

Texas Head Coach Charlie Strong

Opening Statement: Well, this one, I'm just so proud of how our team fought back from being 21-down, and they grew up tonight. I can say that about them. When you watch them, they came together and no one had a selfish attitude. They just continued to scratch and get back in the game after being down 21 in the third quarter. Probably the biggest turning point in the game was when we were up by 10, had the momentum going and there was a long run out there right before half and they scored in three plays, and they turned the ball over, and then they get a field goal. Giving up 21 points during the third quarter, that's where we had to battle from 21-down.

But just watching Jerrod and the offense and how they just kept answering and answering and answering, I'm just so happy, and we can learn a lot from this. A lot of growing up tonight, but there was a lot of mistakes out there. We've just got to get those corrected.

On strengthening the defense: That's the thing. Everything was gap. You see the one big run and we sit there, and the guy is in the gap, and then he turns back and tried to fight off the defender, but it's all gaps, and we've got to get off of blocks. We've got to hit blocks, get off blocks, and that's where we didn't do a good job tonight. The big runs there, even when you're in zone coverage and the ball breaks the line of scrimmage, you should have enough guys on the line of scrimmage where guys can make the tackle, and we didn't.

On the mistakes by veterans: Well, it's just – I can't point out seniors, juniors, freshmen or sophomores. It's a lot of mistakes that were being made, and you're right. When you're young, you have to play, almost just ball, that's mistake free, and those things can't beat you up like they're doing right now.

On if this loss will help turn the corner for Texas: This one here hurts because you watch our team and you watch Jerrod take off, and there's a minute and 11 and we go and score, and extra point is like automatic. I didn't even look. What I'm saying, I'm on the headset saying, we've got a minute and 11, what are we going to do on defense because we have to stop them. We can't just let them – we've got to get pressure on them. We can't let them drive the ball because we had stopped them the last few times, but I said, now they're going to open it back up so we've got to go stop them. Then I look up and all of a sudden I see one of their players running down the field, and I was like, oh, my God.

I hope this is one that turned the corner for us. I hope this – because when you look at this, it's a lot of mistakes, but they can be corrected; but to watch us play and fight back the way we fought back, that's where more than anything – that 21-down and it could have really gotten away from us, and to watch our guys continue to play and get back into it.

On Jerrod Heard's performance in the fourth quarter: Well, you know, you look at it, we were down; and then we take the ball and go and drive it, and now you're down 14. What he can do, they start just rushing three, and he was making the throws, makes the big throw to Daje on an over route, and then once they break down, they start covering so he can get out and then make people miss in the open field.

The last run that he scored the touchdown on was really electric. I mean, you see where he takes off and we called a draw, he makes a wide-out miss and then all of a sudden – an open field is very dangerous. But just watching him, he's exciting, and he has brought the excitement into the team. You watch our whole sideline now when our offense takes the field, our guys are all just locked in. When we went back out there to go and tie the game, they just knew we were going to go out and go tie that game.

On addressing the locker room tonight: When I walked in I heard – I heard J-Gray (Johnathan Gray) pull them all together and they were talking, which is really good, and now that they're beginning to take ownership. So with them taking ownership, I think that's going to go a long ways. A lot of guys in there hurting, which is good. That's the first time I've seen guys like that really hurting. Where it hurts is to watch them fight back the way they fought back.

On how Texas will rebound from this loss: Well, we have to rebound. We have no choice but to rebound. They'll come back, and it was tough. It was a crushing loss. But they can come back. I know what you saw – what we've seen in the past is that when we get down 21, we end up getting blown out because we don't come back, and now you watch them continue to fight and fight back, fight themselves back into it and they continued to play.

On starting conference play next week against Oklahoma State: Yeah, because coming up next week we've got Oklahoma State, and they're a very good football team and they're ranked. We've got to get it back together, and we're coming here tomorrow, and they'll learn from it. There's a lot of mistakes, but you look at it, and we didn't play that well. We didn't play that well on defense. Offensively we turned the ball over twice and we had turnovers, but defensively we didn't play that well. So there's a lot of mistakes and a lot of things we've got to get covered. We've still got a ways to go.

