



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### **Postgame Football Quotes – Northern Illinois at San Diego State Saturday, Sept. 30, 2017 – SDCCU Stadium – San Diego, Calif.**

San Diego State Head Coach Rocky Long

**ROCKY LONG:** I don't know if you believed me at the beginning of the week that Northern Illinois is a good football team, but they are. They're a very good football team. We made enough plays to win the game.

**Q.** Your thoughts on seeing Rashaad getting gouged there?

**ROCKY LONG:** I think that sort of stuff happens under the pile a lot of times. Things like that happen when you're in a pile. They just happened to get it on TV or no one would have known but us. Because he came to the sidelines with his eyes hurting and no one would have known but us. But since they got it on TV, it's a big deal. But stuff like that happens all the time. I'm not saying it's right because it's not right. It's not right for any player to be doing that kind of thing, but in those piles, you don't know what goes on, it's been a long time since I've been in one, but they used to be nastier than they are now.

**Q.** As far as some of the long pass plays that they were able to break off did you see what kind of happened to that?

**ROCKY LONG:** Their guy was faster than our guy.

**Q.** A lot of strange penalties tonight?

**ROCKY LONG:** No, I don't think they were strange. You got to get used to how the crew is calling things. Those were plays, we got some penalties, one of them was a bad one because we were talking to one of their players after we sacked the quarterback. But the other ones were on interception returns. And this crew decided that if you blocked somebody behind the guy carrying the ball, that it was unnecessary roughness. Okay. So they called that twice. I've been in a hundred games where they don't ever call that. So now it's just like every other sport, when you realize that's the way they're calling stuff, you have to be smart enough not to do it. Even though in maybe the game before or the game before that you got away with it and you felt really good about knocking somebody down, you got to realize that this crew is calling it a little differently and you got to adjust the way you play. So those are not smart things to do, those are did you mean things to do and they can cost you a game.

**Q.** Did you get an explanation on that first Noble Hall penalty? I think you held them only fourth down. Did you get an explanation?

**ROCKY LONG:** Yeah, he said something to the offensive lineman that he beat. Now you know what, that goes on all the time too out there. I thought there was a, I'm sure they were doing the best they could those officials. But they had a favorite team.

Q. Mikah, the call on Mikah.

ROCKY LONG: Yeah, I think in this day and age that's a legit call. I mean I saw it up on the scoreboard, now it's hard to see, because that picture's not very big, but it looked to me like he did hit him in the chest with his shoulder and his arm, but his helmet bumps into the other kid's face mask. So if there's any contact with the head, they're supposed to call it. So I think that was a legitimate call. But sometimes they're calling that stuff just because you hit them hard.

Q. Kameron, with so many moments and plays especially late in the game where there were opportunities for you guys to lose the game, despite all those moments, you get the interception by Kameron, you get another one by Tariq and all those moments, why did you win the game tonight when there were so many chances that could have gone the other way, in your mind?

ROCKY LONG: Well I think that we, I think that we're a team that believes they're going to win and we made enough big plays to win the game. There's a lot of teams in the country that will wilt in those situations and give up or we're not like that. Our team has a really good spirit. They go to every game thinking we're going to win and they -- I thought Northern Illinois outplayed us. The difference was we made big plays, we made big turnovers, that's the only thing that saved the game. So, momentum swings with turnovers, but we hurt ourselves on some of those too by getting penalties on them so that we didn't get the field position that we need. But the best thing about this is I guess we made the big time because all we're talking about is negatives. Guess what? We won. We're 5-0. We won the game. We won the game at home since 1975, since a ranked team has won a home game. That's pretty positive. But let's talk about all the dumb things we did.

Q. On the other side Kam said the reason for all the interceptions in the last couple years is that you are a genius.

ROCKY LONG: Oh, yeah, that's right. That's right. I agree. I agree.

(Laughter.)

