

# Texas Football Press Conference

Oct. 19, 2015

Transcripts courtesy of ASAP Sports

## Charlie Strong

CHARLIE STRONG (opening statement): It was good to have a week off. The main thing is we have a lot of guys with some bumps and bruises and they were able to get back. Looking forward to the match-up with Kansas State. They were unlucky with that score on Saturday, and I know that's not who that football team is. It's a very well-coached team, a team that doesn't make many mistakes, and I have a lot of respect for Coach Snyder. I told our team yesterday, the same thing happened to us against TCU, we were able to bounce back and beat Oklahoma, so you've got to be ready for a team that's going to be ready to come and play, a team that's mentally and physically tough.

**Q. You said you're kind of bumped and bruised up a little bit right now. Can you just tell us about the status of [Kent] Perkins and Hassan Ridgeway and anybody else? Do you foresee them being available this week?**

CHARLIE STRONG: I think those guys will be ready to go this week. Perk is still day by day, but he was able to move around somewhat yesterday. Ridgeway, you know, I think Ridgeway will be ready. You know, he's got a shoulder issue, but still, he'll be ready come Saturday. I'm trying to think, Hager is still day by day. I think that -- I don't know if he'll be 100 percent come Saturday, but with the rest of the team, we should be ready to go.

**Q. Do you think [Edwin] Freeman will be (available)?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Freeman is working back but he will not be ready.

**Q. When you were talking with the team last week and Sunday, do you put down the marker on them that says, hey, we're going to a bowl game; you guys are going to finish with a winning record?**

CHARLIE STRONG: No, what I talk about is game by game, and so we just have to get ready to come and play and be prepared and just be ready to be focused. I said that what has happened, you play so well against Oklahoma, now we can't take a step back. But it's all about game by game. We've got six left, but let's just take them one at a time. It's Kansas State now, and a key thing for us is that we can control our own destiny, and we have to be ready to go and play.

**Q. After such an emotional win, you get that week, but now you look at what happened at K-State. Do you guys have to coach your guys harder now not to believe it's going to come a little easier?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, you have to coach them because you're right, you look at that game with K-State against Oklahoma, but when they look at the film, they're going to see that K-State had -- first play of the game got double moves and he's wide open, he had beat the corner wide open, ball was overthrown, and they had some opportunities to score, didn't get the scores in.

So I don't think our guys will get too overly concerned about this game because the thing about it is that we go up there last year, and they beat us pretty good. They pounded us. So I think that there's always something that you can point to.

**Q. You talked about how well your team played against Oklahoma. I know after the game you said you expect that from now on. How tough is that to get kids to do that week in and week out?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, it's going to -- you'd just like to think that mentally they would approach it the right way and they would go out there and just -- because it comes down to mental and physical toughness, about approaching the whole game and how you go out and go play. You look at that Oklahoma game, I know it's behind us now, but they're running the ball for over 300 yards, and then to go and play as well as we played on defense, it's there. That's about the whole preparation, the mindset of just going out and getting it done each and every week.

**Q. One week you guys don't look good against Notre Dame, the next week you come back and look better against Cal, especially from an offensive standpoint. One week you don't look good against TCU, the next week you beat Oklahoma. Week to week, do you know what to expect from your team?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, I wish I had that answer for you. You're right, it's just -- you'd like to develop some consistency and hope that you gain momentum and you just continue to improve and get better and better. Now with this week off, now you'd love to continue to play so that now you have a little momentum, just continue to play on.

But you know, we had to get them ready and had to have a game plan where we can go and execute a game plan and where you have some success executing it.

**Q. You talked a lot since you've been here about having people believe in the program. Have you sensed that's what's happened and you have made it easier for guys to believe and buy in since you are making progress?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, the players have always been -- they have bought in, the players. I was never concerned about them, because I know this, that they're going to -- when you have a win like that, it's where you sit there and you kind of are on the edge of everything. You're playing and playing and playing, and it just took a win like that to try to get them over the hump, but they had always believed and it had not happened for them, but now that it has happened, now you just hope the confidence just continues to build on and on.

**Q. Did you form an identity offensively against Oklahoma, and do the coaches have to trust a young guys a little bit in that Oklahoma game of playing the whole game and playing Davante [Davis] in that situation?**

CHARLIE STRONG: No, the second part of that, you know, it's that guys are ready to play, you just let them play. When you talk about skill guys and when you talk about Holton [Hill], you talk about Davante [Davis], John Burt, those guys, they're skilled athletes, so when you match up skill on skill, it doesn't matter if a guy is a freshman or a senior. If you can match it up, go ahead and match it up. But just the identity, we want to be a team that's physical -- you want to control the line of scrimmage always, so it always starts up front, so if you can run the football and knock people off the ball and you can stop the run, then you're going to develop an identity.

