

Texas Tech University Football Media Conference

Monday, November 14, 2016

Kliff Kingsbury



Q. Can we get some injury updates, like Justin Murphy, Da'Leon Ward, Jordyn Brooks?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, Da'Leon should be back, I think, mid-week. We'll see if he's able to play. We're going to work him back in there mid-week. Jordyn Brooks, kind of the same. Won't practice today. We'll see if he can go early in the week.

And Justin is no longer with us. So he decided --

Q. Injury?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: He decided that he didn't want to continue his football career. Murphy.

Q. When did he make that --

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yesterday.

Q. Why did he decide?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: I guess his injuries. You'd have to take it up with him.

Q. Medical retirement?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: I'm not sure how you would phrase it. He would be the one to speak with about that.

Q. What about Felton?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: We'll see. High ankle of some sort. I'm not sure the exact severity. They're going to try to jog him around today and see if we can get him available for Saturday.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Justin Stockton I think will be out.

Q. What was his --

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Some sort of shoulder/chest contusion, I believe.

Q. With what Murphy has done in the last couple of years, I know Coach Hays has spoken very highly of him.

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Obviously he was a good player for us. Brings good size in there, and we'll have to move forward. We played without him on Saturday, and have to keep finding ways to be efficient on offense.

Q. How did you think Bailey Smith did on

Saturday?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: I thought he fought, wasn't perfect by any stretch. Got in there had good energy. Chased the ball down the field. Had a lot more life than some of the guys we've been rotating through there.

Q. Seems like whenever you replaced Madison with him that (indiscernible) the rest of the game. You think that?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: I think we just started slow. I don't think it was anybody's fault specifically. And when he got in there, like I said, he had good juice. He was running around, flying around. Wasn't always going to the right spot. But made up for some of that with his hustle. So it's a credit to him for being ready and not blinking when he was asked to go into the game.

Q. What are you expecting to see from the offense and defense?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, they're good. When you look at their record it's not indicative of how good a team they are. I think you look at the scores they've had, teams beat and lost some close, tough games. I think they do a good job offensively and defensively.

Offensively both quarterbacks are protecting the ball, playing at a high level. Coach Campbell, I followed him when he was at Toledo. Very innovative very good on offense. Defensively they play hard, have a good front. No. 5, their safety, is a very good player. So it will be a big challenge. We know we've got to play our best game to go on the road in that environment and get it done.

Q. Rushing team?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Against us I'm sure they will be. That's kind of the trend. But they have some very good "D" linemen. Those interior guys are seniors and big physical kids.

Q. How big of a player is Lazard for them? (Indiscernible)

KLIFF KINGSBURY: His size is what jumps out to you. He runs really good routes for that size. Very smooth. He's been playing a lot, has a lot of confidence and they're doing a good job this year of really scripting to get him the football.

Q. Your top three running backs all banged up.

You're getting pretty thin. What do you do if they can't go?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: We'll keep finding bodies to put in there. You just gotta be creative at that point. And that's where we're at. A lot of people are in that same position this time of year and we just have to be creative move some people around and continue to make it work.

Q. There's been a drastic improvement in penalties. How (indiscernible) you're able to turn it around?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Just focus. We try to emphasize it, and rock bottom was that Virginia game. And since then it's basically been if you're going to commit any penalties you're not going to play, and really regardless of who you are, and I guess that's helped.

Q. Defensively do you think it makes the task a little bit trickier this week given how many different guys they're rotating between the running backs and two different looks at quarterback as well?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: I think it is. You try to have a feel for what they like to do with each quarterback, but both guys are really athletic.

Lanning runs a little bit more than the other kid. But they both move well, extend plays. And like I said when he was at Toledo, I'd watch his stuff and always impressed by his game, what he would do. I still am. I think he's doing a great job up there.

