

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Texas vs Arizona State

Saturday, December 28, 2024

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Arizona State Sun Devils

Marcus Arroyo

Offensive Coordinator

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Arizona State will play in the 2024 Peach Bowl on January 1st against Texas. We are excited to have Offensive Coordinator Marcus Arroyo on Zoom.

Q. Texas has one of the top defenses in the country. Of course everybody kind of knows that. How important is it going to be for you to kind of remain patient in both the pass and run game when things may not be going your way at any point during the game?

MARCUS ARROYO: I think that's probably definitely part of the thought process. You're playing a top three defense in the country with a group that's seen a lot of football, does a really nice job on defense, coached well, plays hard.

We're going to have to be patient, like you said, and take what they give us and try to figure out and make some adjustments early on, put our best foot forward, and put together a good plan that keeps us efficient and keeps the game in a manageable situation where we can control it.

Q. You've mentioned in the past just kind of how the scheme is obviously centered around Cam and obviously like adjusting the passing game since Jordyn Tyson's injury. What have you kind of just seen over these last couple of weeks, the team has kind of recuperated, just rejuvenated itself. How have you seen the receiving group as a whole take on this preparation against a DB room at Texas that in many ways is probably one of the best in the country, led, of course, by Jahdae Barron and the Jim Thorpe award winner.

MARCUS ARROYO: I've been really proud of the guys the way they stepped up since the Arizona game and Jordan going down. Even before that, over the course of this first



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year in the offense with me, it's been us learning to know each other and earning trust and learning the scheme and letting me come in in January with open arms to all these guys, coaches included, and be able to install a system that I thought revolved around the players, what they could do, and what kind of scheme we wanted to implement that we could do and communicate, what we could coach.

They've done a great job each week all season growing and learning, trusting and developing the system around themselves. It just so happens that after Arizona we had our main guy really go down, and I challenged them that after that game, going into the Big 12 Championship week, that we've got to pick up the flag. They've done a great job, I think collectively, from all ends.

Whoever we've asked to step up during the course of the week, whatever scheme we put in, whatever parts or pieces that we wanted to put and target in any accord, run, pass, or screen, these guys have been awesome and excited about doing it.

Q. We've talked about other guys stepping up, and obviously Malik McClain has gotten more reps in the last couple of weeks with Jordyn down. Can you talk about what you've seen from him and how much he's improved since he's had more reps?

MARCUS ARROYO: Malik is a guy who obviously coming into this season we had in fall camp, got a chance to see and see right away as a guy we thought had some character and talent and things we could put some of the system around.

A good part of it, we got a chance to see him in the first few games too before moving over to the scout team there and now having a chance to come back. I think throughout the course of a couple byes and a couple weeks where we had opportunity to see young guys, I think because of the way the schedule played out this season, we got a chance to watch some of those guys when maybe you don't, when you don't have those breaks.

Malik was always a guy we challenged each week to go

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over there. We were watching to see how he was evolving. To be able to pull him back up late in the season and have him make some big plays in that Big 12 Championship and have him practicing full speed right now with a great attitude and work ethic, I'm excited about the opportunity coming up this week in this game and the future moving forward with him.

Q. I'm curious about Cam, if you seen some outlandish strategies to try to stop him? I don't know how much they can overload in the box as it is, but have you seen anything that stands out that's different or special?

MARCUS ARROYO: Not too many crazy things. We've gone against some really quality opponents that aren't going to get too outside the box.

The reality is we've got a guy in the backfield who can do it all, and he's been productive and efficient. We try to manipulate every blade of grass with him, so it's a little hard to try to pinpoint where he's going to be. That's kind of by design hopefully.

I think we've seen that defenses do respect him. I think we're seeing the box count in their favor in regards to how to try to add a hat to the box. The guys around him to be able to help supplement that leverage have done a really nice job schematically or independently as a player.

They know who he is. He's no secret now. Cat's out of the bag. He's a tough, tough, tough kid that runs hard and runs well, can do it all. We're proud to have him.

Q. Second question, does that allow for more one-on-one opportunities for your receivers with people putting extra safeties in the box?

MARCUS ARROYO: Yeah, that's a great question. I think the reality of the scheme in and of itself and what we believed in when we got here was to be able to run the ball effectively so we can find some matchups outside, create some one-on-ones, create some free access passes.

I think anybody who's running the ball and believes in play action like we do and being able to find one-on-ones and manipulate players on the field to get leverage or matchups, for us running the football is where it all starts.

We've seen that inability for teams to be able to cloud things or roll things because in the backfield you've got him as such a weapon.

Q. Marcus, you had several big games when you coached at Oregon, being in the New Year's six bowls.

How do you give you experience to the players with them not being caught up in the moment with many of your players not being in this big of a game?