**Q. You mentioned getting over the hump. Now that you've got a big signature win, do you know what to expect from this team, or are you still a little uncertain because it is college football?**

CHARLIE STRONG: It is college ball, you're right, and the uncertainty is always there because when you go out, you're just hoping, hey, you're hoping they're ready to go play and let's play well. You go back and you go Cal and then you go Oklahoma State and then you see what happens at TCU, but you would like to think, hey, each and every week when they take the field, they're ready. You can kind of sense that. Sometimes as a coach you feel like you can sense that. You're just hoping that now that they've felt it and now, hey, guys, you've got to play like this all the time.

**Q. You alluded to the fact that you wish you kind of could have kept the momentum going, but you did need this kind of off week to have a chance to heal. What was your messaging to the team to make sure they kept the intensity even though they had the week off?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, we did, we went out and practiced so it was more fundamentals and technique and just practice. It was never -- when we went out there, it was all about business, so I just kept it at that. I would say, guys, I know it's a week off but we still have to get better, we're nowhere where we should be, and it's all about improving, so we're going to work. It wasn't one of those where we just go out there and kind of threw the ball around. No, we went to work. Yes.

**Q. [Kendall] Sanders was acquitted of sexual assault and will be allowed to reenroll in the school, would you take him back?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, we would sit down and we would discuss it as a staff and then just have that conversation with a lot of people involved.

**Q. You've been here a year and 10 months now. Has there been a more enjoyable week? And what are people saying to you over the last couple weeks?**

CHARLIE STRONG: I don't know if a vacation has been added -- but it was just that -- I guess so much had happened prior to that game, and when you talk about so much was said, and a lot of times I don't listen to it because you just can't listen to everything that's said. But when you talk about losing your team, our team, we had never lost our team. Talk about losing the locker room, and that's what -- where you kind of sit back and kind of go like, wow, I guess somebody is in the locker room with them when they have no idea what's going on. One thing about the players in this program, they know what the standards are, and they try to live up to them, and I know it hasn't been the way we would love for it to be, but they're still going to work and do everything you ask them to do, and it wasn't where you felt like the earth was falling in on us. It was never that. It was just them going back to work, and now you go and get this win, and the guys were just -- they were so -- I was so excited for our players more than anything because so much had been said about them. I was just so happy for them to see that -- to see their reaction and just -- where you kind of step back and watch them, even when we got them in the locker room after the games to sit back and watch my man do the haka, he loved that, [Patrick] Vahe. But to see how the players were around and they kept hugging one another and grabbing one another because they were just so happy, and that was the fun part about it.

**Q. Do you feel like the perception of your program maybe has changed overnight with that**

**one win?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, our guys went out recruiting this past week, and I actually went out on Thursday, but the coaches went out Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and had a chance to get around and get into a lot of high schools. The thing about recruiting, there's just still a number of guys that are still sitting there having to make major decisions, so this win, it does -- any time you win, it helps recruiting tremendously.

But the perception that -- so much is said about our program, which a lot of people really don't know, and they just make their comments, but when you have -- at the University of Texas, a lot is going to be said because a lot is expected, and that's what I tell our guys all the time, that you just have to have the courage just to just override everything that's being said about you, but you can't ever let doubt creep into yourself where you really don't believe in yourself but you have to have the courage where you have to believe in yourself where you can get things done.

**Q. Of course [Jerrod] Heard is extremely talented. What do you have to do in order to kind of open up that passing game?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, what happened, and it's just what teams -- you know the Cal game you were able to throw the ball, but even the Oklahoma game he was able to run the ball. Whatever teams want to give you, that's what you've got to take advantage of. He can throw the football, it's just you got into that game, the last game, and you just kind of rode -- the defense was playing well and the backs was running so hard, and even Jerrod took off with the football, so you had two guys that rushed for over 100 yards. So whatever they're going to give us that day is what we're going to take advantage of.

**Q. Back on the topic of surprising results where you guys can look back one week when you look at Kansas State and OU, and you see in the Pac 12 teams are being blown out that were looking good previously. What do you attribute the surprising results to?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Yeah, you know what happens is sometimes when you get into a game and I would take like the TCU game for us, where you have a mistake, and then one mistake leads to another mistake when you have to be able to just bounce back and say, hey, guys, let's get it together. Let's get out and move the ball and let's get a drive established, but then it doesn't happen. When you're playing a good opponent like that, then they can strike and then they strike again and then they get you back on your heels, and then all of a sudden it starts coming with pressure, then they strike again on you.

But it's a lot of explosive offenses, but defensively you've just got to be able to just gather yourself, but it's so hard because players see so much that is happening around them for them to gather themselves, and guys, let's slow down, let's go out and get something established, and then let's try to get this thing back on track.