On the kicking game struggle: Well, Nick has been doing well, and for that to happen there, he got the pressure coming from the outside and just mishit it. Just go ahead and kick through it. If anything, the guy may have ran at you when you're ready to kick. I think he just didn't kick through the ball.

And then early in the kicking game, they was trying to kick the ball away from Daje, so once we got it straight, they didn't really give us no good kicks because (Cal) wasn't giving anybody a chance. Even if you watch them, the punts that they had were all from the quarterback because they were not going to allow us to get our return team out on

the field.

I just was talking to him, and I said, you've got to get your head up. Mistakes have been made, but it's a mistake that can be corrected.

On the hope this game gives Texas for the rest of season: Well, it really gives you hope. Because now you watch guys, and it means something to them. It's always when you talk about where's your pride at, when are guys going to start fighting and start standing up and somebody taking ownership, so tonight to watch that in the locker room, it meant a lot.

On his level of concern with the defense: My level, it's a major concern right now; because you look at us defensively, it's been three straight games where we have not played very good on defense. What we've not been able to do is make a team one-dimensional. We allow them to – it's balanced run and pass, which you can't do because now you can't play good defense; and then we're not getting pressure on the quarterback, and he can stand back there and pick us apart. Knowing that we're young in the secondary, we're playing a lot of guys, but still, though, we just have to – we're going to have to play much better, and it probably can be fixed, just guys need to stand up and start playing better.

On the unanswered 21-0 Cal stretch defensively: Well, their long run is one where we jumped out of a gap; and even when it breaks the line of scrimmage, you would think you've got to get it down, and you've got to get it down in the back end and we didn't get it down in the back end, so you can't allow a long run, and it wasn't man coverage. When you're in zone coverage, you should have your eyes right on the quarterback, so you should see the long run coming at you.

So it was just gap control then; because even the one right before half where we had it there, one of our defensive backs thought the guy was tackled, and I said, no, don't ever think that, you go tackle him, but that's just youth and running up there and being in position and go make it.

On his feelings about conference play offensively and defensively: Well, a combination of both. I mean, I'm excited about our offense, but it is negated by how poorly we're playing right now on defense. We have to play better, especially going into conference, because now it's going to be – it's a conference where teams can score a lot of points, and you're going to have to – offensively we can match them if the quarterback continues to play well.

On what has gone wrong with the defense: Well, it's just guys not doing what they're coached to do, and it's just gap control. It's coverage principles. It's so many things that can be fixed.

On seeing Interim Athletic Director Mike Perrin greet the team getting off the bus before the game: Oh, it was great seeing Mike. I know he's going to do a great job.

Assistant Coach Jay Norvell

On the team's performance: I thought Jerrod was fabulous. He's grown so much in a very short time. The big thing we wanted people to do today was we wanted people to defend the whole field with him, and I just think it's his ability as a thrower that really separates him. Because now everybody has to defend the field, and now he can really attack people with his athletic ability. What he did with his arm was really special, I thought. We got to keep building on that. I was so proud because they kept playing hard. We really challenged the players this week to play selflessly. We really felt like we had a bunch of kids that were still individuals in the first two weeks of the season, but this week we challenged them, and today we challenged them to play for somebody you love – to play for somebody besides yourself, and try to pour your whole self into the game, and see how good we can play. I just told the team, I said, "this could be a wild shootout where we have to outscore them in the end, and whatever we have to do offensively we have to do." At the end of the day, we didn't do enough. And that's just the way it is. We had too many penalties. We had the two turnovers that didn't help the defense, and it's our job to score more than they have, and we fell short. We have to build on the positives. We grew as a team, and we got to learn from the mistakes that we made and correct them so they won't happen to us again.