That's not true at all. I mean we try to put them in the best plays that we can, and then a coach has to be smart enough if you have a guy out there that can't run with a certain receiver, you better not put him in one-on-one situations any more. You better always have a safety help him over there. So what we did was we started helping both corners and it allowed the corners to get some interceptions. Now the two on Tariq, those are, for a freshman safety, those are unbelievable interceptions. Because he has -- and I don't want to get technical here -- but he has, he was playing zone, he has curl to flat, they flashed the guy in front of him that went to the flat, most rookies will jump the guy in the flat and the guy coming behind him will catch the ball. Well, he baited him into it. He acted like he was jumping the guy on flat and then slipped right back under the curl and intercepted that pass at the end. He had a great high school coach. But it was me. But it was me. It was me.

(Laughter.)

No, he has a great high school coach, his high school coach has done a great job of teaching him how to do that kind of stuff. So we always try to put them in the best position but you've heard me say this a million times, players win games. Coaches can lose games by not making adjustments or not helping your players, they can lose games, but players win games.

Q. It looked like you talked to Coach Carey for a minute after the game, what was that conversation like?

ROCKY LONG: It was fine. I mean, complimented him on his team. I think he's got a really good team. If he wins the MAC championship, that wouldn't surprise me a bit. And I thought they came to play. I really think they came to play. Now they had a week off, so they were a little fresher than we were, and they just beat Nebraska so they came in with a lot of confidence. So he's

got good players and they have confidence, they're going to win a lot of games, I think.

Q. Is it safe to say you think you have a really good team?

ROCKY LONG: I don't think we have a really good team yet. I think we're making way too many mistakes, but we're on the other hand we're making enough plays to win. I said from the start, we'll see. I said from the start, at the beginning, at the middle of the season we'll have a really good team. I said that from day one, anybody that came to that press conference. I mean we didn't run the ball worth a darn tonight. That might have been because Northern Illinois's really good or we had a true freshman guard in there. Talk about the immaturity of our offensive line, guess what, that caused problems tonight. They saw things tonight they haven't seen before. So that causes issues. Even though we have a great running back, he has to have somebody block for him. And I think that we're young at linebacker, we make some mistakes there. I think that we're still going to become a really good team about halfway through the season, which is probably after next week, right? After next week's game we'll be halfway through the season. Is that right? Right.

Q. You mentioned 1975. So in that --

ROCKY LONG: I only do that because Mike May told me that. So if my facts are wrong, check with him.

Q. No, I think both of your facts are right. But you mentioned 1975, so in that context what does 5-0 mean in your mind?

ROCKY LONG: You want me to give the media version? My version is we're 5-0 and we got a long way to go. It's nice to be 5-0. I'm not sure I've ever been -- yeah I've been 5-0 before, as an assistant coach. But I've never been 5-0 as a head coach. And I only see bright things from that because I don't think we played very good. I don't think we played very good the last two games. And guess what? We won. What's that tell you? We have got a chance to be really good. We're not right now, but we got a chance to be really good.

Q. You could have lost a few of these games but you guys find ways to win. Where do you think that resilience comes from?

ROCKY LONG: We have got great kids in our program. I mean I tell you guys that all the time. They play, they're team players, they're not individuals. They like each other, which is fun to be around a group of those kids that like each other, because I've been around teams that they had good players but the players hated each other. They like each other, they do things for each other, it's fun to be around them. Because they're enthusiastic, they're energetic, we got good kids and good kids don't ever quit. Good kids don't ever give up. And it's funny, if you just hang in there, a lot of -- I mean, you won't win them all probably, but if you just hang in there you win some that you're not supposed to.

Q. The return of a Dakota, you were kind of expecting it, but still is it pretty remarkable to you given --

ROCKY LONG: To me it's unbelievable that he played tonight. I think he probably played 25 or 30 snaps. He played quite a bit. We had a lot of -- see, we're spoiled on defense. I think we had to play 80-some plays on defense tonight. We don't ever have to play 80-some plays because our offense keeps the ball away from them. But tonight the offense didn't keep the ball away from them so we played 80-some plays on defense tonight, which is unusual for us. So it was good to have fresh bodies to put in there. Dakota, I don't know how well he played, but he got through the game without getting re-injured and he's our most veteran defensive lineman so I know he didn't make any assignment errors. I hope he played good, because he can really help us. But what more than that, it's nice to see him out there because he wants to play so bad he's willing to do that. There's a lot of guys that would be done for the season. But he wants to play so bad that he worked so hard to get back there, it's really fun to see him out there.