Q. Is it impressive week after week to see, even though they're not seeing the improvement as much in their record, obviously, but each game it seems like they're showing up and they're competitive and each game that they're losing?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, they are. Like I said, I don't think their record is indicative of the type of team they are. They have good talented skill players. Defensively they're flying around. They have a good scheme. And we'll have to play our best game to beat them.

Q. How is the morale after the loss on Saturday? I mean, you come back, score the touchdown, probably go into overtime and then no over time?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: I think they were down because it was a great opportunity. But I sense today that everybody's back and understands it's surviving-and-advance-type situations. You've got two games to try to extend your season and it starts with Iowa State. So everybody's all in. And I feel like that's the vibe.

Q. You had several guys, Giles and Dylan, who dropped balls on Saturday. Those kind of -- uncharacteristic of those guys. Is it contagious once one guy drops one?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: It seems to be that way. I don't know what the psyche is on that, but it does seem to be that way. There were three big third downs that really hurt. But those guys have made plays all year. I don't expect it to continue. It happens when you're throwing it that many times.

Q. (Indiscernible) on Saturday? Did a better job taking (indiscernible) --

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, much more efficient, I think anybody can see how much quicker he's getting the ball out of his hands early and finding the seams and holes. When they drop eight, like I said after the game, they don't get more open. They get more covered as it goes. That first window you better be on time and get it out quick and have a pretty good recognition. He was much better in that regard.

Q. Couple of years ago in Ames this was one of Mahomes' first home games at Tech starting and I heard you talk about that being the turning point game for him where you guys came back after trailing at halftime. You say that was still kind of the turning point game for him?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: No question. That's still my favorite start he's had just simply because we were out of bowl contention. Easily -- got down, I think, late in the third could have easily packed it in. It was cold. Tough atmosphere and he kept fighting and brought us back and found a way to win that game. That just told me a lot about him and his competitive spirit early on.

Q. Mentioned the cold weather two years ago. It's supposed to be cold again and possible snow. How do you prepare for that here in West Texas?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: You just deal with it. I mean we haven't got very cold weather yet. So most of the players understand what it is. And go out there and it's football weather and go after it.

Q. You talk at all with the team about how important it is to have those weeks to prepare for a bowl and how these next two games are paramount?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, I think it's more of a coach-type thought process. For them it's just extend your season with your teammates, these guys you've been here with three, four, five years, that's a lot of camaraderie and it's a big deal to go experience it with them. You play on that more so than, hey, the extra practices are huge for our program.

Q. Was it encouraging on Saturday that OSU switched up a lot of weapons and went to a three-man front and tried to copy what it was the last couple of weeks, and you guys moved the ball the rest of the day. Did you think that was more

encouraging, do you think?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: I felt like the week before we had some spurts against Texas, but we're not getting the mileage you should have out of the run game. When they're dropping everybody out of there, you can't get stoned for a yard when you're handing it off. And that's consistently happening. So we still have to do a better job.

But I thought nobody got frustrated. We went three and out the first three drives which I don't think I've ever done as a play caller since I've been calling plays. And nobody freaked out. Everybody hung in there and got it figured out and kept battling the rest of the day.

Q. How big of a difference was it when you put in Felton --

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, he did a good job. He found it. He was hitting it. We just moved the ball better. I don't know if we were blocking better or not. But we were definitely more productive once he got in the game.

Q. How did he handle it when he went from being a starter (indiscernible) carries to before Saturday he had only gotten one carry the last three weeks?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: He's competitive. He continued to work hard on special teams and knew his role. But he wanted to know what he could do, consistently would ask what can I do to get my job back.

It's a credit to him. He hung in there, kept working hard and when we asked him to come back in he was ready.

Q. Beyond the end of this season, what does that mean for the running back position once you get to spring?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: We'll see. We're going to cross that bridge when we get there. We're trying to find a guy to hand off to really this next week and go from there.

But we'll see what bodies we have. If there's a mid-year player coming in, we'll kind of evaluate that after the season's over.