On what we thought of Jerrod Heard: He's a fabulous competitor. He's a fabulous competitor, and the way he battled back, he never stopped. He kept believing. He showed leadership, and the players believed in him. Because of what he's done, they just know we have a chance with his hands on the ball. He brought us on a long drive from being backed up in the first half. We battled back. He threw the play action balls very well again tonight, and he spread the field very well. We wanted to make these guys defend sideline to sideline and vertically. We did a good job of that. We're still not good enough on third down; it's not good enough. We have to find ways to stay on the field. We have to learn from the turnovers. The turnover before the half... when you play a team that's good on offense like this, you can't waste a possession. We tried to score. We needed to score at the end of the half and we want to be smart, and we had an outside lane throw and he just missed it inside. And you can't do that. He's got to learn from that. On the second turnover, we had a run pass option and he got stuck and held the ball and he got it knocked out. Those are things he's got to learn from, but we challenged the players to play aggressively, and they did. I thought we coached aggressively, and we just have to be better. The bottom line is we have to play with less mistakes and clean ourselves up on third down.

On the offensive line: We have to play better. We had some pressures and some sacks versus four man rushes and we can't have that. We have to play better. We had some critical drops on a quick pass... Jerrod hit one of our guys and we put it on the ground and we had a screen we couldn't come up with.

Texas QB Jerrod Heard

Whether this was a devastating loss: I wouldn't say it was devastating. I'm really proud of my team. What we showed tonight is not what a lot of people can do. What we did tonight shows we can win a lot of games.

On his fourth quarter rally: It's just the faith I have in my guys. I know that Taylor [Doyle] and the whole offensive line are going to do the blocking and the hard work. I have faith in those guys to let me see the pocket and get the ball distributed to those good athletes I have.

On the missed extra point: I did watch it, but we still love Nick [Rose]. Stuff like that happens, and we are still going to rely on him to make even more critical kicks for us. No hard feelings for him. He knows what he has to do, and he's going to bounce back and be that reliable kicker we have.

Whether he thinks things could have been done better: Definitely. Right now, I'm still thinking about the things we could have done. At the end of the night, we rallied back and fought for our team and the Longhorns tonight.

On the offensive performance: Execution. That's all we needed to do, just move the ball up and down the field. It's just one of those things. We showed that we can fight all the way to the end and we can win the ball game. When it gets hard, we are still going to have faith in everyone.

On his emotions during the game: I don't know if I can explain it. It's one of those things that's going to build a team. We can really have growth from this and be a great team after that.

On what he said to the team during the game: I told them that we are going to get this ball in the end zone. I have faith in them, and Coach (Strong) called the play. I just relied on those guys and did my part. I just keep talking to them and try to be that motivator. I knew we were going to come back and fight and that it would be a shootout in the end.

On how quickly the team will bounce back: What we showed tonight is great for us in the long run. By tomorrow, we are going to have a lot of confidence and be ready to start the Big 12.

Senior LB Peter Jenkins

On defense: The defensive teams have to make plays and make tackles.

On what he would tell Nick Rose: Keep his head up. He's got to play through it and just do better.

On how he feels about the overall state of things: I feel good right now. We came back and fought real hard and something we haven't seen here in the past year. So I'm excited.

On the message in the locker room: Keep fighting and everybody just do their jobs and continue to do what you're doing.

On his message to the team as a senior: Keep their head up. I feel like we did really good last night, but we just have to push through.

Senior OG Sedrick Flowers

On Jerrod Heard's fourth quarter TD: All I heard was the crowd roar, and I looked up and all I saw was him running down the sideline, and I was thinking let's go, let's go, let's go. During the whole game we never gave up. We always kept our hopes up, and that's what you have to do. We kept going and we kept Jerrod going.

On the missed extra point: It was a blow. You have to learn because overall we kept ourselves in the position we did. In the third quarter we did horrible. We needed to do what we did in the first half and we did in the fourth quarter, but we can't do that with a team that can score like that. We can't play that way.

On coming back from a 21-point deficit: It shows that we can do it. When we have a deficit like that and can come back like that, it shows this team has potential and we can do it if we all come together, stop being selfish and play for one another. That is when a team is playing at their highest. You can't play as hard as you can playing for yourself. If you care about your teammates and play for each other, that's when it all starts to come together.

Freshmen LB Malik Jefferson

On the tough loss: You can use it has a learning opportunity. We came out of the second half ready to fight and they were ready also. We will look at what we did wrong, try to fix the mistakes and come back next week ready to win.