**Q. Now that you've had a good week to watch that Oklahoma film, how much of that was just guys were emotionally amped up at the moment and how much of it was a natural progression of a young team?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, any time it's a rival game they're going to be amped up and they're going to have a lot of juice and they're going to have a lot of energy. You know, even when we took that field just to go warm up, you know, there was a lot of jawing back and forth. I think

that kind of contributed where our guys kind of got ready to go play now because we run past them, and a lot was said. That's why I wish they would change the end zones, so whenever we're the home team, we should get the end zone (on the tunnel side of the Cotton Bowl), because you think about it, every year we come out, we have to listen to their crowd, and coming through the tunnel and they're throwing stuff and talking, so our fans should get the tunnel, and then when they're the visitors, then I don't know where you seat them but they can always switch it around.

But what you'd like to do is just make sure it's always a game by game, week by week, and just get settled down and get locked in and get focused.

**Q. So many players finding playing time on offense and defense, but staying on the special teams. We saw Kris Boyd on special teams all of a sudden getting some reps on defense; DeShon Elliott, can you talk about his play on special teams and how do you feel you're set at safety and whether or not that kind of game or those sorts of performances out of a guy like Elliott get some playing time?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, at safety, and you're right, Elliott had the really good game there against Oklahoma, but I told Elliott, he ought to thank Holton Hill and he ought to thank [Kevin] Vaccaro. Vaccaro is an unbelievable special teams player because that first fumble, they actually went there and tackled the guy, and he's kind of getting blocked, and he reached his hand out there, and he ended up getting pancaked on that block. So I told him, you got pancaked, but you did cause a fumble.

But at the safety position with him and PJ [Locke], they're coming along good, and those are two guys we'll rotate in at some point. When you're sitting there, that's a position where you're gaining a lot of depth now because those guys are coming just like they did at the corner position.

**Q. Third straight 11:00 a.m. kick, the importance of starts, TCU, Oklahoma. Is it more important maybe in a morning game to get juiced up, especially now that you're back at home?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Oh, it is, and I love those 11:00 games because we get our guys up and I think it's a 5:40 -- it's a 5:30 staff meeting, so we have our staff meeting. Then we wake the players up at 6:00. So when I wake them up at 6:00, I kind of walk them around. They've got to get up and they've got to walk, so we kind of walk the perimeter of the hotel, then we come back and then we do a walk-through and get them moving. So we're making calls and getting them moving, and then we go and eat breakfast and then it's time to go get dressed and go play. That's what I like to do; I like to get it going and get them moving, and I tell them don't come down there looking sleepy. Wash your face and come down there, let's get going. I don't want any guys looking sleepy. Let's get going and get ready to go play a football game. But I love the 11:00 a.m. games.

**Q. Based on his season-long production, should D'Onta [Foreman] be your lead running back?**

CHARLIE STRONG: D'Onta? Well, I'll tell you what, he's doing -- the number of touches that he has, he's been very productive. But you look at [Johnathan] Gray, too, you have two outstanding backs. Even with [Jerrod] Heard, look at his number of touches and the number of

yards he gets. But you have three threats there that can really run the ball. The thing about it is that those guys with the ball in their hands, the thing D'Onta, what people don't realize is just how fast he is, and the guy that we're forgetting, and he was coming back from an ankle injury, is Chris Warren. He's another one that can add something to the mix.

**Q. I'm sure you're influenced by a lot of head coaches, but how much has Bill Snyder influenced you in the way he's built that program?**

CHARLIE STRONG: That's the thing with Coach Snyder. You think about where K-State was and where he's built that program, actually from ground zero, and just his leadership ability, and then when you talk about building a program, just the toughness and the type of players, smart, tough, dependable, what we always talk about. But that's a team that doesn't make many mistakes and they don't beat themselves, and year in and year out they're always in it. You think about it, they're always in the mix. You look at the team they had last year and it's only like two or three guys, it's not a big-time superstar, it's just a bunch of guys that is a team and they all play together.

**Q. People were talking about how bad your defense was and how you need to make changes on that side. Did you see a significant breakthrough on that side of the ball against the Sooners, and what did you see the defense do in that game that you didn't see them do before?**

CHARLIE STRONG: You know, defensive plays, it's all about disruption, and it's always -- you talk about just rhythm and disrupting the rhythm of the offense, and we started off, and we knew this, and I think that they played so well on defense because they knew all the weapons that OU had. We saw the quarterback with Baker [Mayfield], the wide receiver with [Sterling Shepard], even the running backs, the two big running backs, and the big offensive line.

But you've got to start off and you have to start off good on defense, and then once you set the tone there, then everything else kind of fell in place for us because we got there and we stopped them three-and-out, then we make them punt the ball. We started off like that against TCU. But it's got to be where you continue to play like that. Sometimes you start playing that well on defense and kind of take a dip. You can't take a dip. You've got to remain consistent throughout the whole game.

