**Baylor Football Head Coach Matt Rhule
Weekly Press Conference
November 25, 2019**

***Opening Statement***
“Obviously, very happy with Saturday. Proud of our guys. Winning on Senior Day I think is really, really important. I thought we played great defense, save a play or two. I thought we ran the football and were really efficient on offense. On special teams, I thought Issac Power and really all of our specials, [Noah] Rauschenberg kicking the ball off. The punting game, I don’t know if I’ve ever been involved with that many balls inside the 6. I thought it was just a great team win. Great atmosphere, I appreciated all the fans and students, I thought that was awesome to have back-to-back weeks that crowd, that atmosphere. I thought the people who work here who do the music and the in-game stuff I thought were elite. I think our game day atmosphere for the recruits that were there and the people that were there was as good as anywhere. So, for that, I’m very, very grateful.

“Very much looking forward to finishing out the regular season this week. I told our guys there’s not many times in life that you’re going to have a chance to win 11 games. It’s an opportunity for us to go 1-0 this week. Go on the road and understanding the symmetry of being 1-11 the first year and have a chance to be 11-1 is certainly not lost on me or our guys.

Obviously, Kansas is a tremendous challenge for us. It starts with Pooka [Williams]. He’s as dynamic a player as there is in the country. We saw that first hand last year with the run he had down the sideline. He had more rushing yards against Iowa State than our team had. Things start with him. Carter Stanley is playing really, really well. They’ve got a good group of receivers. [Andrew] Parchment is a deep threat. Defensively, we’ve got to find a way to run the football and hopefully keep our defense off the field. It will be a great test, a great challenge for us. Our guys will have some subtle changes with fall break and Thanksgiving break, and let our guys go home a little bit. But I’m sure our guys will stay focused on the process this week and try to go 1-0.”

***On any concern about not being focused on Kansas with Big 12 championship berth already clinched…***
“I’m always concerned about everything, which is why to me all I talk about is process. I thought we were a little unfocused to begin the game (against Texas), which sometimes happens. It’s the first time I’ve ever had a corner be so offsides that they call the play back. Obviously, we turned the ball over the second play of the game. But I thought our guys did a nice job of regrouping. I think there are always concerns about where are we at mentally. I thought we were in a really good place again. We practiced last night, the guys were focused. I think people understand we win not because of who we are but because of what we do. We’ve won 10 games because we’ve tried to go 1-0 each week. I think they understand this will be a tremendous challenge any time you play on the road, and play a team that really should have beaten Iowa State last week or had a chance to beat Iowa State last week. A team that went to Boston College and beat up on Boston College, team that beat Texas Tech. So, we understand what we’re getting ready for. I think we just have to trust the players, you have to trust the locker room. And they did that last week, and I had no doubt they were going to do that last week. I had no doubt we were going to be ready. I was in the training room this morning where guys were getting treatment, and they looked very focused this week, understanding that this will be a challenge.”

***On Kansas’ offense…***“They have a tremendous rhythm passing. They’ve kind of established who they are. They made a change in coordinators halfway through the year, and their quarterback is really accurate. He does a really nice job of being patient and taking what they give you. They have a big-play presence down the field. [Andrew] Parchment has beaten people on posts and has run by people. That’s always the challenge to us: A. eliminate the big play. But if you try to get an extra guy in the box to take care of Pooka, they have the ability to go over the top of you, and they have a really good offensive line. They have guys who are going to be next level players. When they’ve clicked like they did last week and they did three or four weeks ago, they’ve put a lot of points on the board. They had every chance to beat Texas at Texas. So, we’re going to have to play really well defensively to try to limit them with the understanding there is that conflict of trying to take away the running game, knowing they have a deep-play game, and the quarterback is really patient. He’s going to take what you give him.”

***On practicing during the holiday week…***
“There’s no school Wednesday, so we’ll practice in the morning and let the guys go around 3, and let them go home Wednesday night and come back Thursday at 7. We’ll do our walk-through and stuff Thursday night and practice full speed Friday morning and then leave. It’s one of the great things about Texas kids coming to Baylor and staying in the state of Texas is they can go home for Thanksgiving and bring me back a plate of something, hopefully. Some of our guys will stay here, and we’ll have something for them, bring them over to coaches’ houses, have a dinner whatever. But a lot of our guys will group up and go to people’s houses and have fun.”

***Update on Brewer’s health and team health…***“We’re as healthy as any team in college football would be right now. A lot of that credit goes to first, our strength staff, and our medical staff. Last week, there were guys who were questionable, questionable, questionable, and they all played.

“Obviously, Charlie took that big hit and the official sent him out of the game. The official said to me, ‘Coach, we’ve got to be careful.’ I said, ‘Absolutely.’ I appreciated them doing that. I love when people who are in charge protect the players. The officials did a great job of protecting the players. That’s our job. The doctor said let’s hold him and see what’s going on. He’s fine to go, he’s cleared to go. He also rolled his ankle, so he’s been kind of gimping around a little bit. But I’m sure Charlie will be ready to go. Xavier Newman is questionable at this point, [Jake] Fruhmorgen will be questionable. Those guys came out of the game with injuries. Xavier went back into the game, so with his toughness I’m sure he’ll find a way to get himself ready.”