On the struggling run defense: Execution. Coach is putting us in the spot to make plays and there are some gaps guys just can't get in. I feel like sometimes we come out and just don't execute. The mistakes are correctable. We know guys are going to try and run it down our throat because they have seen our last three games and now the challenge is to stop the run.

On Nick Roses' state of mind: He is real down on himself but I just let him know that we are going to need him the rest of the season to make game winning kicks. We need to come out and execute better early on so we don't put one person in a position to have to win the game.

Junior CB Kevin Vaccaro

On the feeling in the locker room: Everyone is hurt but I think we will learn a lot from this game and it's a good thing to go through it as a team.

On lack of execution: Our coaches gave us great calls, at the end of the day we have to get our jobs done and do our assignments. We cannot give up 21 points in the third quarter. We just can't do that.

On defensive play in the fourth quarter: We got together and said we are going to have to play hard till the end because you never know what's going to happen. I am proud of the defense and we will grow from this. We fought through adversity and that's all you can ask for. We came up short and that's tough.

On speaking to brother/former Longhorn Kenny Vacarro: Before the game he told me to play hard play physical and he told me he'd be watching. My role has been special teams and I take that seriously so I have been going hard doing what I can for the team and I got my opportunity and made the most of it.

Senior DE Shiro Davis

On reaction to the game: We had a whole lot to fix. We missed a lot of opportunities to definitely turn the game around and seal it as a win.

On emotions in the locker room: Everybody took it hard. It's just definitely one of those games that you want and to be so close, it seems to hurt more.

On Nick Rose's missed extra point: Just upholding him. He is definitely a competitive guy, just like the rest of us. We all had our shot to definitely win the game for us, so it doesn't make a big difference. We can't put it all on him. The game should have been won a long time ago.

On overcoming this loss: We grew as a team. We fought back. We came back from being down. We held that fight and that is something we have been missing for a long time and now we have it, and now it's just trying to finish after that.

On Coach Strong's message to the team: Keep fighting. Just learn how to take this and use it to get better.

On Coach Bedford's half time adjustments: Basically, it was a new game. It was tied going into halftime, and he knew that we could get it done. He believed in us and told us to keep fighting and bring home a win.

Senior WR Daje Johnson

On if Cal was afraid to punt to him tonight: Uh yeah, I think so. We were trying. Actually when we went to punt, you know, they kept on calling timeout and getting

their offense out there, doing quick kicks. So, I guess they didn't want to punt to me this week.

On how the loss feels: This is probably one of the craziest games I've been in. So far, it's probably the one that hurts the most because I thought we were going to win. Once Jerrod made that touchdown, I was thinking, "Ah this is, you know, we're gonna get this," because we, the team, had heart and so we fought back and, you know, we pretty much built the momentum back. So I figured that we could have came out with the win but...

On the missed extra point: I didn't see it. I was so hype, celebrating with Jerrod, celebrating with everybody. Everybody is so pumped, I just heard the announcer say it. So, I didn't see the field goal.

On after the Notre Dame game you said, "once you guys got down by one touchdown, some guys started hanging their heads and thinking, come on its one touchdown".

What did you see on the sideline when you guys were down 21 points in the third quarter: I've seen a different team. I've seen guys still in the game, still ready to fight, you know? With the D making plays in the clutch, with D'Onta Foreman making plays, that fourth and one, and then busting it in for a touchdown, and stopping the momentum. After that, the team started believing in themselves, building up a lot of believers on the team, and so, you know, once we had that then, the sky is the limit.

On QB Jerrod Heard's performance: Hey man, Jerrod, he's a baller. He's going to come play every week, so I'm excited for him, and I'm excited for his success, and I just hope he plays like that every week and just leads the team to victory, because the team is going to get even better, we're getting better each week. We see the progress.

On if strong offensive play brings confidence to the team: Yes, and because we knew it was on us, why we were down. The penalties we had, that's what brought us down in the game, and we know that once we know what we're doing, that we could score and get back in the game. Towards the end, once we start executing, that's what we did.