Q. (No microphone.)

ROCKY LONG: About Wednesday. When we knew Chief couldn't go.

Q. Do you expect him to go next week?

ROCKY LONG: We think if -- we held him out this week -- he could have maybe played a little bit tonight. But we think if we held him out that he will be okay next week.

Q. In the fourth quarter that quarterback run with Chapman on the third down, is that something you saw in the defense or was that something you've been hiding up your sleeve?

ROCKY LONG: You mean where he didn't get the first down? Where he was that short (Indicating)? No, that was quarterback draw. That's a smart play in that situation because you don't take a chance of throwing it, you don't take a chance of handing it off, one guy has the ball and if he gets a decent block, he's probably going to get the first down. He got tripped up a little bit and just missed it. Would you go for that? Would you go for a fourth and an inch? Would you guys?

Q. Everybody in the elevator would have.

ROCKY LONG: They would have?

Q. Yeah, coming down. Everybody in the elevator would have.

ROCKY LONG: Yeah, but we didn't. But who won? We won, right?

Q. I don't mean us, the fans coming down.

ROCKY LONG: Yeah, yeah. But they're okay that we won? They were okay that we won? Okay.

Q. They were exhausted though.

ROCKY LONG: They were? They were exhausted.

Q. Yeah it was a tough thing to watch.

(Laughter.)

You should have been on the sideline if you think it was tough watching it up there.

Q. To have Juwan return one at the start of the game and you got Penny back there already, I mean embarrassment of riches back there in some sense?

ROCKY LONG: No, I thought the players executed that very, very well, but you got to give credit to the guy that designed that return. And that's Bobby Hauck. He did a great job of scouting their kickoff team from last year and they have done exactly the same thing up to our game this year and last year no matter where we put Rashaad they kicked it to Juwan. Juwan had a long one against them last year it too, he didn't score, but he had along one against them last year, too. So Bobby knew if he flipped them and blocked it a certain way, that we had a chance to pop it. So that's the return he put in during the week of practice. Now the players still have to execute it. They had good angles on the block, they made their blocks, they held their block, Juwan made a guy miss and then he was fast enough to outrun the other guys. But, yeah, you have to give Bobby credit for the design, but the players for executing it.

Q. You said you're kind of just hoping for Rosales to be back next week. Was this designed because it's a conference game?  
ROCKY LONG: No, we thought he wasn't getting well quick enough because we played him last week and he played average for him, so he wasn't a hundred percent last week when he played either, so we thought it was best to give him -- well we were hoping he would get well by Friday, but he didn't, so we're hoping he'll be well by next week.

Q. You've been around long enough you've seen dirtier things happen in the pile, but your players are so young, how does something like that affect them when one of the top players on the team has something like that happen, does that get them more charged up?

ROCKY LONG: Oh, I think it would upset, I think it upset his teammates, yes, I think that's true. Might be some late hits because of that, too. I don't know what you guys think of a football game, but it's survival of the fittest out there. Other than you can lose a game by doing that, there's sometimes it's worth it.

Rashaad Penny, Christian Chapman, Kameron Kelly, Jay Henderson Press Conference

Q. (On why the team did not lose tonight)

RASHAAD PENNY: That stuff shouldn't happen. I thought we were all more mature than that. I bounced back and I can't thank my teammates enough. It was all them and it was a great win. It was a great win.

Q. Christian did that moment change the game or change things for you guys in any way when that happens to a teammate?

CHRISTIAN CHAPMAN: When it happened I really wasn't sure what happened. For a second I thought he got grass in his eye, I didn't know what was going on. But then I actually got a chance to see the replay and I saw what happened. Something like that shouldn't be allowed on the football field. And I don't know what's going to happen, if anyone's going to see, it but I think like that shouldn't happen.

