

# University of Texas Football Media Conference

Monday, November 2, 2015

transcript courtesy of ASAP Sports

## Charlie Strong

CHARLIE STRONG (opening statement): It was a frustrating loss, and I know the players are just as frustrated as I am. When you don't play smart and you don't execute, then that's what happens. You know what we have to do is we have to continue to work hard. We have to make sure that during the week we're prepared and we're focused.

And there's more than enough talent on this team to win. That's not the question at all. But we just have to be more consistent.

Knowing that's our opponent with Kansas coming in, Coach [David] Beaty is from the state of Texas, was an unbelievable high school coach here in the state of Texas, and I know his team will be ready to play. It won't be the same team that we saw against Oklahoma because I know when they get ready to come in here and they get ready to play us, teams get a different attitude about them.

**Q. Is it time at this point for [Jeff] Traylor to get an audition as the play caller, and do you still have confidence in Shawn [Watson] with the quarterbacks?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, it's not so much the play caller, it's just about executing the call. You know, I have a lot of confidence in Shawn with the quarterbacks, and you know, it was just more we've got to continue to develop them.

**Q. How stunned are you at the way Saturday went, and how much of it is a team learning to change its mindset as you change the program?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, you know what happened, you would have thought that because of the way we had came on the last two weeks that you would walk in and just be ready to go play. It's just a whole mindset of being ready to go. You know, you can't blame anything. You go back and we didn't get in there until about 10:00 that night because of the weather here, but that had nothing to do with it. You still would have thought that you had plenty of time to be focused and plenty of time to get prepared, but then on game day you just go execute and go play.

It was more of you start off on defense and you get the stops and then you don't move the ball on offense, and then they get back out there...but still, though, it's just a group that has got to learn how to go finish and prepare themselves and be ready all the time.

**Q. Coach, [Jerrod] Heard, what he did against Cal seems almost like a distant memory. How do you get him back to that? Is it simple as just making some more downfield throws, and how did he get away from that?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, you know, just with him, a lot of times you look at it, you're still looking at it as a redshirt freshman that's still learning how to go play the game. You're right, you

go back to the Cal game and it does seem like many years ago instead of games ago, and you'd love to see that performance all the time each and every weekend, and it's there. It's just a matter of him just doing it and playing and playing up to his ability and playing to his level because he can -- we've seen it happen, so we know it's there and it can be done again.

**Q. Speaking of Jerrod, he clearly did well against Cal with his feet, but when it comes to passing, looking down the field, the pocket presence, he just seems to be struggling in there. What are you seeing and how can he improve?**

CHARLIE STRONG: The key thing with that, when you talk about just pocket presence, a lot of times when he's outside the pocket, and I always say that when you allow a quarterback to get outside the pocket then our percentage rate goes up, and that's the thing with him. He's better just with the bootlegs, with the sprint passes and getting him on the edge and letting him release the ball. Even on Saturday, the protection didn't break down, just have to have the patience to sit in there, because what teams are doing, when they drop eight at some point somebody has got to come open and you just have to have the patience. But the clock is running in a quarterback's head, and when we drop eight we know it's going to run 1,000-one, 1,000-two, I've got to get rid of the ball. You really don't have to get rid of it, just wait for guys to come open because they're going to come out and now when they do come open, release it to them.

**Q. How do you lose your identity in one week, and are you afraid the players are mentally soft?**

CHARLIE STRONG: No, the second part of that, I don't think they're soft at all. You know, you have a group that is -- they have some toughness to them because that's what this program will always be built on, just mental and physical toughness, and they have that. And the identity, you know, we walk into it, and I've said to them before, before the game ever started, even last week, I said, this game here concerns me because of where it sits, and I know that we're going to get their best. I said, 'They have us picked for homecoming so they're going to go play at a different level. Now we have to go match that level, which we didn't do. We didn't match their level of play.'

And that's what happens. You're going to always get their best. When we go on the road we're going to get the team's best, but we've got to be able to match their best, and we haven't done it. We haven't done it on the road.

