

Big 12 Conference Football Championship Game: Oklahoma vs Baylor

Saturday, December 7, 2019

Matt Rhule
Terrel Bernard
Jordan Williams
Sam Tecklenburg
Baylor Bears

Oklahoma - 30, Baylor - 23

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by Coach Matt Rhule. Coach your thoughts about this afternoon's game.

MATT RHULE: First, I want to make sure I give credit to Oklahoma. I thought they made the plays they had to make down the stretch to win the game. I thought it was a great football game. As I told our players while they can be disappointed, they certainly cannot hang their heads. They overcame diversity, and battled and fought and had a chance to win the game. We're one step away from winning the game maybe in regulation and credit to Oklahoma, though, they made the play that counted.

They found a way to get it done. Really proud of Gerry, went in for Charlie, scored twice in the first half. That knee from last week really was bothering him, so turned to Zeno and for a guy that was running the scout team, was Jalen Hurts all week for the scout team and I thought he did a great job, he got in there for a big play and gave us a chance to go to overtime.

I'm proud of our guys, as I told them, first time being here, I think they know they belonged and looking forward to getting back here soon.

Q. Matt, when Charlie jogged off the field, can you take me through the process of what happened and what you guys knew at that moment?

MATT RHULE: I didn't know anything. Mike Defee came over and said Coach can you look at Charlie, and I had been talking to Charlie on the sidelines and he didn't seem out of it to me but I got a lot of respect for Mike Defee and when he said that I called over Matt



and hey, they're saying on the field they were concerned about Charlie and so our training staff took him, got him to the doctor and they took him in for evaluation and then they ruled him out for the rest of the game.

Q. Kenneth Murray sacked him and did you evaluate him after that?

MATT RHULE: I don't know when, and I think Mike thought it was on the hit, not with Kenneth Murray but maybe when 44 hit him. He came over to me and said it so I called the doctor and they ruled him out.

Q. Matt, obviously Jacob, a true freshman, what made you think he could handle that pressure situation?

MATT RHULE: I couldn't sit here and tell you I thought he could. I have confidence in him. We were down, Gerry (Bohanon) was hurting all week, and he was trying to gut it out, really couldn't move and if you put a guy out there who can't move he's eventually going to get hurt. We said let's turn to (Jacob) Zeno and he had three, four throws last week, maybe had three or four in his career and we turned to him and he certainly hit some big plays and it was more of a function of that's where we were at.

Q. Matt, the defense keeping you in the game when it looked like it could get way from you. Then getting a couple of turnovers there to kind of get you right back in the game.

MATT RHULE: Yeah, I mean -- I didn't think it was going to get away from us. You know, it's just -- they really scored two big plays to CeeDee (Lamb) and he's a great player they threw an out and he made a great run. They hit that -- we checked the play and everybody checked it but one guy so they hit the other play to CeeDee. We thought we were going to be able to take away a lot of the rushing game, not 100% but I mean, to hold OU to 146 yards rushing. So it was a function of a couple of big plays, even that last drive for the field goal that was leading to the field goal they hit CeeDee on the play there and in overtime it was really a function of the facemask you know we had a facemask that put them down to the 11 yard line so I thought our defense other than that they played really, really well, a couple of back out of the backfield and guy blows an assignment. But they made some key interceptions when it mattered and I think they made

them start to run the ball a little bit more, to hold Oklahoma to 23 points in regulation, I don't think anybody has done that in a while so I thought our defense played great.

Q. Matt, Denzel Mims didn't have any catches, and you targeted him two or three times?

MATT RHULE: We called a lot of them, we just never pulled the trigger and got them to him.

Q. On Zeno's two big passes were those the plays he was supposed to run or was that him freelancing?

MATT RHULE: No, that was a designed play for (Trestan) Ebner and then a design play for Chris Platt. But Denzel, you have regrets after games and we tried to get him involved, I thought they did a good job of taking him away, but we probably had opportunities to hit him in, in the second window, and didn't do it and that's unfortunate because he's a big part of us being here and we never quite got him involved.