Q. Kameron, what effect did that have on you guys?

KAMERON KELLY: It got us fired up. I told the defense, I was like, before we even walked out on the field, we were in the tunnel and both teams coming out, talking to us, calling us names, and stuff, you know, that's football, you know it's going to happen, so we kind of let that feeling go when we got on the field and saw that they were doing some stuff after the whistle. So we just told them like that's their attitude, we got to have that same attitude between the whistles and start making them feel it between the whistles, so.

Q. (On why this was one of the stranger games:)

RASHAAD PENNY: That shouldn't have got me going. I should have been, I should have been going from the start. But I can't, I can't thank my teammates enough. They always encouraging me always, pushing me. But when something like that happens, you just, I mean, you never want that to happen. That's a play that shouldn't be in college football, in any type of football. You shouldn't pull anybody's face mask and try to eye gouge them. It's just bad. But it happened and after it happened, that's when I thought I found an extra gear. And I had to step up my game, because maybe if I was going that slow, maybe that's why it happened, because I was probably going slow or I was playing too tentative. So when I got it going, I felt nothing happened after that, so I feel better now. When it happened I couldn't see out of my right eye, and I thought honestly I was going blind. But other than that, I feel better now and I got to thank the training staff here. They do an amazing job getting us back on the field when we're feeling beat up. Just the little things. But I'm fine now.

Q. (On what Rashaad Penny's injury did to the team:)

RASHAAD PENNY: It's football. You can't do nothing when you're at the bottom of the pile. When you're at the bottom of the pile, you really can't, your hands are stuck to the ground, you're worried the ball more than anything. So you can't really do nothing on that play. You just got to fight your way through it, I guess.

Q. Has anything like that ever happened before?

RASHAAD PENNY: No, not, that never happened before. Honestly, I don't see why it happened today. That shouldn't even be a play in college football. I don't think anybody should go through that experience. I don't know what they're going to do to this guy. Whatever happens, happens. I mean, I'm just happy we got the win. The stats, everything else really don't mean anything. The eye gouging that doesn't mean anything, I'm happy we came out 5-0. We fought through their adversity and we kept pushing. But we got to have a better week. We can play better than this. They are a great team, so my hat's off to them. We know what we can do and we got to push through this.

Q. What was going through your mind in the fourth quarter, seemed like the defense kept coming up big.

JAY HENDERSON: I just have to make a play, because we was put into the position to make the play or they make the play and win the game. So basically that's it.

Q. Kameron, what do you think this says about this team? It's always like somebody else, somebody else who makes a play. Somebody comes from somewhere and Juwan starts the game the way he did.

KAMERON KELLY: It just says we're a team. Last year, like I say, I tell you all the time, last year was like Pumphrey and the rest of them. This year you never know who is going to make the play for us and I think that's the best thing about having a team like this. I feel like that's why we have made it this far, because each week, if I don't step up, I know Tariq's going to step up. And if Ron doesn't step up, I'm going to step up. If I don't step up, then Ron will step up. So we just got a whole bunch of guys that love each other, a whole bunch of guys that love this team, we love winning. I feel like we're starting to have an obsession with winning and we got to keep that going, we can't lose at all, we can't. Can't even get this close to losing again.

Q. Kameron, is this one of those games where you realized that the narrow edge of what you guys are all about as far as this season?

KAMERON KELLY: Being hunted. Yeah, exactly, we're being hunted. Life is all about learning from mistakes. Last year we went into South Alabama nonchalant and they were hunting us and we were acting like we weren't being hunted. And we got our butts kicked. This week same thing almost happened, but like I say, we have enough guys on our team that can make plays and guys that are giving their all. And it's just going to just fall in our direction sometimes and it did tonight, thank God.

