

University of Tulsa Football

Media Conference

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Philip Montgomery

Press Conference



Tulsa Golden Hurricane 28, SMU Mustangs 24

COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY: To start with, you know, just really, really proud of our players, just the way they fight, the way they stay together, through adversity, through thick and thin. They are resilient about the way we play.

Obviously they are trying to give their coach a heart attack but the drama part of it, I mean, I just love to see the way they react to each other, the way they continue to keep playing for 60 minutes. That's always been a staple of our program.

But as you can tell, just finding ways to win and to see guys step up and to make big plays and to continue to just battle, we didn't start the game really either side. Didn't start the game the way we wanted to. We spot them ten points right there and then guys don't get down, they don't shrug. They just continue to keep battling and just keep chipping away at it, and you've got to love the mentality that they bring to the table each and every week.

So extremely proud of them. SMU has got a great football team. I think Coach Dykes does an unbelievable job with them. They are very talented and Shane Buechele, to me, is one of the top quarterbacks in the league, if not in the country. I love that we were able to do some good things tonight, get some pressure on him did. A good job in coverage, but he's hard to contain, but you know, after the first quarter, I thought our defense played lights out and just, again, can't say enough about those guys and what they do down in that locker room.

Q. Getting pretty good at coming back. How much does the confidence build? Seemed like it would have been easy to hang their head and they didn't.

COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY: I think our team is built that way. I think our team is just built to continue to keep battling. They give us 60 minutes to play, 60 full dang minutes. So that's as clean as I can make it for TV. And I'm proud of that, right.

Do we want to have to do this every week? No. But our guys know that we can come back. We've proved it multiple times and now we've just got to continue to keep getting better, keep sharpening off of each other, and you know, maybe try to get a better start to a couple of these.

Q. You can't do it unless you have a defense capable of that, and SMU averages 40 a game and to shut them out in the second half, how much confidence does that give the entire team when they know that, hey, our defense is going to start getting stops, it's just a matter of time?

COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY: Yeah, and I think it works both ways a little bit, too. You know, I think we are confident in each other. And obviously our defense has played lights out all year long, and will continue to do that.

But we know they are going to get stops. They are going to make big plays. They are going to get turnovers. Those things are going to happen. They believe that they are going to make those things happen and they go out and make it work.

And I think on the other side of it, you know, offensively, at some point, I think the defense looks around and says, hey, y'all got to come on, but know that they can and will, and just continue to keep believing in each other.

You know, we get behind and we just continue to keep chipping away at it. You know, that's the mark of a good team, and we've got to continue to keep growing.

Q. The celebration out there, well-deserved, you guys are enjoying it out there. I talked to Zach about it; if it's sweeter with the postponements. Crazy speak to how close this team is and how much fun you're having, especially with these types of wins?

COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY: I think that's one of the big parts of this team. We've had other teams that were like this, too, but this team, they believe in each other. The type of togetherness that we have here on this football team, with all the things that we have been through, with the virus and all the other things that have started.



You know, this is just a really close football team, and continue to get closer and they believe in each other and they are going to fight for each other and they know each other's got their back and that's such a huge part of the way a season goes and I wish could you put your finger on and say, well, if I do this every time, it will always end up this way, and it's not like that.

Every team is different. The pulse of it is different and the way these guys have come together has been phenomenal.

Q. Can you talk about Zach, especially after the start with the interception and the fumble and how he bounced back?

COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY: The good thing about Zach is he does bounce back, and you know, he doesn't let things weigh heavy on him. He's resilient. He's confident. He knows what he can do and it's just about getting into that rhythm. I'm not trying to make excuses for either side. You know, we didn't start the way we wanted to but some of that goes back to just the speed of the game and just the timing and all of that, you're trying to replicate that in practice, but it's not the same, and you saw, we weren't taking great angles early defensively.

And then all of the sudden, we got used to the speed of it, again, and our angles adjusted and those five-yard runs turned into two-yard runs and we're making good tackles and then offensively, kind of the same thing. Just you know, getting back and knocking some rust off and getting to the speed of the game and finding our timing and guys just keep battling to do that.

Q. Zach took a big hit. What was your angle at that? Does that deserve to be targeting?

COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY: You know, I thought the officials did a pretty good job of managing the game tonight. There's going to be some calls in there that you agree with and not agree with. I thought it was a big hit and might have, could have gone either way.

Q. Going off flags, Zaven gets a flag but in situations like that for a celebration, is that a flag that the way the season has gone for you guys, you're happy to take that for what he's been able to do for you guys on defense?

COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY: Yeah, I was just fine with it. There's not many of those that I'm just fine with, but at that point in that stage of the game, I don't even know what he did, but I just saw the rags come out and I think

there was a plethora of rags come out, so I don't know, but it was worth it at that point.

Q. Talking about resilience, obviously the 21-0 lead but then when Zach gets popped, and your second and long, you get a holding penalty and then you come back, looks like you're getting a touchdown and you get stopped and you kept after it, finally got a another touchdown, you get down ten -- talk about the resilience of your team after so many times getting turned back and so many things happening to you.

COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY: You know, really, down there, the second half -- the first drive of the first half was a huge drive for us, but you know, we come away without any points.

Now the flipside of it is I think that drive set the tone for the rest of the half because I thought our line started really coming off the football. We started getting some movement. Started doing some good things, backs got involved. We hit some good throws in there. We just didn't finish it, and we should have on the third down. We should have finished it right there on the third down and got the touchdown.

But, you know, at that point, our guys just felt the momentum starting to move and starting to change and then it was just, let's get back on the field, get us the football back and let's go down and get points and just chip away at it.

And that's kind of what we talked about the whole game, quit looking at the scoreboard, forget about that, let's go get seven, let's look up at that point and go get another one and we had plenty of time, so let's go get it done.

Q. How much in the past year has your team turned a corner and stayed disciplined and when you're down 21-0, not freaking out and not giving in to that sort of pressure?

COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY: I think it helped, obviously. You know, at the Central Florida game. Obviously they are a very talented team. You're on the road. We went down early and just fought our way back. I think when you do it and you see it get done and you know that you can do it, I think that helps the confidence and the level-headedness of our team to continue to understand, hey, we've been here before, we know what to do, we know how to do it, and now we've just got to go out and execute and get it done.

Q. The bad stuff, the penalties in the first half and some mistakes there -- was that just the flow or the



game plan or what's your take on that?

COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY: We've got to clean some of those things up. Some of that is a little bit of rust. They are doing a lot of shifting and things up front. We've just got to be more disciplined in those areas and we'll do a better job of that. Tonight was one of those nights. But even with all of that, just finding a way to come back and win.

Q. Late November, you guys still haven't lost a conference game, so everything is still out in front of you. Just how much juice does that give a team at this stage?

COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY: You know, I think you've got to remember, this team has been through a lot. We've got a lot of good leadership on this football team. That being said, we put ourselves in the driver's seat tonight to be able to accomplish all the goals that we want.

Everything is still out in front of us. We've got opportunities to handle that. We've still got to take it one game at a time. I think this team has done a good job of that, not looking into the future but understanding, hey, this game puts you in the driver's seat for this, and the next game is going to put you in the driver's seat for that and we can't have letdowns when it comes to that part of it.

So, you know, enjoy every time that we get to step out on the field. We've been through that part. It's been taken away from us. But we've got to enjoy every one of them. We've got to continue to get better. We're not where we need to be. I think our ceiling is still way up there.

But like you said, we are in mid-November and we've only played five games. So that team right there has played eight, now nine. So we've still got a lot of growing to do as a team, and now we have got a short week to get prepared for Tulane, who always plays tough who has a very talent D-Line. I think Willie does a heck of a job as their head coach and I know they will be prepared and it's always been a battle every time we've played them.

Q. Thoughts on Coach G's DFO, tell me a little bit about how this came about?

COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY: Coach G's DFO?

Q. "Don't freak out".

COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY: That's been a saying we've had for a while, you know. I think that just goes back to who we are. There may be sudden change either side of the ball; "don't freak out." Might be a turnover; "don't

freak out." It's about the highs and lows and the ebbs and flows of a game. You can get so caught up in that, that you lose focus and you lose your intensity and you lose what's going on. And I think our team, because of our leadership, has done a good job of staying locked in on those things.

Q. When you talk about the resilience and coming back and that sort of thing, but how proud are you of the team -- like this is maybe unparalleled, maybe it's never happened before in college football where one team has played eight games and one has played four, where they are dealing with something that's super unique and seemed like it kind of showed at the start of the game and to overcome that and seemed like they aren't excuse-makers, you know what I mean. How gratifying is that?

COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY: It is gratifying and it shows the maturity of our football team. Be easy to stand up here and make excuses about this and that. We can say, poor pitiful me, I didn't get to play all the games I wanted to play, but our team just continues to keep battling together and growing together. You know, I give a lot of that tribute to our players, but I also have to give some of that to our coaches and I've got a great staff. I'm blessed to have them. They do an unbelievable job and you know, it's been a different year with a lot of different trials and tribulations to it, and our staff and our players have done a good job of continuing to stay together.

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