**Q. The identity, it seemed like on offense was that two-back set with the speed sweep motion and the stuff that could come off of it, and then it didn't -- [Jay] Norvell didn't stick with it or the offensive staff didn't stick with it. What was going on there? Was there some part of the game plan that disappeared when De La Torre went down and the 18-Wheeler package disappeared? What was the game plan on offense?**

CHARLIE STRONG: No, when [Alex] De La Torre went down we put Chris Warren in, so you didn't lose nothing there. Now you've got a big running back who can really run the ball. But even with the 18-Wheeler package, you know, we moved the football in the 18-Wheeler package. Here's what you've got to look at, and a key stat is the 3rd down. We were 2 of 13 on 3rd down, and the two that we converted was a 3rd and 1 and 3rd and 2, but the rest of them was 3rd and 4 to 5. So they're there to be gotten, so let's just take it, take what they give us, get the 1st down and keep the ball moving, which we didn't do, so now we didn't get many opportunities

because we couldn't convert on third down.

**Q. Jeff Traylor helped put that run game stuff in. Why not let him add to it and run things the last five games?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, it's not so much who's calling it right now. It's about execution. It's not -- you can have whomever calling it. I know I can go call it. But they've still got to execute it. But it's totally execution, and guys just being consistent.

**Q. Last year you predicted that Texas would never lose five games again. How shocked are you that it has happened?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, you know, I can make those predictions, but it doesn't always happen, so there's not much I can do about it. We've just got to keep playing.

**Q. Jerrod Heard, the course of the game, it seems like it was a lot, from not throwing the ball out of bounds and taking sacks, is it just a lot weighing on him right now, and what can you do to kind of take some of that away and allow him to play kind of freely?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, so much of what you do is you take advantage of what the defense gives you, and we didn't take advantage of that, what the defense -- and when the play is called, just execute it because it's there to be -- the yards are there to be gotten so we've got to take advantage of it.

You're right, the one play he threw the ball and tried to get it out of bounds and it stayed inbounds, the guy ended up intercepting it, but you just need to be patient, and he needs to be consistent, just sit in there and let it go.

**Q. Where are you confidence-wise with Jerrod, and will you consider Tyrone Swoopes as your starter this weekend?**

CHARLIE STRONG: I'm fine with Jerrod. The thing about it, Jerrod is -- we know this: We've seen him make plays, and we know he's capable of making plays, and we've just got to continue to put him in that position to make those plays, and he's just got to be consistent and execute it.

Tyrone is going to play, and we saw that. And then when he comes in with the package that we have for him, it's just not only short yardage because we get the first down and we can stay in that package because now we have wide receivers on the field, so we have a package set up where he can -- if we need to throw the ball, he can throw the ball down the field and do those things.

So really you're playing both of them right now, and they're playing -- I don't know the number of snaps, how many played the most, but they're playing -- they're going to play a lot of snaps and you're going to get both of the guys.

**Q. You talked a lot about maintaining an even keel on the sidelines, but does there come a point where you need to get up in guys' faces because I know you do it behind the scenes, but do you do it on the sideline and do you have players who will get up in other guys' faces just to kind of get a spark going?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Do I do it? I do it more than enough. When they come off (the field), they

hear it.

But it's not so much -- you know, when you talk about just during the course of the game and how the game is going, you have to know who your players are and who you can really all of a sudden go after and go attack them because you don't want to lose them during the game. But, they need to know how you feel. So, it's not hard to call them over and just let them know. Even before they take the field, like before the offensive huddle, you see us huddled up there on offense before they take (the field), things are being said then, even with the defense.

But you've just got to know who you're dealing with. A lot of times some guys you can't just all of a sudden rip them apart because then you lose them, so now you've got to pull them back and usually sometimes that's the guys with the ball in their hands the most.

So what's frustrating is that you know that they can play better and they know they can play better, so it's not like you've got to walk up to them and all of a sudden break them down there and berate them in front of everybody. They know how they're playing and they know what they need to do to get it back.