**Q. Can you talk about how your offensive staff was coming together after the reshuffling after Notre Dame, and what impact Jeff Traylor has had on maybe helping with the running game design?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, just offensively it's coming together well. They're all professionals so they all work together with [Joe Wickline], with Traylor, with [Tommie Robinson]. You've got a bunch of guys in there with a lot of experience, a lot of years of coaching, so they know what we have to do, and it's all about putting a plan out there so we can go win the game.

**Q. I don't know if you got to watch any college football on Saturday, but did you ever think you'd see a punter from Australia flip a punt and cost his team the game?**

CHARLIE STRONG: No, I didn't get to watch much, but I mean, that's tough now. The game is hard. How would you be feeling right now, huh? How would I be feeling? Oh, wow.

**Q. Did you also get a tattoo of the Foreman brothers on your back?**

CHARLIE STRONG: No, I started to (laughs), and I just thought it would be kind of odd, so I just told them we need to win a little more before I think about a tattoo.

**Q. Talk about those two and how they've played for you.**

CHARLIE STRONG: You look at it, and Armanti [Foreman] was the one that everybody was talking about in the very beginning, and now D'Onta [Foreman] has kind of done great things. But there's two guys, twin brothers, that kind of feel each other, and you can't ever see one without the other when they walk in the building. If I miss one, I always ask D'Onta where is Armanti and he's always right behind him, and he's coming close. But just to see them go out and compete and the year they're having is really fun to watch.

**Q. Did you watch that OU-K-State game live and were you thinking what in the world am I watching here?**

CHARLIE STRONG: You know, I watched it in the very beginning, and then all of a sudden you see -- and then OU jumps up, and you just start saying, it isn't going right for K-State today because the first play, like you see the double move, guy is wide open, and the DB is 15 yards behind him, and if P.J. [Locke] just gets it to him, it's a touchdown, and then probably it's a different game. But when you don't make plays, that's what happens to you. Then it's just the snowball effect starts happening for you and it just continues to go downhill for you.

**Q. Do you watch differently because K-State is the one you're playing next?**

CHARLIE STRONG: No, and that's why I kind of quit watching it, because I said, this team, it will not be the team we'll see, so I'm done with this game. I know when they come in here Saturday it'll be a totally different ball team.

**Q. We saw how successful the combination of Tyrone [Swoopes] and Jerrod [Heard] was against OU, can we expect the same split with their playing time against K-State?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, you know, it just depends on the flow of the game. You know, you'd like to always play a lot of guys, and we'll see how it goes.

**Q. I know you talk about confidence a lot, and going back to the OU game and building on it, is that the main thing you want your guys to take away is when you can run the ball and stop the run?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, you always talk about just the point of attack. The line of scrimmage, you have to control the line of scrimmage, and you watch teams win, if you can move the football -- if the offensive line can take guys and drive them off the ball and you get positive plays, then you're going to get positive yards, also, then you're going to be happy you're protecting the quarterback. And on defense you just can't allow teams to just take the ball and run it. You want to make teams one-dimensional, which we haven't done, where you'd like to say, hey, we have to stop something, either stop the throwing game or the run game, but you do it where it starts up front with the big guys. That's why we always talk about big guys beat up little guys. That's where it's got to start off.

**Q. A lot of people talk about that you're weak at the linebacker position. What have you seen from Peter Jinkens?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Pete played very well against Oklahoma, and then Malik [Jefferson] was the national defensive player of the week in that game. But you look at two guys that are doing very well, and they're playing off of one another. Malik is one that you can put him outside, he can rush the passer and just create -- he can create plays, and there's Pete kind of sitting back where he's done a great job -- where Pete has done a great job is just attacking and making a lot of plays. I'm happy for him just to see him having the year up to right now the way he's playing.

**Q. You got asked about the big news last week about [Steve] Spurrier. What did you think of your time with him and what did you learn from him, and would you ever talk smack with him?**

CHARLIE STRONG: No, I would never talk smack. He's the only one that can do that. I coached with Coach Spurrier and spent a number of years with him, and I always say this, he changed college football because when he came into the Southeastern Conference, that was a conference that was kind of black and blue, beat you up, three yards and a cloud of dust. Then all of a sudden he starts spreading people out and he started working. It was all about using the players' athletic ability where you'd just find them, and it was just so funny, though, to watch how he would get into a game and a guy would be wide open and he'd yell at the quarterback, tell him run the same play again and throw it to the tight end, and you'd throw it to the tight end and it's a touchdown.

But just to see how he changed it, and you're right, it's just -- his whole attitude where he built confidence in his team because he had a lot of confidence, and each game you should approach it like that. It wasn't one of those where he was arrogant. It would be like, hey, we're going to go out here and beat these boys, so let's get ready to go beat them, and you'd go out there and go beat them, somehow.