and focus on each other. I think we have a team that is close. We have a team that -- that might sound corny. What does that mean? "A team that's close"? We don't have a team that's yelling at me. Why is he touching the ball and I'm not. We have a team that blocks for each other. If we can continue that -- the post to Tyquan [Thornton] for the touchdown, they got thrown a play earlier. Jeff [Nixon] called a play. And he ran a post. He said, "Coach, the post is wide open. If you call it, they'll run right by the guy."

We called it. But Tyquan [Thornton] was in the game, and he caught it. I said you better thank Denzel [Mims] for that. Should have gone to Denzel, but he was out. Denzel laughed. There is not a lot of ego in that room.

I think, when you see that, you see some talent, the players that have that, we get better in a couple of key areas, hopefully, we can get to that point and beyond.

Q. How do you throw a football?

COACH RHULE: I'll throw you when we get home.

Q. Coach, the way you all won this game, thinking back to how you built this team over the last couple of years, is this kind of your ideal blueprint to have all three areas rise up and salt it away at the end?

COACH RHULE: We would like to be a lot better in a lot of areas. We don't want to turn the ball over in the first half like we did. We want to get more turnovers. I think there was a game early in the year, they asked me why I didn't go to 4:00. I knew I wanted to improve as a team. We knew for us to have a chance to win, this team, we would

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have to be a tough physical team. We would have to be able to run the football when it mattered. That's everybody. Some of those balls we threw out to [Chris] Platt, that's the O-line block the run. That's the running back running. That's Charlie [Brewer] getting the right read. When you run plays like that, you're playing as a team.

That's really all I want. I want a team that complements each other. When the offense turned the ball over, our defense, if you look at them, they come out and they get a lot of stops after turnovers. They don't panic. They don't point fingers. They play together. That's really all you want. You can handle adversity and success equally the same if you have a team that plays together.

Q. Charlie Brewer looked like he got back to his old self, 300 yards, plenty of touchdowns. Was the running game helpful in getting him back to where he needed to go?

COACH RHULE: Yeah, I don't want to think about last week. I thought that Charlie -- one of the big things was some guys made plays down the field. Tyquan [Thornton] made that play down the field. [Chris] Platt made that play down the field. We were able to protect for him better. Still not at the level we want.

If you want to see the program to continue to move forward, we have to protect the quarterback a lot better. And, obviously, the run game. The fact that our defense hung in there. They scored on the first two or three drives and we were able to hang in there for awhile. If the game doesn't get away us from, we can stay true to who we are and throw it. And that was key.

Q. Matt, with Jalen [Hurd] hurt, or limited, I guess that put more on [John] Lovett and [Trestan] Ebner. Can you talk about the way those guys responded, a little over 200 yards for those two guys?

COACH RHULE: They were probably a step or two away from knocking a couple out of the park. Our plan was with JaMycal down, he was an emergency guy, Abram [Smith] 's back. Our plan was to run Jalen -- we thought he would have 30 touches today. He got banged up. Wouldn't come out of the game. But I knew it wasn't right to put him at tailback, more to keep him at receiver.

But [John] Lovett and [Trestan] Ebner responded. He had one down the left side that we thought would be a touchdown. They're getting better. They're sophomores. Sometimes you forget like, you know, Lovett, run with the ball. I bring him over. I realize we haven't been in four minutes a lot. Last time was Kansas last year where we're running the ball. So it is nice when you can learn things in wins.

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I thought our offensive line blocked really well. Saved a couple of false starts. Second and five a couple of times and ended up being a little bit longer yardage. Keep correcting some things. They were pretty stout defense. They gave up yards passing. To be able to run the football, I know that was good -- that was really -- I thought the guys up-front, Jeff and Glenn and Shawn Bell and the guys, Joey McGuire did a nice job of finding some unbalanced surfaces to run the football in that were a little unusual that created some lanes and some angles.