



2018 Academy Sports + Outdoors Texas Bowl Vanderbilt University vs. Baylor University



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2018 ACADEMY SPORTS + OUTDOORS TEXAS BOWL VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY VS. BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

BAYLOR HEAD COACH MATT RHULE

Opening Statement:

"Well, first off, I want to make sure we thank the Academy Sports + Outdoors Texas Bowl. I thought it's been an outstanding week. I'm happy we won but life – not life changing but life altering, life happy moments for our players, for their families and our kids and our family, it's been a great week and want to thank the Texans and people of Houston. It maybe means a little bit more to us doing it probably here in the state, where our family and friends could be here. I thought our crowd today was awesome and we very much appreciate them for that. I thought today was a hard fought game, came down to the end. There are stories in there that you couldn't imagine. John Mayers kicking his first ever play and has to go kick a couple field goals. Issac Power, first of play and he has to kick it an inch from the goal line and he crushes it, and that's just two guys. But that's, to me, emblematic of the grit of our team, the toughness of our team, and the never say die attitude from our senior class all the way down to the freshmen that just walked on to the program. So, proud of our guys, very grateful for the Bowl, a lot of respect to Villanova (Vanderbilt) and Coach Mason. I saw the running back out there, unbelievable performance by him. That was a good football game, and hopefully our seniors leave feeling like they left a legacy, and hopefully our young players build off it as we move into the future. I'm very proud to be here right now."

You guys showed a whole lot of resilience all night and it was needed in this game, as back and forth as it was.

"Yeah, as I told our guys, would we have wanted it any other way; the way our season's gone, the way we battled back. We didn't want it to be easy, and that was a great football game. And at the same time, who are we to think a team – they lost to Notre Dame 21-17, they beat Tennessee for the third straight year, they won three of their last four and they play in the SEC, like that's a real football team. They are going to fight and battle till the end, and I was proud of our guys for fighting and battling till the end, even when we dropped that last interception on third down, to go out and get the stop on fourth down I thought was huge. So many different guys stepping up, and that's what was fun about it for me was watching it, Charlie (Brewer) hits Trestan (Ebner) for a touchdown; hits Marques (Jones) for a touchdown. Marques is a guy that does his job, and plays hard, and plays well and starts the year as a walk on, and finishes it with the game winning touchdown. To me that's really who our guys are."

Coach had at least five fourth down conversions, some short yardage, but 4th and 13th, not short yardage. Can you talk about that for a second?

"Yeah, you know, the fourth and one was a long one, and we did that against Texas Tech. We went for a fourth and one on our own 25, and we did a fourth and one again. You're going to look back, I think Charlie (Brewer) has been one of the great quarterback sneak quarterbacks of all time, this year. It might sound silly, but it's been so good for us. The pass to Denzel (Mims) was really I would say this was Charlie's football IQ because it was a high/low, where there's a guy at like six yards and a guy at 16, and he knew he really couldn't throw it to the guy at six yards, and he found a way to make that throw. I thought what Charlie said, I thought our offensive line did a really nice job. We were there to win. We weren't going to come out and be safe. We were going to push the ball down the field and go for it on fourth down and have some fun and we thought the best way to win the game was just keep possession of the ball, especially when they started moving it pretty well."

One year ago, your team went 1-11. So from that point last year to now, how much has this program and team grown and how big is it to end the year with a bowl victory?



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“You know, I asked them the other day and I said it to them before the game, I asked them to think about where they were a year ago and I think there's two things. No. 1, they did it with hard work. Like you're always looking for a substitute, looking for this, looking for that. They just did it with hard work. And even the team that played Duke earlier in the year, I just told these guys the other day, I don't even remember that team. That team doesn't even exist. Like they have just continued to evolve, every week into a good team, battle through adversity. So you know, they did it by working hard and working together. And then the second thing is, you know, as I said to them, this game was a gift. It wasn't promised to us. We got a thirteenth game, and we're here because of all the gifts that we've been given, whether it's gifts that the Lord gave us or our family and our coaches and even the wins and losses this year. Some of the losses were, you know, if you look at them, we learned a lot from them. We learned a lot from the TCU game. I learned a lot from the TCU game. We learned a lot from the Duke game. They are miserable when they happen, but if you're smart and tough and loyal to each other, you'll grow from the adversity. I want our guys to go out and take this game like a gift and learn from it, and I thought we did. We battled through everything, no matter what happened. Even me with the officials, a couple times, some plays, I was like, 'What is that?' and I tried to flip back, which is really hard for me, but I tried to do that because I learned that at the Texas game. Don't complain, just play the next play. I just think, you know, it's been just this slow process and the thing is that we want to be a program that's built on something and built on rock. So I feel like our senior class last year, the senior class this year, and then the guys that are sitting next to me and many more like them, they are building the program on the right things in terms of the right lessons and toughness and resiliency and battling back and celebrating together. That it will hopefully just continue from here.”

WR Jalen Hurd was obviously not in the game tonight and he was very special in the flats for you guys during the season. Can you talk about the adjustment period you had to make to make sure your receiver is still getting open in the flat?

