

Temple Head Coach Matt Rhule
Temple Owls vs. Memphis Tigers
11-21-15

Opening Statement:

"That was a great win and a great day. The challenge this week was to our seniors to take the team to another level. By that, I mean winning big games down the stretch, not being distracted, responding to adversity, and we felt like we were prepared for it. Everything that we have been through has led us to this moment to play really well. The game did not go as we planned early on, but guys kept hanging in and kept fighting and we were led by some incredible seniors. You have to have seniors that are not focused on their future, are not disappointed about last week, and out there leading the way. Our seniors led the way today and I could not be more proud. The defense had some early adversity, but I thought they took away the run, got after the quarterback and gave up no big plays. It was our first first quarter shutout since Penn State and I thought our guys just played really well. We played more people on defense this game than we have all year. We felt like we trusted guys and we wanted to play them. I thought we were physical and I thought we got contributions from a lot of guys. Brandon Shippen made a great play to change the field position and Colin Thompson had a great play. I thought David Hood was outstanding. He had been waiting his turn. Romond Deloatch catching a fade for us, Kip Patton with that big time run, Jager Gardner and a lot of guys on that offense stepped up. Our defense stepped up and played great. I have to congratulate Tyler Matakevich getting his 100th tackle for the fourth time and I could not be more proud. I have a lot of respect for Coach Fuente, they're a great, tough team, but we held them without a touchdown today. We have a great defensive system and they united today and you saw the results."

On how defense played today:

"Everyone just settled down and played the defense. That sounds stupid, but it's not. Last week we were just missing some tackles that gave up big plays and we were able to calm ourselves down, do the same things, we don't change and I think our guys responded and played well."

On when team got over USF loss:

"Maybe around Wednesday. I felt like they came out and I could see a focus. The message this week was everything you have gone through has prepared you for this, all the great and the bad things. You always hope for a second chance and we had a second chance against a ranked, championship caliber team. I told the seniors it was on them and they responded."

On the run game today:

"I think we were trying to establish it early. We felt like we had a match-up. I thought all of our coaches did a great job today. We had 284 yards on offense in the first half and managed the game in the second half."

On Saladeem Major:

"Is there a better story than Sal Major? This guy is paying his way to go to school still. He already

graduated with an economics degree. He made the decision to pay his own way to be the second tight end. If I owned a business I would hire him. He is as tough and as smart as they come. There could not be a guy in this program that stands more for what we do than Sal Major. “

On 7:59 drive in fourth quarter:

“We felt like Memphis was getting banged up and guys were coming in and out of the game. We felt like we were wearing them down and I think we finished with over 200 yards rushing. If there is a negative it was our offense on third down. I thought we ran the ball well all game; it’s a cumulative effect throughout the whole game.”

On David Hood:

“We made the decision to kind of make him the third down back last week to take some pressure off Jahad Thomas and he embraced the role. I thought his touchdown run was a very special run and whatever we give him he takes advantage of. “

On Kip Patton and his touchdown run:

“That was a great play call. Kip has not played because he has not done the things I have asked him to do. He was having a good week, so we felt good about him. Kip is growing, maturing, and doing the right things.”

On PJ Walker and his overall progress:

“I am proud of him. He has always been a really good quarterback and his touchdown to interception ratio has been pretty good this year. He has always been a winner. I thought today he made some big plays with his legs. We have a lot of confidence in him and he is really developing into one of the better players in the league.”

On decision to go for it on fourth down a few times:

“I’m probably going to wake up and be angry at myself tomorrow. I just felt like we were going to get it. I wanted to keep Memphis off the field on the first one and the second one was a dumb decision. I made a couple bad decisions, but it worked out in the end.”

On how the safety’s played today:

“I thought they played great. I thought Alex Wells showed up today. I told him it was his chance to go lead today and he did. He made the big plays down the stretch. I thought overall the defense played great. “

On importance of today’s game:

“I showed our team what the 2011 team did. They were 5-4 and had a great group of seniors. They went out and beat Miami (Ohio) and won five straight to go to a bowl game. Today was that kind of moment for me. Are we going to do it or not? I don’t want to slide into the championship game; I don’t want somebody to have to lose. This was a playoff game today; this was a championship caliber game today. We won it the way we play which is was I liked. “

On getting closer to reaching the conference championship game:

“I haven’t really thought of it much because I’m so excited about today. We’ll start thinking about what is next tonight. I think we have a lot of respect for Connecticut. They play football the way we play football which is playing defense and running the ball. It will be exciting to have another championship caliber game. “

On bouncing back today:

“We lost, and sometimes you lose. Nobody faces adversity better than our guys. They are the best of the best and they fight and bounce back. “

On winning an important game:

“In the past we have never really been able to win this game. We have won a lot of games, but not this game, the game where everyone’s watching. Last week was a blessing in many ways because we were locked in, focused and ready to go.”