Q. Matt, you mentioned at the outset that you're disappointed but you don't want them to hang their heads because they played a great game. Do you feel like -- I know you're just now in the moment after this one, but that you guys will go into whatever bowl game that you go to not looking at it as a consolation prize or anything like that?

MATT RHULE: I would say that our track record would be pretty clear that there hasn't been a time where we have played like an entitled group. That's entitlement, when you have game and you act like you're better than the game, there is not a part of us that's that. They could have quit, you're down 10 with 8 minutes left and you have a third-string quarterback that's never played a meaningful college snap and they played their way back into it I told them, get on the bus and root for LSU to beat Georgia no disrespect to the Bulldogs root for LSU to beat Georgia let's hope they go to the college football playoff, they should go in my mind any, I think they're a great time and so let's hope they go to the college football playoff and represent the Big 12 and let's hope that we go to the Alamo Bowl whatever bowl people ask us to play in, let's go play one more game together, let's finish as a top-10 team and let's get to 12 wins which has never been done and more importantly we'll be back.

I told the young guys, feel that pain of watching those guys pull that stuff out and celebrate, let that drive you in the off-season but at the same time also understand what we've done. We walked off the field and Oklahoma fans stood to applaud. Even this week some of the national stuff was you know, can you believe Baylor? How many teams would play with their third-string quarterback come back and get in there? That's

a tough group.

I feel like -- that's why I said you got nothing to hang your head about. You went in there and you battled. It was just a little bit short, you know, one guy catches one more ball, that guy -- what a great play to run Platt down, if he doesn't make that play who knows what happens, but that's football. But I think we'll be ready to go play again.

Q. Coach, congrats on the season. Entering Big 12 Championship game for the general fan, the casual fan there probably wasn't a lot of optimism facing the Sooners again in a rematch. For those that don't follow Baylor closely, how would you define your team, what Baylor is in one or two sentences?

MATT RHULE: I think you just saw it there. I mean, I think action speaks so much louder than words. Again, to lose Charlie, and to go out there and play the way we played and to hold OU to 23 points. I just think -- I just think that speaks about who we are. We're a tough, hard-nosed group, we find a way and we get better and better every year. This is just the beginning for us. I think that was really who we are.

Q. Matt, when you look at when you put Jacob in, it looked like you guys were more comfortable taking those deeper shots. As Charlie been limited at all in throwing the ball? Even before the potential head injury was there anything holding you guys back with the down field passing stuff?

MATT RHULE: No. The second play, we hit the first play of the game, the second play of the game was a shot, we took a sack, we had a hard time with No. 7. He's a good player.

But I think it was a little bit more like, all right, backs against the wall, we're on the five yard line we threw a double move fake screen and go. We called some of those things early, we had a hard time getting something going. So we didn't play great up front all the time, didn't run the ball, didn't protect. They had some active guys.

But -- I think last week, Charlie aired the ball out, threw it up over the top early. He just couldn't quite -- the times we called them early in the game, couldn't quite protect and have been one of the things all year we have had a hard time protecting all year at key times.

Q. Did Mike tell you to take him out? Or he just said hey y'all need to look at him?

MATT RHULE: Mike Defee came to the sideline and he said Coach can you guys please look at Charlie, I said okay, Matt, can you look at Charlie? He didn't extend him out of the game. He had done that in the Texas game he took him out. But he said Coach, he seems

off when I'm talking to him out there. Which I didn't see, but I said okay, if someone says that we're going to act on it.

Q. And how would you describe what you guys showed from your three quarterbacks? Three different guys and three different styles and y'all still in it at the end. What does that say about the coaching y'all have done at the quarterback position?