Q. (Indiscernible) Oklahoma State gets the ball back and if I'm reading it right, you have all three of your timeouts left. Was there any thought given to let them score, probably kick the extra point, and it's 52 to 44. You get the ball back and your timeouts?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: It was. The first time they ran the ball, we were going to stop them, use all three timeouts, get it back. But they got a first down on that one. So the next time, we had told them let them score and we still did not let them score.

Q. That was communicated?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: It was communicated and we did not get it done. At that point, Coach Gundy called a timeout, and he said, I think they're trying to let you score and that's when they started sliding.

So it was an effort to do that and we didn't get it done.

Q. Without your running back, how much pressure, how much of an MO do you see this, you get Pat involved in the running game and basically being another running back at this point?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, he's kind of done that on his own. You don't want him to get hit that much. You wouldn't want him to have 20 carries. But he has a pretty good feel for when to go, when not to go. But like I said, I've been saying it really for the last five weeks, we have to find a way to hand it off and get more yards than we're getting against the looks we're getting.

If it's got to be him at times it will be him, but we're not going to lean heavily on that.

Q. With all the (indiscernible) a short time and going back to Castaneda, (indiscernible) Justin, how does that affect you in recruiting?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Trace Ellison is another one. Yeah, that's tough. You have a bunch of guys that we thought would be playing for us this year and are no longer with the program. So we're going to have to take some more guys moving forward. We feel like we have a good class coming in this next year, a lot of guys at mid-year. And hopefully have four new bodies on campus mid-year and go from there.

Q. (Indiscernible) by one possession, how does it help you as a coach (indiscernible) disciplined with your system what you're doing and not overreact to the fact you're getting close in a lot of these games, you're just not being able to get that last push at the end there?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, I think you understand where your shortcomings are and why we haven't got it done when you watch the film. And there's 20 different things you could point to in each of those games. We just have to get better. There's no other solution or answer.

Q. Follow up on that question about the offensive linemen, when you look to add say (indiscernible) older more experience (indiscernible)?

KLIFF KINGSBURY: Yeah, I think so. I think we're pretty much scouring the country right now for that or a grad transfer at mid-year to put another body on campus so we can have some competition this spring.

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Patrick Mahomes, II

THE MODERATOR: Take questions for Pat.

Q. With what the defense has been doing the last few weeks, seems like you guys figured out in the second quarter the other day moving forward, definitely the second half. What do you think was the difference? Is it just seeing it so much, getting used to what to do against that?

PATRICK MAHOMES, II: Yeah, we had a better game plan, I feel like. Going into it Coach Kingsbury told me to take the little ones quick and don't try to make -- scramble around, because they have eight guys back, there not a lot of stuff is going to get open. So just take those unders, take those stops, and it worked out well.

Q. Why do you think it took so -- the three-and-outs, three three-and-outs, what was happening, were you just not --

PATRICK MAHOMES, II: I mean, they just had a good game plan coming in. And it just took a little bit to kind of see where those holes were. And a lot of it was me not just trusting in those -- the windows weren't big. I have to trust in myself and my receivers to throw them in there and the receivers have to make some tough catches, and they did.

Q. What do you look at when you see Iowa State's defense?

PATRICK MAHOMES, II: Just their whole team in general. They have a lot of talent. They've been in a lot of close games, a lot of games they could have won. And it hasn't gone their way, kind of like us.

So they're going to be giving us their best effort. It's going to be at home for them. Tough place to play. So they'll be out there and they'll be flying around. Just gotta to go out there in a tough environment and try to get a win.

Q. The extremely early weather report, supposed to be cold and snowy on Saturday. How do you guys prepare for that mentally?

PATRICK MAHOMES, II: We knew before we got the season started there was a chance it could be snowing up there. And it's something that you just have to embrace. I think last year when we had at bowl practices we practiced in the snow. It's something we've done before. And we'll just have to embrace it and be ready for snowy atmosphere.

