



POSTGAME PRESS CONFERENCE

Texas A&M at Arkansas

October 18, 2025

Fayetteville, Arkansas

QUESTIONS FOR COACH MIKE ELKO

Opening Statement

"It just doesn't matter where we play this game. That's just how this game is going to go, whether we play it in Jerry World or we play it on campuses. It's the sixth game that I've been part of Texas A&M against Arkansas. It's the sixth one that has come down to the final drive in the fourth quarter. I'm glad that we had more points in them at the end of the game. Offensively, obviously we played a really, really good football game. I thought that was Marcel's best game of the year. He did a lot of things with his arm and with his legs. He extended drives. He did a really good job in the passing game and spread the ball around. I thought we had some guys step up and make plays. It was great to see EJ Smith step into a really strong role tonight. And obviously he has the critical 4th-and-1 run in the fourth quarter where he goes and gets it. Ashton Bethel-Roman has two critical catches tonight, I think he had four total for the game. It's great to see that. As hectic as it felt because I felt like I was calling defenses, the offense never let them get the ball back with a chance to take the lead. And I thought that was huge.

"I think that we never let them actually touch the ball with a chance to go up and it's a credit to our offense. It's a credit to what they did. Defensively we just picked a really, really bad night to play bad football. We played bad football. We didn't play anywhere near the standard of Texas A&M football, ever, at any point during the course of the game. We battled, but it just wasn't good enough. And when you do that against a really good offense, that's what happens. Obviously (Taylen Green) he's a tremendous player. Hats off to him. Because every time I felt like we were kind of trying to get a grasp of the game, he did something remarkable to keep it in their hands. But that's what you get in this conference. You get really good players, and we've got to be way, way better."

You guys were 3-of-3 on fourth down. Just what'd you see on those three, and especially the last one that EJ Smith got that that extended that drive in your own territory?

"We were going to be aggressive because we knew it was going to be a high-scoring game. We knew we knew our advantage was going to be our offense against their defense. We knew they were going to be able to score points. It was a very challenging offense. It's been successful all year. And so we knew that it was going to be that type of game. Two of them were fourth and less than a yard. We talked about that a little bit last year. It kind of doesn't matter where it is if it's fourth and less than a yard, I feel confident that we can get the first down. We were able to do it three times tonight."

What would you say is just the biggest thing you need to fix with the run defense?

"Yeah, a lot of things. Obviously, we mis-fit a lot of runs. Whenever you see a running back come running out of there like they did so many times tonight, those are all misfits. They were doing some different things then. Their offense is not different tonight versus the rest of the year, but it's a different offense obviously with the quarterback run element and it creates more stress. We just were very, very poor fitting things tonight."



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Two road games and the offense has played really well. What is it about this environment for this group that allows them to succeed in games like this?

"I truly believe this. I believe this team gets a feel for the game. I do. And when one side of the ball has needed to step up, it has done it, right? Every single game, every single week, every single opportunity. And I just think they're getting a feel for that. And so it didn't take much to figure out that we were going to have a problem dealing with that kid tonight. It didn't take long to figure out we weren't on our game defensively tonight. And I think that just kind of triggered the offense into a little bit more focus, a little bit more being locked in because that's how the game was going to have to go for us to win it."

Grade Marcel's play tonight, what did you see from him tonight to think that that was maybe his best game of the year?

"I thought he was calm in the pocket. I thought he delivered the ball where it was supposed to go. I thought he was really good in his reads and his progressions and his checks. He got us in the right play a lot of times. I just think he played a really, really clean game tonight."

You did something tonight that has not been done in Aggieland in 31 years, 7-0 record. What's different about this year that made the difference, that got the Aggies over that hump?

"We're making winning plays. We understand how to make winning plays. And listen, there's a lot of positives--I appreciate you saying that, and don't mistake this at all--four straight SEC wins? I think we're the only team in the conference who's done that, four back-to-back-to-back-to-back, without a bye, without a break, without playing anybody else. That's a challenge. Now we've got two big wins on the road. That's not something that's happened around here in a while. I think they're learning how to make the plays they need to make to win football games."



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QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES MARCUS RATCLIFFE AND ASHTON BETHEL-ROMAN

Ashton Bethel-Roman

Start with the big play. Walk us through the touchdown.

"You know, all week they were playing inside leverage. And me and Marcel were just connecting all week. So, I just took what I did from practice and applied it to the game, and it worked out."

And then how about the one down the sideline? That wasn't a touchdown, but it extended the drive.

"That's Coach (Holmon) Wiggins' philosophy, attacking the ball. We're in the SEC, so we've got to be big, make big time plays at receiver, contested catches...we're in the SEC. So that's all that was, just again applying what I learned from practice, using it in the game. Attacking the ball."

It was a game where you had a big game, EJ Smith had some big plays. Is it little extra special when guys who haven't had a chance to showcase themselves yet were a big part of the win?

"It feels great because everyone in that locker room over there can do anything. That's what we came here to do, play football at a high level. So, at first it can get a little frustrating, but it's part of the game. It's a team sport. When our number's called, we just play up to our standard."

What do you feel like you've learned the most about your team these last 3 or 4 weeks in particular that's led to this 7-0 start?

"We got dawgs. We've got dawgs everywhere. Whether people outside of our team want to admit it or not, we've got dawgs. We're just going to keep showing the world that we've got dawgs. So that's all it is."

Marcus Ratcliffe

What is it about this game you've seen these last two years that it just seems like it always comes down to the wire?

"(Coach Mike) Elko always harps on the fact that in the SEC, every game is a big game. And so we go into the week not thinking like, oh, this is an easy game or oh, we should blow this team out. We know every game is going to be a dogfight. Elko does a really good job of giving that mentality to us."

What was it like trying to contain Taylen Green?

"He's a great athlete. He's a superior athlete - super fast, super quick, super long. And so, yeah, obviously, you guys saw that gave us some trouble."

How big was the stop that y'all got early in that second half that allowed you guys to make it a two-score game?

"That was a huge stop. There were a lot of great plays made by great players on the defense. That was a good stop for us. We needed that."



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Can you talk about the offensive performance today and how they were able to pick you up on several occasions?

"Yeah, I mean that's such a blessing to have an offense that can play complementary football like that. When defense isn't doing so good, the offense steps up and makes plays throughout the entire game. I'm grateful to play with an offense like that."

Ashton Bethel-Roman and E.J. Smith had some big plays. What is it like to see guys who are fighting in practice like that have a big impact on games?

"I think it's a testament to our program and our culture. Your name can get called in any moment, and you need to make the play. And they did that."

What have you learned about your team these last few weeks in particular as you guys have now started 7-0?

"I think we don't stop fighting. I think throughout all four quarters, we're fighting, we're playing as hard as we can. And we don't stop."