

University of Tulsa Football Media Conference

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Coach Kevin Wilson

Press Conference



Army 49, Tulsa 7

KEVIN WILSON: It's a little similar trend with the second half. Played a good team. Battled early. A little disappointed first half. Did a good job stopping them again. You have to stop the run when you play this team, but you also have to keep your eyes on your guy because you're basically in man-to-man. So we had some cheap pass plays in the first half. A little unfortunate because really battled hard offensively, had a couple good drives, didn't finish it off.

I think that drive when it's 14-7, we have a negative run where we don't really block it cleanly, and one guy didn't do a particularly great job. Then the next play we got nice competitive -- we got the ball, and their guy knocks it out, now it's 3rd and long, and you punt and they get a cheap score, and instead of 14-7, 21-7.

Third quarter then let the run out kind of different, a bit like last week. They've got a good team. I thought our guys continued to battle.

We're sitting here going into an open date. We've got a little run -- not the success we want, but I think we've got too much invested, a lot of good guys, like a lot of things we see. We've just got to play better in games. We've got competitive stamina, competitive excellence when called upon, and certainly we've got to make more plays. You can't win a game with one touchdown.

I love the fight and what these guys are about, but we've got a lot of work to do. Opening day coming up. We'll be smart with what we're doing. We don't need to just go out and kill them. We've got a lot of time invested. We've got to recover, we've got to refresh. We need to eke out what we are good at and what we are not good at and then make a push as we game plan into the next remaining conference games, three on the road and three here.

Disappointing game, but good football team. They do a good job. They've got a heck of a football team, very experienced team, and again, they played well today.

Q. The quarterback play today, you had Legas come in pretty early on, which hasn't really happened much this season. What did you think of his play and his run game?

KEVIN WILSON: Yeah, just with their style, like everyone is different. The other couple games have been an odd front with a bunch of DBs. This game, they were going to play their umbrella coverage, which can be a little for sure soft and might give up the big play. But they're going to have edges, and you need to incorporate both backs.

We haven't been protecting great or catching great. And Kirk's forte, it's the run with some of the pass. Cooper's forte, it's the run. And some of those runs today weren't read runs, they were just designed two-back runs, trying to spread it out a little bit.

I just thought early to get the run game going -- we kind of played the first half and we were out there for 20 minutes, they were out there for 9. They had 18 plays in the first half and we had 44. So we wanted to play their style, keep them on the sideline, go for it on 4th down, don't be 4th and 12. If it's 3rd and long, get us to 4th and 3, let's try to go for it. And I thought we needed some tough running, which means against -- this week I thought we needed to be a little bit more in the 12 personnel, the big tight ends.

And we needed to rely -- even though Cardell is fast, Cooper is a little bit thicker. And I thought there was going to be a little bit more old-fashioned almost like tailback plays for what it's worth. Just trying to get the run game into balance, and some of it was there okay and some of it wasn't.

Q. You mentioned the phrase "competitive stamina." What do you make of the second straight game where for a quarter and a half you're right there and then the dam breaks?

KEVIN WILSON: Yeah, again, we'll keep looking. Again, I don't think from a physical conditioning standpoint that we're tired, and I don't see a rash of injuries. We still rotate a lot of guys.

I don't know if it's a lack of confidence and we're hoping for success versus making success. There will be some things we'll look at. A little bit of it is the psychological piece, but at the end of the day, it's not just how long can you play hard, but how long can you stay focused. Because you're double teaming to a certain person. You're running a route at a certain depth. My eyes are at a certain -- I'm in a certain gap.

As we went along today, we played very, very hard, but we had some miscues. You saw some guys running open or some guys not fitting some of those holes where those plays popped. It's a little bit of growth. Again, some of our best players are young guys, but we've got some old guys out there, too.

We've got as a team yet to truly win like you want to win, and we've got to pop that bubble. And right now we're not. I wish I had the magic potion for it. My thing, like I told them, it would be easy to point fingers and blame, kind of seeing it like you're playing a poker hand. We've got too many chips out here to fold the cards. We're going to have to play the cards. We're going to have to play the best we can.

Q. How you managed your quarterback today is how you want to manage him going forward, or was this specifically Army related?

KEVIN WILSON: A little bit because of -- again, in their world, it's hard to do tempo against these guys because typically their normal trend is 12 and 14. And like this morning as we're eating breakfast, we put a video on and watch their last game on TV as we're eating. And there was a 13-play, 18:29 drive and you're just standing over there.

So you come out -- we can be a no-huddle team. Today we huddled. This team I think is pretty good at gathering information. They look over and signal late, almost like a no-huddle defense.

We were trying to minimize their ability to know exactly what we're doing. Sometimes our ability to maybe have more efficient plays -- we didn't have enough efficient plays. For example in the first half, I want to say we had 23 rushes for 96 yards. So that's three yards, whatever, less than -- whatever -- less than five popping.

Cooper had some 10, 15, 20 quarterback runs and there was a lot of one- and two- and three-yard runs, so still just weren't efficient enough.

But again, I think initially my thought was I thought we needed to play multiple quarterbacks. As we went along,

Kirk was playing very long, and he does. At the same time we've got -- for Kirk to play well, you've got to pass block. Our receivers were playing so many young guys, they were able to separate, make plays.

