

Army Black Knights Football

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Jeff Monken

Press Conference



Army 24 - Charlotte 7

JEFF MONKEN: Afternoon, everybody. Haven't had a chance to look at the play-by-play in earnest. I think it will probably show we played a much better first half than second half.

I thought our defense played great, particularly in the first half. I mean, all the way up until the end. We had some other guys in the end. As I told the players in the locker room, just because they got the ball back in the end and we were playing guys that weren't on the first string, it wasn't a rule that they had to score.

I thought our first defense really, really played well. Just excited about the fourth down stop we made, the big plays that got 'em in long-yardage situations that forced them to punt. Those were all positive things that happened today on defense.

Offensively I thought we played pretty well in the first half. The exception being the fumble. We had two touchdown drives and a field goal at the very end of the first half, which I thought was a great job.

Again, like last week we were able to finish the first half with a score. Unfortunately we couldn't come out in the second half. Had to punt the very first drive. I thought the second half our offense played very poor. I voiced my displeasure with them. Probably got a pretty crappy look on my face.

I know who we have to be and what we have to do if we're going to win and have a chance to beat another opponent on our schedule, any of 'em.

Hopefully we'll get some things corrected through coaching and through practicing the fundamentals, our assignments. We'll see if we can play better next week, have a chance to be competitive against a great, well-coached Tulane team, one of the best teams in our league.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. The consistency that you're looking for, is it a fundamental thing or...

JEFF MONKEN: Yeah, I mean, it all comes down to assignment, fundamentals, execution of those two things. At times it was assignment, at times it was fundamentals, at times it was both. At times we could have done a better job as a coaching staff to position our guys.

It's a combination of all of it. I'm critical of every bit of it. I'm critical of myself because I'm responsible for all of it. Don't get me wrong, I'm glad we won. It sure beats the alternative.

I've been doing this a long time. I tell you, sometimes it's even hard to enjoy the victories because the standard is so high. My expectations are so high. The standards to meet those expectations, they have to meet the expectations.

So, too much to be perfect? I don't know. Not in my opinion. We're going to keep trying. When we have the ball, my expectation is we're going to score every time we got it. If we don't, I'm going to be disappointed, particularly when we make some errors that we can do a better job of controlling.

Q. Does it make it more frustrating that you're halfway through the season and this stuff is still happening?

JEFF MONKEN: No, it happens. It's frustrating no matter what. I thought we had a pretty good football team a year ago. We didn't score every single time we had it last year. I would get ticked off then, too.

We won the game today. I don't want to discredit how hard it is to win a football game, 'cause it is. They got a lot of good athletes on that team. Their coach is an outstanding football coach. They have a great staff.

It's not easy to go into a situation where you're starting over. We're not starting over here. I've been here 12 years. We have a culture established, guys that have grown up in our program.



My expectations are really high for these guys. That doesn't mean that they didn't in a lot of areas probably have better athletes than we have. Just collectively we got to execute together, coaching and playing, all that we're responsible for together. Just do it at a higher level, do it more consistently. I thought we really did that in the first half. We didn't really do it in the second half.

Q. Was it score related or...

JEFF MONKEN: We want both of those guys to be prepared to play, ready to play. I thought Kalib played his butt off. He rushed for 134 yards at that point. He's taking a pounding. So I think when we pulled him, was it 17 or 24, probably 17 at that point, I can't remember.

Q. 24.

JEFF MONKEN: 24. So at that point we felt pretty comfortable putting in Dewayne and letting him take a crack at it. You get better by playing. You keep yourself kind of in tune by playing. I thought it was good to get him in there.

Q. Talk about some of the defensive plays. How do you talk about the defensive play? Seems like they were more aggressive today.

JEFF MONKEN: I thought the guys played really well. I thought our defense played really hard, really tough. Came up with some big plays, several negative-yardage plays. We did a nice drive down here by the building. We got a sack, then we got another tackle-for-loss, then short gain on third down. We went for the punt block, ran into the punter. That was a really good series by our defense. Gave us a chance to get the ball around midfield. The penalty kind of backed it up five yards or so.

They came up with some drives like that. Stop on fourth-and-one. Threw the ball on the flag. We were able to stop them.

I was proud of the defense. Happy with the way they played. Missed some tackles. In the first half, just talking to those guys about tracking the ball, tackling low. We had some chances in the first half. I thought Coach Woody called a really good game to tackle 'em in the backfield for a loss. Missed a couple of those.

Overall I thought our defense played winning defense. I thought they did a good job.

Q. Do you feel like the offense is just gaining some rhythm to the way they're playing?

JEFF MONKEN: I hope so. I hope we're gaining some rhythm. It would have appeared so in the first half. We all watched it. It would not appear so in the second half. Just didn't look the same.

We get a chance to evaluate that on film, look at what we called, how we executed it, the fundamentals that went along with it. I know this: we're going to have to play better than we did in the second half if we're going to have a chance to win.

Q. Do you feel the team is playing fundamentally better the last two games?

JEFF MONKEN: I feel like we practiced better the last two weeks. I feel like collectively as a team, the entire unit has played better over the last couple of weeks.

But we're going to have perhaps the biggest test of the year coming up against Tulane. If you saw that game on I guess it was Thursday night, East Carolina and Tulane, those are two really good football teams slugging it out to the very finish.

East Carolina, their athleticism, their ability to score, their ability to stop us, you got a team that's of the same or better caliber duking it out.