MATT RHULE: I want to make sure I talk about the players first. I'm sad that Charlie -- obviously sad that he's hurt but sad that he didn't get a chance to play because he's one of the main reasons why we're here and I would have loved to give him the opportunity to play that game. I think he deserved the right to play that game but obviously he got hurt and that's part of the game. I would have loved to have seen Gerry, if he was full strength, he's a dynamic runner for us, but you get hurt in this game. And for Zeno, literally he's -- you have to be careful you're not -- literally he was the scout team quarterback all week and we do "Fast Friday" and he was playing safety for the offense to give a look and next thing you know he's out there in the fourth quarter and what I love about Gerry is he kept saying "coach let me play, let me play," but if you're a dual threat dynamic quarterback you can't run. He got us back in the game, he drove us down there in the first half and then Zeno did so. That's who we are, Clay goes down, Terrel steps up, he's all Big 12. We never want to be one of those programs or those coaches that makes excuses and that carries over to the guys and whoever is out there. They kept going out and playing for them. Like I said, if that kid just is a step slower, Platt scores, who knows. I say that more for our kids, you're like a play away, I want them to hear that. I want them to know how good they are. They're a really, really good team. I want to say this about Oklahoma they celebrate at the end as they should and that guy Kenneth Murray, that's twice now, they beat us two weeks ago in a heart-breaking loss and it's painful when you see them celebrating in front of you, that kid comes right over to me and hugs me after that game, him and Neville Gallimore. Today we are getting ready to pray and who is standing there, Kenneth Murray and you spend so much time talking about what's wrong, there him and there's number 44 Bookie, Radley-Hiles, and both those kids after they beat us after that last time, and after this game, and were two great college football games. We lost by three and we lost by seven, in overtime. That hurts.

How much respect I have for those two kids that they're the first two guys that came over to say that to me. That's why, you know, that's why I love coaching college kids because you see great stories like that and I want to make sure I say that about those two guys. I

couldn't have been prouder of our guys. I would have liked to have seen Charlie play, a lot of credit to Mike Defee for putting health first and for our guys to make sure that they follow through on what he said.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much and good luck the rest of the way.

Okay we will take questions for our student athletes.

Q. James, what was the key -- what were y'all doing today that was so effective on basically you were thwarting the OU rush, the running game especially from Jalen Hurts.

JAMES LYNCH: We know he's a great player so we were trying to get in his face and take him out of game but they ended up making one more play than us and didn't work out for us but we fought hard and tried our best.

Q. Jordan, you saw Zeno on scout team all week. What made you think that maybe he could handle this situation? What is it about him that you see?

JORDAN WILLIAMS: As a young guy he's really mature. I mean, just seeing how he throws the ball on scout team and how he throws to receivers and they're just running made-up plays, their plays, not running our plays but to see him how he carries himself and throws the ball, he's going to be a pro.

Q. Terrel, can you take me through that play, and James you can chime in as well, but where Hurts fumbled the ball and the ball ricocheted across the field and how that was the turning point for you guys in the first half, I think it was 10-0 at that point, it was a turning point?

TERREL BERNARD: We went into that series knowing we needed a turnover, momentum shift and he came up with a big play, strip sack and we got the ball down there toward our own goal line. It was a big play.

Q. Terrel, Coach just mentioned it, that obviously you guys are disappointed. You wanted to win this game. He said he told you guys not to hang your heads. What's the feeling right now in the locker room? Do you feel like a few weeks down the road you guys will be able to regroup and attack whatever bowl game you get?

JORDAN WILLIAMS: Definitely I know we'll come back and be ready for our bowl game but this one hurts, obviously. This group of seniors, this coaching staff, all these guys, you want to go out there and win the game for them. We came up a little short so obviously it's very painful.

Q. Jordan, can you talk about that interception? What did you see? Again, it was kind of a big

momentum shift for you guys to kind of -- I think that tied it up when they scored.

JORDAN WILLIAMS: Yes, sir, we had a zone drop, and I seen No. 2, he fell down, and he got up and started running and kept dropping, and he threw the ball right to me. It was a big game changer, because we flipped the field. We didn't have to drop the whole field we were on the 40-something. That was a big momentum swing and we try to play for the offense and get the ball back for them and make the plays and I feel like that was part of our defense.