Q. (Question about missing Chief.)

CHRISTIAN CHAPMAN: He's kind of the voice of the O line. He gets us going. Chief pumps everybody up. So losing somebody like that that's going to be an impact. He's our only senior on the line, so, yeah, it affected because you don't have that guy or leader there. So you come in with a younger guy and he's a freshman and he's taking a spot, so, of course, it's going to be some down a little bit. But Chief's going to come back and we're going to be good. And for Dom going in there, I think he did a good job for the most part, and he's just going to keep getting better from here.

Q. Do you guys now understand how fragile all this is, like maybe every team has tough times, but have you ever, but it never seems to enter your mind.

KAMERON KELLY: Talking about our winning streak? It's a thing that we kind of just, it's kind of just like a norm for us. We want to win, and we know that everybody else on the team is going to do whatever they can to win. So when we get out there on the field nobody's thinking about, oh, we can't lose. We're thinking about winning, winning, winning and doing whatever we got to do to win. So tonight I think that we kind of hurt ourselves earlier on in the game, but towards the end of the game we just made enough plays to win.

Q. Talk about the interceptions over the course of the last two or three years. What is your perspective on why you guys are so good?

KAMERON KELLY: Coach Long is a genius. He puts us in the perfect positions. I'm out there, he calls a play and I'm the deep cover. I can go out there, I know I can mess around with my alignment, mess around with the quarterback, and just know if I get back to where Coach Long will want me to be, the ball might come my way and I might have a chance to make a play. Then you have someone like Jay, he had three sacks tonight. So a lot of those quarterbacks get back there and he's not hunting anymore, he's not going to sit back there and try and find an open guy, as soon as he sees 46, he's letting it go. That happened to me, the quarterback threw it right to me. That had literally nothing to do with me. It was all the D-line, all the linebackers and everybody else being on their guy and the quarterback. He's just like, shoot, just throw it right to 7, and he did.

Northern Illinois head coach Rod Carey

On how his team was able to get back in the game after halftime:

"Well, I thought we were playing well the whole game and we gave up a kickoff return and two turnovers. Credit to San Diego State, they capitalized on those so that gave them the spread. We had a good portion of control, minus on the scoreboard. So I felt confident coming out in the second half and we stopped making mistakes, at least until the end. I think that's what got us back in the game because we felt we were running it pretty well, throwing it pretty well and stopping them pretty well."

On the passing game:

"It was good but unfortunately when you turn the ball over four times it's going to overshadow everything."

On SDSU senior running back Rashaad Penny:

"I thought our defense did a good job of really caging him in. He's a good player man, he still got out of some tackles and got some hard fought yards but we wanted to make him earn everything tonight so I felt like we did that."

On the toughest part of playing SDSU at home:

"Well let's start with that they're a good team and they're well coached. Like I said though, with all due respect to them, I really feel like we lost this with the four turnovers. But at the same time I say that, I'm not disrespecting them because give them credit, they took advantage of the four turnovers."

On NIU sophomore linebacker Antonio Jones-Davis allegedly poking Penny in the eyes:

"I heard that. I haven't seen it on film yet, [but] I did talk to him [and] he admitted it to me. So I'm going to get home, let the emotions get down a little and look at it to see what the next steps are. He's a great kid so you know, emotions, 18 and 22-year-olds but we're going to have to deal with it for sure."

Northern Illinois sophomore QB Daniel Santacaterina

On personal performance:

"The defense played their butts off. I think it was 100% on me for this game. I think I lost this game and I'll learn from it. It's just not good enough on my part."

Northern Illinois senior WR Christian Blake

On what the SDSU defense presented:

"Whatever it (the defense) was in, it wasn't working. I have the confidence in myself in one-on-one situations to win 10 times out of 10."

On the chance to beat a top-25 team:

"It would have just been another win to us. We don't really look into all the hype. It would have just been a great road win."

On his match-ups with SDSU cornerbacks sophomore Ron Smith and senior Kameron Kelly:

"It didn't matter who was across from me, I still had the confidence. 17 (Ron Smith) was covering me for the most part and 7 (Kameron Kelly), those guys are pretty good corners. Like I said before I felt like I could win every one of those match-ups."

-SDSU-