I thought last week we made three competitive plays in the passing game. Like today in the first half, that was a big competitive 2nd down and 11, we got our hands on the ball, we can't come down with it. You're not going to make all those plays, but we're not making enough of them.

Bottom line today I thought we needed some two-back runs. There's been other weeks where Cardell and Cardell on the edge was maybe more of a factor. We're not trying to be a revolving door. We're not trying to put pressure on Kirk. We're trying to find ways to score more than one damn touchdown in a game because that's not enough.

Q. This is the second week in a row that you've had really a bad third quarter. Is the effort where you want it in the third quarter from your defense? What do you put your finger on in that situation?

KEVIN WILSON: To me, I think it's been a little bit more -- again, we talked about it hard at halftime. For example, in the first half you've done a good job except not covering some guys. Keep doing your job. I'm not one of these guys that's, okay, let's look at the tape, and all of a sudden that dive play you've got nothing and he goes back-to-back 67-yard runs for touchdowns.

Why all of a sudden? Because I don't think we were -- against that team, that's a pretty good first half rush defense, let's keep doing it. We gave up the big plays passing. And the big plays passing shouldn't have been given up. They were just busts where all of a sudden the kid doesn't mean to -- he thinks it's a run, by the way. I forgot to cover my guy.

So we had a couple kids make mistakes, lack of maturity, lack of competitive stamina, lack of keeping my eye on my guy.

Second half I don't know. I'd like to sit here -- I'm not going to point fingers at the kids, and I'm not going to sit here and point fingers at our coaches, but we've got to coach it better and figure it out because it ain't what it looks like, or it needs to look like, or what's expected, or what needs to be expected, that's for sure.

We'll look at it hard. We're not going to come up with an excuse. I don't see an imminent thing where I say, yeah, okay, I got it. I'm trying to, quote, figure it out. Having said that, too, I think the offense came down with a couple decent drives but then bogged down. The offense didn't go

three-and-out, three-and-out until the fourth quarter.

At half let's get a stop, let's don't get to 28, let's get back in this thing. We're moving it, let's get a score, get back in it, and let's keep punching and swinging. And we didn't.

Q. Earlier in the week you talked about preparing for this offense since the spring. What's the difference in preparing for it and then actually facing it, the speed they hit it at?

KEVIN WILSON: Yeah, I mean, they're good. What I think, too, is they've always had -- they know their base rules, their base concepts, the things to me -- I've never been a part of the offense, but I've watched it for years and years. First of all, when you're them, they seldom have tape -- like we lined up today like we never line up. We line up to stop. That was a completely different alignment in the game, an extra deal.

Typically they've had great success making their adjustments before these laptops. Now you've got these laptops and you can specifically frame it and say, wait a minute, hey, you can -- so in this day and age of modern technology, I think it makes you make some better sideline adjustments. We're not doing a good job of that ourselves.

Bottom line, when you get lined up, every time you stop something, you give something. Every time you're taking away space, there's space out there. They did a nice job of getting to it.

Again, we'll go through. Maybe there's a common trend of -- I don't think so -- a guy or a position that's out of gap. But bottom line that was a decent first half of run defense and then a poor third quarter of run defense, and it was the same defense, same guys, same structure.

I was talking the other day and there's times where it looks really good, and that's good ball. That's guys playing good ball. Then there's times where it's like, where is this, what is this.

Whether we're fragile, lack of confidence, our veteran guys on defense in particular, transfer guys, and their ability to lead -- you've got a lot of young guys out there playing. Bottom line is we're a little too loose. We've got to figure out how to tighten it up.

Q. With the bye week coming up with some time to work on some things, but this far into the season, how much can you or should you try to switch things up to turn things around, or do you just more focus on fine-tuning what you've been working on?

KEVIN WILSON: Well, I think, again, this one falls to me. We have enough video evidence to verify some things that we are good or not good at individually, some things I am good or not good at, whether it be in my skill set as a defender or a blocker or a route runner. I run this route good, I struggle with this one. I am a guy that's had way too many penalties; why?

So to me, we've got -- I think we live in a generation of kids, they want to know why they're doing things. I think we have enough information we can verify these are things we're doing nice, that's good. Let's continue to get better at. These are things we're struggling, why. Are we not good at it, are you not good at it, should we do it with someone else. To me that's the first thing you look at.

But to me as we're trying to build this thing, it's constant consistent daily improvement, and we've got to do that. But if we just stay status quo and stay bland -- it's obvious the way we played the last two second halves, we have a hell of a lot of work that needs to be done, and it needs to be directly figured out. Without blaming and without having an excuse and without reason, we need to get better.

So we'll use this open day, one, to reflect where we're at, why, what we're doing to get better. And then to me we get into a six-day run into our conference. In our conference, we've got to play better defense, we've got to find the end zone, and if we do you're going to be in some competitive games.

We need to find a way to compete and get some W's and finish strong. We've got a six-game run. I've seen too much work with these guys to think we stink. We've got some results we don't like. We've got to cut some fat, clean it up, get on a run here and see what we can do for six games.

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