**Q. You could see early on that you guys weren't playing up to Iowa State's level. Once you sensed that, what do you say or do you just put a lot on the players that they can get out of this?**

CHARLIE STRONG: No, as a coaching staff we have to say something. I said to our coaches, I said that the thing that happened in this game is you know this: When a team takes the field, and I tell -- I told our players this in the locker room before the game. I said, "We need to get ready to go play, guys, and I said, 'I can sense it right now because you're going to get their best so you'd better be willing to go play your best'. And I said, Take a seat, everybody needs to sit down and just think about what we have to go do here to go win this football game.' So then when the game gets started, I said, 'You don't wait until game time to get ready to go play a game, and that's -- and you look at it, the last two weeks it's been such a buildup where everybody -- you would have thought that we were an undefeated football team, and we weren't. We were sitting at 3-4 and everybody was building us up like we were, and sometimes that can hurt a team because when a team is still trying to figure out who they are and still fight through their identity. You don't need to build them up. You still need to make sure that they understand there's still a long ways to go and we still have a lot of work in place.

**Q. Back to Jerrod and his passing, it doesn't look like he's trying to pass the ball often. It looks like he's just dropping back and looking to run. Are you guys calling the pass plays for him? Are you asking him to be more conservative? Is he just missing -- can you give us an understanding of what's not clicking with the pass game?**

CHARLIE STRONG: No, he's not -- for sure he's not doing it (running) on his own. He can't go up there and call a play. No, the play comes in from the sidelines so he's given the play, and he knows what he has to do to execute the play.

So you know, and he knows which side he's got to work and what's being given to him. And so when it goes up, then it's all about him, when he goes up and gets his pre-snap read or how the secondary is aligned and how the backers are aligned and what kind of front he has, then he

knows where to take the ball and go deliver the football.

**Q. The past two years when things start going bad it seems to bring the worst out of your team and it just snowballs. Have you thought about mentally why they are not able to just kind of withstand the storm and get things back going on their own?**

CHARLIE STRONG: And you're right, because the main thing is for them not to lose their confidence and not to lose their focus and just keep playing. You know, and it's a 60-minute game. Here's a great example. The one punt that they punted the ball there and Daje [Johnson] caught it, fielded it on the 7 and the guys runs at it, makes a big hit. I said, 'Listen, Daje, I don't need one guy to go win this football game. Just let the ball hit, let it go into the end zone; we'll get the ball at the 25.' He said, 'Well, Coach, I was just trying to make a play.' I understand that, and I appreciate that, but we've still got a lot of time left on this clock and there's a lot of time left in this game, so let's just go play. There's a lot of people involved that I don't need just one guy.

**Q. Confidence seems like it's such a fragile thing. When you've won a couple in a row, you talk about everybody is building you up now. They see what's being talked about after a loss. How do you keep them confident as suddenly the window is not so big?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, what happens is we've got to make sure that they understand there's still a lot of games to go play and just continue to play and better. Yeah, it's frustrating that we lost that one to Iowa State. Now you've still got Kansas left and still got three more after that. It's all about getting it back because you're proving that you can do it, so okay, let's go get it done.

It's not hard to do, and we all are locked in, we all are focused and we all prepare the right way. That's what happens when you have that group and you've got to make sure that everybody is on the same page and everybody is locked in.

And then execute. We talk about offense, but defensively we need to execute, too. We need to get off the field on third down.

**Q. As a football player you have to play with passion and you have to play with a little bit of anger. It doesn't seem like anybody on this team is really upset that they're getting beat like this. They go to Iowa State and lose 24-0. No one is stepping up and saying, we've got to get this done, we can't go out like this. What do you tell the kids to get them to that point?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, they're upset, and they come in the locker room after the game and a few guys have something to say, and they said it, and it needs to be said by them where it hurts, like [Johnathan] Gray is going to say something, Sed Flowers is going to say something, Peter Jinkens, the way he's playing now, he's going to say something. That's what happens. It's frustrating to them, and it does upset them. So it's not like they walk in there and say, you know what, we don't care, this is what's going to happen to us. No, and it does. It just goes back to -- all the preparation and making sure that when these guys -- when we go out there to play that we are locked in and we've got to go play. You just don't roll out there.

You're always going to get their best because of who we are, and that's what -- they still have to understand that. Guys, you don't just walk out there because we're University of Texas with it across our chest that people are going to bow down. They're not going to bow down to you. They haven't, and they've shown they're not going to.