On Jahad Thomas’ health:

“He just didn’t look full speed today, but was out there trying to compete. David Hood was hot and I felt like Jager Gardner was going to be a tackling issue today because he falls forward when he runs. “

Temple Defensive Coordinator Phil Snow

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On keeping Memphis out of the end zone:

"It's big, especially because of the way we've played the last two weeks. For these guys to come back the way they did is hard to do. They came out and shut out a pretty good offensive team from scoring a touchdown"

On playing a lot of players today:

"When you start winning, you become afraid to play other guys. After last week we decided we weren't playing enough guys and that we were fatigued. We played a lot of guys today and we will continue to do that. That was my fault in the past, but we got it corrected today."

On the game plan against Memphis QB Paxton Lynch:

"It really comes down to our players making plays. Our cornerbacks are outstanding. The defensive line dominated the game and took over the line of scrimmage. Memphis couldn't pass block us and we limited their run game."

On the career of LB Tyler Matakevich:

"His career really stands for itself. He was a guy who nobody wanted when he went to prep school. He made himself this great of a player with all of his hard work. It really is a tribute to him."

On what adjustments needed to be made after last week:

"Last week we missed 38 tackles. We've been a good tackling team this year, but we didn't tackle well the last two weeks. We even missed some tackles in the first half today because I think we were playing too fast. We really needed to clean that up. Last week we got away from the details of what we wanted to do defensively and today we got back to them. When we do those things we are tough to beat."

On the safeties improving their play:

"Those guys played well today after they missed some tackles last week. When your defensive line plays as good as they did today, though, it makes it easier for everyone to play."

On how hard it is to prepare for a quarterback of this caliber:

"You have to remember I coached a lot of years in the Pac-10 conference when we had first rounders every year. I coached in the NFL and saw Tom Brady. Maybe coaches who haven't seen all of those guys are intimidated, but I'm not. We can defend those guys."

LB Tyler Matakevich

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On how he feels about the last two weeks before the game:

"We have to give those other teams' credit; they came out ready to play, but we won a quickie. This week was a big game for us. We had to get back to our fundamentals and doing what we have been doing since the beginning of the season, which is playing hard all four quarters and being a more physical team."

On Coach Matt Rhule's opinion about this game being a huge accomplishment for the seniors:

"This game does not include everything; however this was a phenomenal win for us. I am so happy we got this win. Memphis is a great team, but we have a game against UCONN next week. I know we're not in the conference championship, so we need to win next week."

On how the impact of making field goals affected the game:

"It's everything, even when we were 2-10 we had one of the best red zone defenses in the country. We have a mentality that even we let other team get in the red zone; we are not letting them score. We finally got that edge back and you saw that today. Offense had faith in us and we had faith in them and that's why it was such a great team win today."

On the team's defense this game compared to the rest of the season:

"It shows everyone that we have each other's back. It doesn't matter what situation we are put in we told Coach Rhule we got this and we told him to go for it. We were feeling great and when your team is on one accord like we were today we are a tough team to beat."

On closing out the season and being one win away from the conference championship game:

"We know what is at stake and we are considering this a playoff game. If you when you keep on going and if we lose we go home. We are using this mentality to motivate is to win the next game."

Temple QB PJ Walker
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On his mindset going into this game:

"I felt like if we came into this game prepared and the mentality that we were going to play our best football, I thought we would have the outcome that we had out there today. We prepared our tails off this whole week and I think it showed today."

On throwing the most touchdowns in Temple football history:

"It means a lot but you have to think about the guys around you giving you the opportunity to make it happen. You have to thank the O-line for protection, teammates for making plays and just give them most of the credit and thank God for the opportunity."

On thought process during touchdown play to Sal Major:

"We planned on kicking the field goal if the play didn't work out. Coach had me roll out and said if there's something there then throw it and if not, just fall or throw it away. Sal popped open, I made the throw and he did everything else from there."

On overcoming early turnovers:

"We were driving up and down the field on them and just kept hurting ourselves. We realized we had to, I don't want to say focus more during the game but just hold onto the football and not throw any interceptions."

On how the coaches have helped him reach 50 touchdowns:

"Preparation throughout the week and just giving me the opportunity as well as trusting me to go out there and make the throws that need to be made. I just have to thank them for the opportunity they have given me."

On the biggest overall difference in performance from last week:

"We played team football today and that's how I look at it. We fought the whole game and did not let any distractions get to us. We play for one another and today was the definition of playing for one another because if somebody messed up, we picked them up and kept playing. It was amazing out there."

Temple LB Nick Sharga
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On relying more on backups:

"It feels great obviously to play on the field more. We knew going into this week that it would be a team effort and everyone would need to play in order to get this win. It feels great."