Q. Jordan, I'm curious, I know these two games haven't come out the way you guys wanted them to this year but they ended up being a couple of classics from a football standpoint. What do you think you will remember about the way these two games were played from that general standpoint?

JORDAN WILLIAMS: Right. Playing against OU is always a good challenge because we get to see how good we really are. The game didn't go the way we wanted to today and last time, but I feel like that's a testament to what type of defense and what type of players and what type of coaching we've built here. Going off of that, it's a good way to go into next year, to be able to look forward to that and be ready and not come into the game thinking we're not supposed to be there because we deserved every right to be here today.

Q. Jordan, what makes Matt Rhule such a good head coach in your opinion?

JORDAN WILLIAMS: He never allows us to be complacent. He never allows us to be okay with just being good, not even just in football but in life. He pushes us to be better men, be father's, everything, he let us it be the players team and we led the team a lot this year. It was kind of like he gave us the team and we pushed the culture he was standing for and kept grinding and kept pushing us and taught us how to process and keep getting better every day.

Q. Terrel, what do you think you gleaned from this game from the experience of playing on the Big 12 Championship stage game? How do you think that impacts the team heading into 2020 and beyond?

TERREL BERNARD: I think it gives our young guys kind of insight of what we have to do to get her and what we have to do to win. Just playing in the game was a big deal for us from where we've come from, and then just like I said, our young guys, letting them know that this is what it takes to get here.

Q. Terrel, what did it mean for y'all to have Clay Johnson out there as one of your captains at the beginning of the game?

TERREL BERNARD: That was huge. It was something

we talked about all week. Clay is one of our leaders. I feel so sorry for him that he couldn't play in this game but having him out there as a captain shows what kind of leader he is and what kind of person he is.

Q. James describe trying to contain Jalen Hurts in the running game which you guys did but it seemed to slip away, never could stop him in the end?

JAMES LYNCH: We knew their offense and they have a lot of weapons. It's hard to focus on one thing, they have a good quarterback, receivers, and "O" Line and we ended up one play short and I'm proud of the way we played but it stings right now.

Q. James, what specific adjustments did you make to contain Hurts from the Waco loss to today and how you continued to use today's experience for whatever bowl game you may be in against another probably highly-ranked team?

JAMES LYNCH: As I keep taking, Jalen Hurts is one of the best in the country. After playing him you realize what you need to do to try and contain him. We did it at times today and also we didn't do it at times today so we've got a lot to learn. As much as it hurts right now it's going to help us a lot.

Q. James, you set the career mark two sacks today, single-season record. What do those records mean maybe it doesn't mean as much today but you setting the sack records?

JAMES LYNCH: Today I'm not focused on any of that right now, but it's a great honor for me to have that next to my name, my title so I'm not complaining at all but I'm not focused on that right now, it's kind of worried about this game and making sure we finish the season the right way for the seniors.

Q. James and then Jordan, after playing Oklahoma the first two years and to now be here in a position where you're a few second away really in both games from winning these games. How much does it say about the progress that you guys have made as a defense and as a program as well?

JAMES LYNCH: I don't think many people realize in the country that this team is the toughest in the country because we've been through more than anybody can imagine, things that we have gone through our freshmen year, things that have been said to us, people thinking we don't belong here and it made us have a chip on our shoulder and it made us work and it wasn't enough today, but it will be soon enough.

JORDAN WILLIAMS: Like Terrel said, it's going to push our younger guys understand what it's going to take to get here and push them, and we gotta go out and push for 1-0. We gotta go next week. It hurts this week but

it's a cornerstone and we're going to learn from it and this program is going to keep building.

Q. Guys, what was the reaction like when Charlie went down and you knew he wasn't going to return and the second part of this question, your thoughts when Gerry and Jacob came in and had the successes they did?

JORDAN WILLIAMS: We didn't know Charlie went down until late in the game but as soon as we saw Gerry out there and Zeno, we were like, let's go, next up, you act like a starter and play like a starter and when one drops off, next up.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, gentlemen.