**Q. Iowa State's secondary was rated by some as the worst in the country. What were they doing Saturday night that confused Jerrod and Tyrone, and specifically what were they doing to limit the Longhorns in passing?**

CHARLIE STRONG: We just didn't take advantage of it, because it was there. We didn't take advantage of it. The throws could have been made, and they were on the outside, the corners were eight yards off, and the secondary, they rolled down, they dropped eight people, and like I said, when they drop eight, just be patient, just hold onto it because somebody eventually is going to come open. A seam is going to open up to you because the linebackers are not going to carry the seams that deep. But it was there to be taken, and we just didn't take advantage of it.

**Q. I asked you last week about concerns about which team would show up from week to week and the Jekyll and Hyde thing keeps happening. At what point does it stop being case-by-case and becomes more of a systematic problem?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, you would like to have said every week that you see that same team that you saw against Oklahoma. That's all I ever talk to them about is will I see that team each and every week. That's the team you've got to see because that team is a team that just played with pride. We talk about playing with passion, playing hard, and even when they fall back, they were able to come back and able to continue to play, and that's what -- we've got to get that each and every week. That's called consistency, and that's what we have to have.

**Q. In terms of what you're getting out of this offense, what you want as the head coach out of this offense, what are you saying going into the week, and then how are you holding them accountable? Do you feel like the offense got away from what it was doing best against Oklahoma and Kansas State?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, I'm one of those guys that it's got to be balanced, and you have to be balanced, and when we are able to run the football, we're pretty good, and we did, I think we had 137 yards rushing right at three points. But, the thing is that we have to establish the run, and then once people start loading the box on you is when Jerrod is really good and he ends up throwing the ball up over the head. But, we've got to get the run game going, and we do have to do a better job of throwing the football.

But once -- and when it's there, when the defense shows their hand, then you've got to take advantage of it, and that's what we don't do. That's why it goes back to just executing what they give you and taking advantage of what they're going to give you because they're going to give you plays. It's not always going to be a 30-yard pass. It's going to be a five to seven, and if you can break a tackle then you're going to turn it into whatever you need to turn it into, and it can always turn into a big play.

**Q. A lot of the counter stuff, the power stuff that had been working for you kind of went away --**

CHARLIE STRONG: We ran the quarterback power Saturday, and we ran some counter when 25 (Chris Warren) came in, and when Tyrone (Swoopes) comes in with the big package, you get the counter and the power.

**Q. Do you feel like you got what you wanted out of the game plan?**

CHARLIE STRONG: No, we lost the game, so we've got to play better.

**Q. Are you aware your fan base may check out, especially with a bowl game being such a longshot?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Yeah, and I hope they don't because still at the end of the day, you need -- the players need their support, and they need them there to cheer them on. When the fans look at the number of losses, then they -- a lot of times it's just human nature, you feel like I've got something else to do, why do I go watch them play. But we've still got games to be played and our fans have been unbelievable, and I feel like they will continue to support us and be there for us.

**Q. You've talked so many times about after some of these tough games about the inability to execute and possibly not being ready and stuff. As a coaching staff, have you guys identified anything that you guys can do to make sure that the team is ready to at least come out and play at an acceptable kind of non-embarrassing level in these games to where they're going to show up and you can expect at least a certain level of play? Is there anything you've identified before these games where you said, man, I don't think they were ready before that game? Is there any common thread?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, I don't think that they were embarrassed on Saturday. I don't think that was embarrassing. The guys played hard. It wasn't a factor where they didn't go out there and lay down and they didn't play hard. This team didn't go out there and quit. They played hard. This team did do that. But you look at the score, and it's 7-0 there right before half, then they get a field goal and make it 10-0, and when you don't get things going is when it looks like that because now you're not executing on offense, and then all of a sudden things start breaking down on defense.

What's frustrating is that when you go out, it's got to happen -- when we start off good, then we end up being good, and that's what happened. We've got to get going early. When we go good early, then it happens for us. You look at the drives in the games that we're in and we win, it's just because we start off good.

And like I said, you look at our quarterback and the thing -- he knows it, and he knows that he's got to execute it. It's there to be done, it's just more of execution, and it's not only on him. You look all the way across the board on both sides of the ball.