MARCUS ARROYO: I try not to get caught up too much in those old ones besides I think that it's probably -- it's a really good question in regards to just the ability to communicate the experiences, whether it was the Sugar Bowl or whether it was the Rose Bowl or Alamo, whatever it may be, I think opportunities for me to share with those guys, hey, here's some things that we've got to look out for and distractions or offsite or whatever the case may be. You're in a neutral site, whatever.

I think that last week helped being away, being at another big site and away from it, but I think as far as like the mindset and the ability for these guys to go back to work, they've really latched onto the reality that we're not -- it's more about the actions and attitudes and habits of preparing for a game than it is in the game itself.

We've talked about it for a long time since I've been here is just the score will take care of itself. Focus on the things that we've got to focus on. Don't starve your distractions. Just have fun working your tail off, and they've done a great job of that all week. It's been reflected in how the season's unfolded. It all starts with Kenny and his ability to verbalize that and inflect that attitude towards this group. I'm just proud to be part of it, man.

Q. You were kind of under the radar obviously on a national level most of the year before everybody started taking note late in the season. Where did you sort of -- is there a moment, a game, or even just a moment where you realized I think we've got something special here. This is not going to be another 3-9 campaign. This team can do special things. Do you remember when you sort of realized that?

MARCUS ARROYO: I wasn't here for last year, Paul, so I don't really have a feel for what that felt like for these guys. So I think that probably played in my favor in regards to having a clean slate coming in. As the season went on, as the season goes on in any time, I think you get a chance to gel with the group and see them take shape, especially with some young players. I think that's been fun to watch.

A young quarterback, watching him grow each week. Because we just installed the new system this year, I've got a chance to see really everybody kind of work into it and kind of learn it.

Each week these guys have picked it up. They've gotten better each week. I think, as the process has gone on,

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we've gotten more confidence. We've tried to make sure that we're focused on the things that win games and we've kept our eye on the prize in that regard.

I don't know if there's one real particular moment. I think, at the end of the day, when -- as a guy who's been in this a long time and been a head coach, when I start to see the autonomy and alignment of a group and the culture and the identity of a program -- offense, defense, and collectively -- that's when I get excited. I'm like, wait a minute, there's some real gel going on, some real ethos going on that's really organic.

That's when I could tell, all right, we've got something cool because there was no me guys. It was all a we thing. Everybody's working together. We're excited. Everybody's competing. No one was focused on anything outside, just getting better.

As the season's grown, I've got a chance to see that, as the guy coming in this year, to go, you know what, there's some special things going on here the way guys care about what they're doing. That's really probably -- there's no real initial instant that I saw that.

Q. How big of an advantage is having the bye? Is it an advantage? We're all kind of in new territory here obviously, but what's your thoughts on that.

MARCUS ARROYO: From a health standpoint, you always like the bye. We got a chance to work some young guys. There was an advantage in that regard. I think bowl season, a lot of times, people from the outside, what we get a chance to do, you get a chance for a lot more practices, so you get a lot of young guys working. You get a chance to evaluate your roster.

Added the transfer portal to this, so that made it complete chaos, which is a little bit different than you want. So you're recruiting, you're getting young guys a lot of work. You don't really know who you're playing up until last week, so it's not much of a time difference because you're not going to start preparing for somebody you're not going to play.

I think just a chance to see your young guys get some more work in, get healthy, that piece of it's been good.

Q. You've talked a lot about Sam's work ethic putting in the dark hours. Is there anything that's really surprised you about him?

MARCUS ARROYO: I don't know if it's surprise at this point. I think the one thing about a young quarterback, freshman quarterback, usually that's the thing that makes

you go wow is the ability to be consistent in that work ethic.

When you've got a guy who's got that ability to stay focused that long over the course of the season, such a young quarterback, and get better every week and come back to work every week and challenge himself to go, all right, I'm going to get better this week as a young player, that consistency as a young guy, that persistence is the thing that you're like, okay, this is what you kind of maybe thought you had a sense on when you met somebody, when you recruited them, you're like, does he have that little piece?

That ultra-competitiveness and that ability to continue to keep the pedal down as a young guy and want to get better and not be real critical of himself and not be satisfied is probably the most exciting part of his maturity.

Q. I don't know how familiar you are with Pete Kwiatkowski, if you've gone up against him, is there anything specific about his defenses and the way he tries to attack offenses?

MARCUS ARROYO: I've known Pete a long time. I've been fortunate to know that staff for a long time, between Sark and Banks and Pete, those are guys I've either played against or coached against or hung out with for a long time since I've been a player. Pete was coaching at Boise when I was a player, and now visited at Washington, and I've visited Texas and those guys for the last few seasons as a coach and friend, minus this year.

Pete's always done a fantastic job, done a real good job schematically, done a real good job of taking away what you're getting good at, identifying what you do with situational football. He changes up the personnel groupings.

He's always done a fantastic job. This group and the way they're playing, it's not a shock to me, having seen the maturation of that program and what Sark's done, what Pete's done with that defense over the course of the last few years. He does as good a job as anybody in the country, and there's a reason they're in this position.

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