On season progression for him:

"It's been great. Transitioning from division 2 to division 1 has taught me so much about football and obviously the team is doing great this year and it's been an incredible opportunity for me."

On how he became an Owl:

"It's kind of a lengthy story but I tore my ACL in the first game of my senior season in high school, took the entire year off because I didn't know what I wanted to do and then went to division two West Virginia Wesleyan College. I played there for one semester and shot down some schools. Temple got back to me and I felt like it was a perfect fit. It's close to home and everything just worked out."

On transitioning from fullback to linebacker:

"You definitely have to be on your toes and know what's going on all the time but it's not too bad. I make it work."

On game plan for Memphis:

"It was the same as every week. Everyone is expected to do their job. Simply just going out, doing what we are supposed to be doing, executing on our assignment and playing as hard as you can."

On meetings he attends during week:

"I'm mostly in with the defensive meetings but sometimes after practice I will check in with the offensive coaches and see what's going on there."

On contributing right away at a DI school:

"It was definitely a goal. I was focused on just coming in here and working as hard as I can, taking one step at a time and going from there."

Temple RB Jahad Thomas
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On the importance of running back rotation:

"It was very important. I knew I probably wasn't going to be able to play much this week so those guys knew they had to step up and play a huge role. I knew I probably wouldn't be able to go too much this week but went in and gave it all I had when my number was called. The coaches trust those guys so it was important that they knew the plays. Those guys are great players and work as hard as I do each and every day but haven't been able to show it as much before today due to the success I've had."

On the backfield during practice:

"It's still the same but there's a lot more rotation now that I am banged up and not practicing as much. The young guys are getting a chance to show what they can do. I'm really proud of them for stepping up, going out there and making huge plays."

On role as a coach from the sideline:

"I'm just coaching them on reads and just using my experience to help the younger guys. I'm not perfect so it's an opportunity for me to learn some things from them when I'm on the sideline."

On role of seniors during practice this week:

"Knowing that they have the experience and the work they have put in through the years in order to help us finish games is huge. Those guys being in a lot of situations before has helped us a lot this year because we have that leadership and guys to look to in order to step up and make plays when we need them."

On David Hood's practice preparations leading up to this game:

"Hood has always been a great player but things don't always go the way you want them. My success this year has put him in the back seat and prevented him from showcasing how good he really is. He didn't do anything different this week other than getting more reps and having a little more confidence and then getting an opportunity."

On how he felt on the sidelines after his fumble:

"It's definitely tough. I don't like fumbling at all. I am definitely my biggest critic when it comes to that but I knew that was not going to win or lose the game for us but it's nice to know those guys have my back on the sideline. It's tough being a running back and losing the football but I knew things were going to be fine as soon as we got the ball back."

On how competitive practices are when a few people are fighting for one position:

"You definitely have to bring it each and every day because you have those younger guys who are just as good as you, if not better, on your heels so it ups the level of intensity and competitiveness at every practice."

On how deep running back rotation is:

“Honestly, since I have been here, it’s the deepest core of running backs I have been around. They all bring different qualities to the field when they step out there which is what makes us so much better and more competitive. It allows us to bring it all out each and every day.”

On the amount of contact he has been receiving in practice since the Notre Dame game:

“Not too much. I haven’t really been practicing too much. When I do practice, I am not taking much contact, just kind of running around out there avoiding hits. It’s been helping my body recover as we approach the end of the season. It certainly helps my recovering process so I can get back to 100 percent.”

TE Kip Patton

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On his first touchdown and being back on the field:

"It felt great being back on the field. It was all about the season being memorable and playing great. No there was not any discussion during the week about me playing today. It was another week of preparation and when they called my number I knew what I had to do."

On the past couple of weeks:

"It's been tough dealing with some things off the field, but I'm just happy to be back out there."

On the contribution from the younger players

It was different, but it was great to play with them guys. It shows how good of team we are.

On P.J Walkers maturity over the years:

"I feel like he's a silent leader, but this year he has been more vocal. He shakes everyone's hand before the game and I think he notice that if we want to be good we have to follow the quarterback. He's one of the most importantly people on the team and people look up to him."

On him not being able to contribute to the team and this week's contribution:

"Everything is a learning experience and it felt good to help this week. I think it's fair to agree with Coach Rhule that I had to wake up."

On his run earlier this season compared to this season:

"It developed earlier on in the season. I remember at individual practice coach wanted me to work on this because in high school I played running back, so this could possibly be a new opportunity for me. It also looks good on film, so we stuck with it."

Temple RB David Hood

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On what went right for him on the field:

"Knowing and doing my job was working for me. I thought out everything I had to do and executed my plans."

On how he was able to respond after losing to USF:

"With great seniors on our team, we do not really need the coaches to motivate us even though they do. The seniors on our team to a great job of pushing us and motivating us in practice, during the week the seniors get the younger guys to rally up, prepare us for the game at the end of the week. On the day of the game we are all on page, so we are able to do what we have to do."