**Q. When a team doesn't have leadership or they're not executing, doing a lot of these things, have you talked about ultimately that's a reflection of the coaching staff? What are you telling your guys that they need to do to improve as a staff so it'll have a trickle-down effect to this team?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, it is, and that is a direct reflection of the head coach and the coaching staff, and I said that to our coaches yesterday. The thing we've got to do, and I tell them all the time, you have to know and you have to sense when the team -- when your guys are not ready to play. I can sense it. I know that right away. I can walk in there on game day and just know, we're going to have a good day or this is going to be one of those where -- I've bet on it ever since I've been coaching. I can remember telling guys all the time, I think about [Brandon] Spikes when I was at Florida, I would tell Spikes, you're not going to play good today. I know

right now you're not going to play good today, and he would end up having a bad day. And I'd say, you know what, I could tell right now, your mindset, the way you're feeling, the way you're carrying yourself, the way you're walking around -- when guys are ready they've got this pep about them, they've got this step about them, and you know right now, hey, we're going to have us a good one because this team is ready to go play. Then you've got to have one, and then all of a sudden they can just feed off of him and he's the one that gets everybody ready with the energy.

You don't need -- and that's what I try to say all the time. We don't need false confidence. I can tell when you're a fake, so don't come in here saying, 'Hey, let's go.' I don't need to go ask you are you ready. Let me get ready and then you get ready the way you want to get ready. I don't need to say, hey, are you ready. No, you get yourself ready, then he'll get ready, then we'll know that everybody is ready to go. But, as a coach you've got to know if your group is ready to go play.

**Q. In terms of the passing game, how much do you put on maybe the receivers not getting open or not being explosive enough or how much do you put on the quarterbacks?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, the receivers, it's a combination of both. They're going to be open, and when you talk about it, it's just executing and taking what they give you because we had guys open, and the way they played us, you know, there was yards to be taken and we just didn't take advantage of it.

**Q. With what you guys put into it, practice, training camp, off-season, does it amaze you that you have to worry about your kids being up to play one of 12 games a season?**

CHARLIE STRONG: And you only get 12 opportunities. That's all you get is 12, so you would think each and every week -- you don't get but 12 so don't waste it, take advantage of it. It's 12, so don't waste it. That's what I say, it's only 12. All the hard work you put into it, you get 12 opportunities to go out and show everybody what you have and what we're all about.

**Q. After a loss like that are you hard on your staff?**

CHARLIE STRONG: I'm probably harder on myself, but the staff hears it and they get it. They get the message. They get the message during the game. They get the message after the game, and they get the message for sure on Sunday.

**Q. Kind of a two-part question on the offensive line. What's your level of disappointment or frustration with that group given the strides they seemed to make the two previous games? And then you made the change toward the end to bring [Kent] Perkins to guard and bring in Tristan Nickelson. Is that a move you look at making for the Kansas game and possibly going forward?**

CHARLIE STRONG: No. The problem wasn't the offensive line. The protection, it wasn't a breakdown in protection. I think they got one sack and then they rushed three the whole day. I mean, you can stand back there with the ball the whole day and they weren't going to get to the quarterback. He's just got to sit in there and let things develop and let it open up. You know, the reason why I did Perk with the guard is because Sed Flowers had went down. He was having issues, so that's the reason he went to guard.

**Q. After the steps y'all took with Oklahoma and Kansas State, how many do you think you took back with this last game?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, we took some steps back for sure, but the thing about it is each and every week you've got a chance to go prove yourself, and you can go get them back. You've got Kansas coming in here. We need to get that one. And I told our guys just look at it as a one-game (season) -- just get it to the game, get to the game, and we can't waste and we can't blow any more opportunities. We've got to take advantage of it.

**Q. Jerrod (Heard), you've always talked about his confidence. He wasn't used to any failure at the high school level. Are you seeing him deal with this downtime in the right way?**

CHARLIE STRONG: Well, the thing about him, and you're right, he has a lot of confidence, and he knows himself, and he'll tell you, 'Coach, I didn't play good.' But it's good that he will say that, and he's willing to take ownership whereas a lot of guys, they don't take ownership because a lot of them think they played well. But, he has said that and he came up to me after the game, he said to me, 'Coach, it's my fault.' I said, no, it's never your fault. It's never one person's fault. Don't ever think that. Yeah, you didn't play good, but there's a lot of other people that didn't play good, too. So he's willing to accept it, and the good thing about him is he'll bounce back.