Q. Mentioned bowl practices. How important is it for this team to get those this year and become bowl eligible?

PATRICK MAHOMES, II: It's very important, especially moving forward to the next season. Those bowl practices, they give you a lot of experience, a lot of time where guys get to try and show what they've got, going into the spring, going into the next season.

So I know after my freshman year we didn't get those. Going into my sophomore -- it's something you don't want to be at home. You don't want to be sitting there.

Q. Do you feel like your defense has turned a corner?

PATRICK MAHOMES, II: Yes, I think they're just going to keep getting better. A lot of young guys, a lot of young talent. I feel they'll keep getting better the rest of the season. And going into next year I'll be feeling very confident.

Q. I know last week I kind of asked you about Oklahoma State being a turning point type of game for you and your career. But I remember Kliff a couple of years ago, when you guys had come back and won at Ames, you saw that as a light bulb coming on for you, your career. What do you remember from that game in Ames a couple of years ago?

PATRICK MAHOMES, II: I mean, like it's supposed to be this weekend, it was cold. It was a tough game. Going there for anyone is always a tough environment. But you just gotta find ways to win.

And I think it's my first career win. And like you said, it can be kind of a turning point where I kind of found my way, I guess you would say, and how what it takes and what I need to do to be good at this level.

Q. With all the changes you've had in the offensive line, especially with Murphy leaving, how hard is it to get the trust of those guys coming in for what could be the first time this year?

PATRICK MAHOMES, II: This last game we didn't have Murphy. And, I mean, Murphy's a great guy, a great leader and I hated for him that he had to be gone. But those young guys have stepped up and they're playing. And I'm just going to trust in them, try to get the ball out

fast, try to help them out a little bit. And at the same time they played their best game probably this last week and so hopefully it just carries on.

Q. How much pressure do you deal on yourself to kind of be that other running back since you guys are so thin at that position right now?

PATRICK MAHOMES, II: I mean, we had -- all season I felt like I've ran the ball well when I did run it. A lot of the yards I take -- negative plays take away from that. But I mean all year long I've been able to run the ball a little bit. But I trust in those running backs. They came in, they've been stepping up, they've been getting better every week. So I'll just keep trusting them.

Q. Did you play without your brace on Saturday?

PATRICK MAHOMES, II: I started, I think, the first two series and then I took it off.

Q. Is that just because --

PATRICK MAHOMES, II: It got loose -- it was getting loose again. And I've been kind of asking if I could take it off these last few weeks. And the trainers have told me to kind of keep it on, just try to play through it. But they said if I felt comfortable I could play without it.

Q. Played the rest of the game without it?

PATRICK MAHOMES, II: Yes, sir.

Q. There's still lingering effects of that knee, that it's kind of carried on throughout the offseason and into this year?

PATRICK MAHOMES, II: I think I kind of tweaked it one time at the beginning of the spring. But since then nothing's happened to it. And I worked out all summer without the knee brace, did all the cuts and all the stuff. It was just a confidence thing. And I feel like now I'm pretty confident in it.

Q. Is it going to be hard not to press because you know you need to win these two games?

PATRICK MAHOMES, II: Yes, definitely. I mean, you want to get to a bowl game. You don't want these two weeks to be your last two weeks of the season. I mean, we went through a lot together on this team. Great brotherhood. And, I mean, we all love each other.

So we're really going to go out there and just try to play our game. But we're going to leave it all out on the field, try to win two football games against two great teams and get to a bowl game.

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Luke Stice

Q. Luke, has the defense turned a corner?

LUKE STICE: I've definitely seen progress from week to week throughout the season. At this point in the season we need to be playing at a high level. So I'm definitely pleased with our performance. And throughout the rest of the stretch we've got to find a way to keep competing at that high level.

Q. You guys are hitting the road for Iowa State. The early weather forecast shows possible snow and freezing rain, if not. How do you prepare for that?

LUKE STICE: I mean, you've got to be willing -- you've got to be ready to play wherever they place the ball down at whatever time. You've got to be kind of trained for whatever. And whatever we end up, whatever the weather ends up doing, be ready to compete.