On his role in the game today and preparing during the week:

"Every week I practice like I am the starter. Even if I am not getting all the reps in practice: I still work hard. You never know what may happen, so I was just preparing myself as best as I could."

On getting in the championship game:

"It feels good to know that we won this game, but this game is over now. Now we have to focus on UCONN because that's what's next."

DL Nate D. Smith

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On this game compared to last week's game against USF"

"Last week we were beating ourselves and that one thing Coach Rhule coaches us on; to not beat ourselves. This week we wanted to change that and dominate our assignments and do what we have to get this victory."

On being surprised on how dominate they played this week with great players surrounding the quarter back on the opposing team:

"No, not at all because even though they are a great team if we do our job and don't beat ourselves down we can do a lot.

On being one game away from possibly being in the conference championship:

"We cannot put that game on a pedestal because if we do, we will start doing things that are not characteristic. We have to do our jobs and staff focused to win that game."

On today's win:

"It was a great win today, but it's not the high of our season."

DL Haason Reddick

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On the difference between today's game compared the past week:

"We had a lot of energy this week. Most of the guys on the team were energetic. We feed off each other more than any other weeks. You could feel the energy on the sideline and on the field. People were excited today because we knew we had a job to do in order to fight for the conference championship. We came to win today."

On controlling your own destiny now:

"The destiny has always been in our hands since the begging of the season. Last week it was in our hands and we missed out on an opportunity and this week it was in our hands. We didn't like how we played last week and we promised each other we would make a change this week."

On Memphis's Offense:

"Memphis's offense is very good, but at the same time we have a very talented defense. I think we prepared hard for the game. We did not want to lose."

Memphis HC Justin Fuente

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Opening Statement:

"Congratulations to Matt Rhule and Temple. They put on a fantastic performance, particularly defensively. They are a very good football team and they took it to us tonight."

On having to settle for field goals:

"We've been pretty good this year in the red zone, but they just did a good job keeping us off balance. When we had chances to make plays, we didn't make them. We couldn't get much going and we had to settle for field goals every time down in the red zone. That's just not going to get it done."

On struggling offensively:

"We didn't run the ball well and we didn't make any big plays. We got behind the chains and made some plays on third down to keep the drives going, but everything was hard. There was nothing easy out there. They were able to keep us from running the football which hurts us. If you can't run the football it's going to be a rough day, and that's what it was."

On the lack of big plays:

"We took a couple of shots early and didn't come down with the ball. They were playing a lot of two high coverage which makes it hard to push the ball down the field. We couldn't run the ball so we were unable to get them out of that coverage."

On injuries to many of the players:

"I don't know the status of any of the guys that got banged up. We had a lot of injuries and I don't have any updates."

On the inability to gain momentum:

"When we did get some momentum on defensive stops and the blocked punt, we just couldn't do anything with it offensively. It seemed like three times we started with the ball in good field position and the offense just fizzled out. We couldn't capture that momentum, but I'm tipping my hat to Temple. They're defense had their backs up against the wall and they were ready for the challenge."

On Temple's defense:

"We couldn't run the football and that sets everything else up for them. They're tough, physical and they run a good scheme. They're well coached and have good players. I think it starts up front for them where they did a good job controlling the line of scrimmage and keeping the ball in front of them."

On the losing streak:

"The losses have all been different. Last week I was proud of the way the kids played, but I'm not very proud of our team right now. I'm not trying to take anything away from Temple, but I'm not proud of the way we played. There is a different feeling in that locker room today than there was seven days ago. The results are the same, but its different circumstances this week."

Memphis QB Paxton Lynch

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On the three opportunities where the offense received the ball in Temple's territory and the frustration with not getting much out of that:

"Our defense did a great job today. They fought their tails off and gave us the ball on Temple's side of the field. As an offense, you can't just go three and out or take a field goal. You have to drive down the field at least once or twice and punch it in."

On what Temple did defensively that made things challenging:

"I'm not sure if they did anything different than we had expected but we knew they were going to come in here and be a tough and physical defense. They out executed us and won the game."

On being hit from behind in the first quarter and getting up slowly:

"I just got kind of rolled up and it bothered me for a minute, so I went on the sideline and got on the bike. I loosened back up and was ready to go after that."

Memphis WR Phil Mayhue

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On Temple's defense:

"They are just a real hard-nosed defense that takes pride in their toughness and stuff like that. They are a really downhill type defense."

On if Temple's defense surprised you on the field with anything you did not see on film:

"We had them mapped out pretty good. We just did not come out and execute."

On what the offense was not able to do today:

"We did not run the ball as effectively as we could have. If we would have established the run, the passing game would become easier. We need to get our running game started early."