“We have great receivers, and it's really just a matter of quarterbacks doing a great job of getting the ball to the right guys. You know, it was fun to have Jalen here. I appreciate what he did for us at Texas Tech. Had a hurt knee and played through it and went and had surgery and look forward to him going off to the NFL and representing Baylor with tremendous dignity and class in the NFL, but we have lots of good players. We knew that Josh Fleeks and R.J. Sneed and Pooh Stricklin and those guys would step up, and Denzel (Mims) would step up, and you know, we had a lot of guys do that. The backs, all the running backs had big plays tonight. I thought it was an opportunity for a lot of our guys to maybe step in there and fill that role and build some momentum going into next season.”

Before you guys came in here, you gathered all the seniors, took a picture with the bowl trophy. Considering the past four to five years with those seniors, what does it mean for them to cap off their career with a win like this?

“Well, I think at the risk of sounding corny, what I said to them is that I don't think they will ever, they won't recognize for a long time really what they did from last year to this year. They have been so in the moment, just kind of one day at a time. But not many people do what they have done. Not many people go from where they were the last couple years and the changes and stuff. But they've done it. I'm just as proud of the fact that we had 24 college graduates out there tonight as I am that we won the game. And I said, 'You won't recognize it now, long after this game is over, but you will remember the lessons that you taught to our young guys and the humility and the loyalty.' So I was just happy to see them have fun and smile and play, and play one more game together, and they'll wake up tomorrow and the next part of their life starts for a lot of our young guys. They will hopefully build off it, but I think the lesson our seniors taught is keep battling, stick around. So often, guys quit, guys give up, guys transfer, they do all these things, instead of just hanging in there, man. And the guys that hung in there, the Iras (Lewis), the Gregs (Roberts), the (Christ) Platts, all those guys, Pat Lawrence, (Blake) Blackmar, Josh Malin, so many more, they have accomplished a lot now, and that's a key lesson I think for our whole team.”

What brings about all that emotion from not only you, but your players after getting the win?

“I think I'm in the concussion protocol right now because they hit me with the actual 'Gatorade,' Gatorade thing. They didn't hit me with the Gatorade. They literally hit me with the orange thing hard. We'll see how



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tomorrow goes. I was happy for them, man. No one knows how hard we work, you know, and the coaches, players, everybody. I had no part in that offensive game plan. That was Jeff Nixon called an unbelievable game and Glenn (Thomas) put together a great third down plan and Fris (Frisman Jackson) had the receivers playing well and Shawn Bell, and George (Deleone), with the loss of Fran (Brown), George was able to go back on the field and coach again and Joey (McGuire) and Phil Snow, proud of our coaches and players. When you see them all smiling and laughing and having fun and celebrating, when you end the year with a win, it's a big deal, and so you know, I really wanted that for them, so I was happy to see that. I always go back to our families. Like my daughter is coming up there, my son, our coaches' kids, they sacrifice a great deal. They get to do a great deal, too, though. It's not like 'woe is me.' They sacrifice a great deal and, I want them to celebrate it, and I want all of Baylor and the fans, I want them all to have bragging rights tomorrow. I want them all to smile tonight and have fun. You sit back, thinking about how far you've come and everybody is happy, is a nice thing."

What adjustments did you make in the locker room in the second half to slow Vanderbilt down and then how did QB Charlie Brewer and the offense then pick up the offensive game?

"I think the thing that we felt like as I alluded to earlier, they were having fast drives, and we were having 7-, 8-, 9-play drives, and you could see some of their guys starting to get tired, starting to lay around. So we felt like, hey, we can continue to run it. Anytime we've run the ball like over 150 or over 160, we've won the game. So I think we finished with 250, 260, 270 or something at the end of the game. I just think we felt like, hey, we'll be able to, because they are scoring so fast and we are having longer drives, maybe that will wear them down eventually because you know you don't win the game in the first, second, third. You win it in the fourth quarter and that's where we wanted to win it. I thought Phil (Snow) went down to a 3-down front in the fourth quarter in the end and turned the pass rushers loose and big key turnover. So I thought the defense was constantly searching trying to find some things to slow them down and eventually did."

What does it mean to you when you look at your players after the win tonight?

"Well, you know, the key, core philosophy of our program, other than winning but the key purpose of our program -- the job is to win but the purpose for our program is to make sure that players leave here with a life that's better than if they wouldn't have come. That they leave here better. Just watching them grow in two years is fantastic. I can't tell you. I think I've gotten four or five e-mails from just random people in the community meeting Trestan (Ebner), and helping. Helping disabled people to their car, taking time after a loss to help people. They just kind of figure out who he is. And the way Charlie's (Brewer) handled stardom, I mean, fame. It's hard for Charlie to go places. People know who he is, and the humility that he shows and respect the respect he shows. Jalan McClendon and Garrett (McGuire) and the guys at his position, guys on his team, that to me is far more important than anything else. They go out and play football really well. So they are good students, good people, and I say those two, but they are a representation of our whole team, and I was proud to watch our guys this week at the charity events. I was proud to watch our people, our guys all week the way they carried themselves, the way they handled themselves. I think some of the people from the Bowl said to me, 'Coach, I've been around a lot of teams and this is the most respectful, polite, fun team to be around.' They might not always be that way Tuesday at a practice, but they are fun to be around for a week. I'm proud of all of them, and I hope they feel good about the decision they made and hope these two recognize that now we've got to start right back over in two weeks. Julie and I are going to México tomorrow, and then we're coming back and in two weeks we're going right back to work because we have to take another step and that's what they will want to do. Thanks, everybody."

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