Q. As a defensive player, do you like playing in the frigid temperatures or would you rather it be 85?

LUKE STICE: I just love playing football. It really doesn't matter what the temperature is. Honestly, we're going to go play ball and we're excited to get after it regardless of the weather.

Q. What do you expect to see from Iowa State's offense?

LUKE STICE: You know, they have a great home atmosphere. They compete well at home. And we're excited to be part of that environment and use that energy to our advantage. And we're excited to just go compete.

Q. Does it make it a hard job for the defense knowing you're preparing for two different quarterbacks and two different styles?

LUKE STICE: You know, we're just going to be prepared going into this game to be ready to stop either quarterback. And as you mentioned, they do have kind of different ways of playing at the quarterback position. But whoever is out there, we'll be ready to compete against them.

Q. Kliff told us at the end of the game, he told the defense to let them score. Is that weird hearing that from the defensive side of the ball, letting another team score?

LUKE STICE: Right. I mean, at the end of the day you've gotta do what coach asks you to do. So that's

the first time I've been put in that situation. But whatever's best for the team, that's what he thought was best at that point. And that's what we tried to do.

Q. Kirk said he doesn't feel like Iowa State's record is indicative of the type of team that they are. Has that message been clearly passed over to you guys?

LUKE STICE: No doubt. Iowa State, they play everybody at a high level throughout the entire season. Especially at home. So we've got to compete to the best of our ability and prepare this week. And we've gotta do what we need to do to take care of business come Saturday.

Q. Is there any talk about you've got to win the next two games so we can practice in December?

LUKE STICE: I think it just comes down to just knowing we've got to attack each day one day at a time and do whatever we need to do to compete at a high level on Saturday. You can't look too far ahead. You see how fast the season has gone by, and it's got to be a day-by-day mentality and knowing you've got to sell out for your brothers in the locker room and do everything you can do to help this team finish on a high note.

Q. What's the attitude in the locker room right now after falling to Oklahoma State?

LUKE STICE: A tough loss. No two ways around that. I mean, we compete at a high level. I know that. And it's tough to say that because at the end of the day we didn't find a way to win.

And the only thing I can do moving forward is promise everybody in the locker room is going to sell out each day to prepare and do everything they can to finish this season on a high note and continue to compete at the best of their ability.

Q. Looks like you guys made some progress on the defensive end. Although, there's still room to improve. But compared to earlier in the season, seems like you guys always knew what the problem was, you knew what needed to change but it just wasn't clicking for whatever reason. You had the diagnosis. And now it's started to be put into effect. What do you think that the disconnect there was?

LUKE STICE: You know, it's hard to put it on one thing,

one particular thing. But just overall it's continuing to develop as a unit and continue to just play for each other and compete at a high level going into each game. And as we continue to get momentum and build confidence, especially with our younger guys, I'm just pleased to see that continue to improve, like you mentioned, throughout the season and at this point in the season it needs to continue to increase.

Q. (Indiscernible) more extended play time, guys going out with injuries?

LUKE STICE: It just comes back to doing whatever you can to help this team win. The mission statement of the United States military and it's when called upon respond with ready units. That's the mindset and mentality we each have to bring to work each day, whatever you need to do help this team win, that's what you need to do. And each day, whatever role you're assigned, you need to do that job to the highest level to help this team be successful.

Q. Do you remember when your last sack was (indiscernible)?

LUKE STICE: No, sir. I'm talking -- I've played a lot of offense when I was at Houston. That was actually my first collegiate sack. So you'll have to go back to the (indiscernible) days back in the fall of 2011 if you want to pull that one out.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

LUKE STICE: No doubt. Permian, they have their hands full. Des Smith, he's next to me in the locker room. He's my locker room buddy. I walked into the locker room, saw Dez Smith - Odessa, Texas on the name plate. I said, all right, we'll have to set a few ground rules before you come prancing in here.