***On the improved play of Denzel Mims…***

“Every year, we’ve challenged him. There was a time where we said, ‘Hey, you’re not very good versus 50/50 balls, you know, jump balls.’ And as you could see on Saturday, he’s become one of the best 50/50 guys around. We challenged him to get better at getting in and out of his breaks. Not just be like a deep, run-by-you guy, but a guy who can run all the routes. He’s definitely done that. I challenged him earlier this year to be a better blocker, and he’s definitely done that. And the biggest challenge from last year to this year was being able to play when you don’t feel 100 percent. Sometimes, a guy who’s a track guy, and you’re used to, ‘Hey, I’ve got to feel primed up and ready.’ This is a game of attrition, it’s a war of attrition. Who can play when they don’t feel 100 percent. And he’s been proof positive of that, from training camp to the thumb surgery to all the way through the year, he’s played through everything. I really enjoy watching players grow, and no one’s grown football-wise, on or off the field as much as Denzel has.”

***On what Kansas’ defense does…***

“They take away the run. They’re a true 3-4, 2-gap, New England Patriots, big guys, strike you up front. So, it’s a challenge to find easy runs. And then they’re a quarters coverage team. They played a little bit more aggressively against Iowa State. And that’s really what people have done against us. People have come out against us and said, ‘You know what, we’re going to blitz them.’ But, I like the way they play. They’re well put together on defense. I like teams that play that way, that kind of try to knock you back and stop the run and try to overload you in terms of leverages. We’re kind of an inside zone team, that’s kind of what they’re built to take away. So, there are some inherent challenges there, especially with Charlie being a little banged-up. Probably don’t want to run the quarterback too much. So, there’s some challenges dealing with some of those things, and we have to put together a good plan, because really the quarterback run game has really been something we’ve done the last couple weeks at a high, high level. We’ve got to find a way to continue that without him.”

***On any worry about a let down after playing in big-time atmospheres the last two games…***

“Andy Reid told me a long time ago, all great teams do three things. And I can never remember the third one, but 1 and 2 are eliminate distractions and create energy. I can never remember the third one. You have to create energy. To me, the biggest thing I have tried to get across to our guys is, the games that we call big games are big games because we are playing. They aren’t big games because of who we are playing, they are big games because we are playing. And this is a huge game. This is the biggest game of the year. We are playing against good players, we are going on the road, there are all these challenges. Going on the road is always a challenge. The weather could be a challenge, it says it’s going to rain, 20 mph winds. All those things are challenges. It’s a big game because we are playing in it. And I want our team to go out there and we challenged them after the Oklahoma game to have a championship mindset and I thought we did at times in the game, but we also put the ball on the ground and did stupid stuff we need to eliminate. I told them I am not tolerating some of those things anymore. So, we need to have a championship mindset this entire week to go 1-0 this week. The day of our guys thinking this is a big game because we are playing these guys, that’s gone. It has been gone all year. It’s a big game because we are playing in it and this is the biggest game this season and the preparation so far has felt that way and will continue to feel that way.”

***On the play of the secondary this season….***

“We lost our two starting corners last year. Grayland makes the move from corner to safety. It’s a lot of the same guys, but they have really grown and matured. I was talking to someone earlier and they were asking me at the end of the day, this season is about to me what Phil Snow has done as much as anyone else. I stand up here and people say good things about me when we win, but this year has been about Phil Snow, it’s been about Evan Cooper, Mike Siravo, Frank [Okam], the job they have done on defense, transforming what we do on defense and it’s been about the players. The players on defense have really grown and become good players. There’s a lot of veterans in the secondary, you have some younger guys, Kalon Barnes is playing a ton, Raleigh [Texada] is playing a ton, but I think our guys in the secondary have realized they are pretty good players. We played all man on third down this past game. We’ve never really done that and we said you know what, we are going to try to evolve and be a better man to man team. You’ve got Jameson Houston out there playing bump and run on third and five, fourth and five and those guys came through. I think our secondary, the elimination of big plays and winning on third down has been as crucial to our success on defense as anything else.”

***On playing against Les Miles at Kansas…***

“I said earlier to the coaches in the office, you think of the two coaches in the state of Kansas, there’s a reason why they have improved from maybe where they started or where people thought they were going to start the season, between Coach Klieman and Coach Miles, those are two guys who have won national championships. And for me, as just a love of college football, the things that he [Les Miles] did at Oklahoma State and then LSU and then what you know he will do at Kansas, winning championships and bringing a winning culture to those places, it’s an honor to me. I love college football and I love college football coaches, so anytime you have a chance to go against as a young coach I was watching the mad hatter with tremendous respect. He has been good to me the times that I have met him and I am looking forward to having a chance to compete against him.”

***On the play of long snapper/linebacker Ross Matiscik…***

“Ross has been unbelievable. And we think Ross is a great linebacker. Like I didn’t want him to not play linebacker this year. I really thought he could be a special linebacker. He’s a great snapper and I look forward to watching him snap at the next level but you do that and with him you also get a guy who can run down on kickoff, play on teams and he’s played more football this past Saturday than he has other weeks to give our guys a blow and I thought he played great. He’s a guy who practices a 100 miles an hour and it shows up and I thought for him to have a sack, a big time hit, a big time play, that was textbook. We will put that on our tackling teach tape, same foot, same shoulder, really proud of the way he played.”