We're going to need to have improved a whole lot from two weeks ago when we played at East Carolina till we play seven days from now if we're going to be competitive in the game.

We'll work hard. I promise you our guys will put the effort in. Our coaches will. I will. I'll make sure of it. We'll give it our very best shot next Saturday in New Orleans.

Q. At any particular moment in today's game you felt really a standout?

JEFF MONKEN: Well, let's see. One particular time that was a standout?

I thought the first fourth-down stop, when they had the ball down there in scoring position, and it was fourth and one, and we knocked it back for just a short gain, didn't gain a lot. That was a big stop.

I think it really was just indicative of how our defense was playing. Very aggressive, very physical today. I thought that was a big play.

Q. Talk about the defense's improvement throughout the year. Talk about what you see in the defense and



how they're coming along.

JEFF MONKEN: We're doing a better job the last couple of weeks, and really in that second half of the East Carolina game, playing blocks, getting off blocks. We've tackled better the last two weeks. We didn't tackle great today. I know we missed some.

Comparatively, if we look back at how well we tackled against Kansas State, we missed three defensive tackles on the night. The next week against North Texas we missed 23. At East Carolina we missed 20. We missed a lot of tackles in both of those games. We missed 11 last week, which is at least cutting it down. We'll see how we did today.

The fundamentals of that, number one, to track a ball in space, that's really hard, track a ball carrier in space. Guys are athletic and fast. To bring a guy down with a lot of space is very difficult. The ones that are in close quarters that I was talking about earlier, we had a chance, it's a guy coming off of a block. Defensive linemen or outside linebacker, when the ball is close, we got to disengage from a block and make a tackle, going low and wrapping our arms. Those are the ones that we'd really like to see us be a little more effective on those. It just puts the offense in a bad situation when you can go from first and 10 to second and 11 or whatever it may be with a quick stop behind the line of scrimmage. It just changes how they're going to sequence the plays following that.

So we'll continue to work on it. We work that fundamental every day. We work tackling in practice every day. Block destruction every day. We have to be good, as good as we can be, in the fundamentals if we're going to be a good defense and good offense, special teams.

Again, we'll get back to work on those things tomorrow and see if we can improve before we play Tulane.

Q. Field goal extra point team, the block at the end. First field goal was nearly blocked. Was there something there with an assignment on blocking that was causing a challenge?

JEFF MONKEN: The first one, I don't know if that first one was almost blocked. I'd have to look at it on the film. Sometimes there's going to be some penetration by the defenders in the gaps. They kind of fall forward and throw a hand up. Sometimes it looks a little bit closer than it actually is.

The operation time is somewhere between 1.2 and 1.3 seconds usually on that play. That means a guy only has to go seven yards, six yards. The placement point is seven

yards from the line of scrimmage. A guy penetrates a gap, gets to six yards, gets his hand up, he's got a pretty good chance to do that in 1.2 seconds if nobody was blocking him.

They're running into people. They're running into bodies. It's hard. Those guys, they're kind of putting their hands on the backs of our players, pushing themselves up over the top, which is perfectly legal. It's hard to defend.

Our guys, they're getting their arms and hands up and kind of getting their high block point down. Hands come down, they're coming towards the ball, but they're not elevated like they would be if they weren't blocked.

The last one, that's embarrassing to me. We work PAT protection every single day. It's not that our guy wasn't trying to make a play, not trying to do what he was supposed to do. There's two guys coming off the edge. One typically rushes between the tight end and the wing, one outside the wing. He should block the guy outside and let the tight end handle the gap. Blocked the guy inside. The guy coming outside the edge is unblocked.

The trajectory of the kick is going right toward him. He was all over it. We didn't lay a hand on him. That's just a missed assignment. It's our job as coaches to get 'em to do it right. He didn't do it right, so...

Certainly could have been very costly in a closer football game.

Q. Several weeks ago we talked about Cale, how he took it hard, his performance against East Carolina.

JEFF MONKEN: North Texas.

Q. Now that he's had a strong start, what does it say about his character, his ability to process and to learn?

JEFF MONKEN: Well, it was the North Texas game, the three turnovers.

He's a tough kid. He's a competitor. He's a winner. He was remorseful over that and wanted to improve. I think he's worked really, really hard.

Today was just a good example I think of what he's capable of. His toughness, his attitude, his temperament. I think that really showed. That fits the culture of our program, the kind of offense we want to run.

Q. About Hayden Reed, we saw you talking to him after his fumble. I'm sure he felt terrible about it. He



got back in the game and was pretty solid. What did you think about his bounce-back, ability to be your back?

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JEFF MONKEN: I thought he did a good job. He had a good attitude. He was over there cheering on his teammates. I know he was disappointed about fumbling the ball. I was disappointed in that, too. I'm glad you said I was talking to him and you weren't a lip reader because I was sorely disappointed.

As hard as we work on that fundamental, if you come out and watch us practice, I mean, it is for the duration of practice, from the time they hit the field till the time we're gone. I don't care if a guy is messing around with his teammates at the end of practice and they're tossing the ball around, tucking the ball away. I make sure they tuck it away the right way, with two hands. I mean, I'm on their butts all the time about it. So are our coaches.

When the ball is knocked loose, it is one of the most frustrating things for me as a coach, is to have a contact fumble where we aren't protecting the ball the way it's supposed to be. He knows that.

You know what, he's been here long enough, been in our program long enough, played a lot of football, he understands what the expectations are.

When that happened, spent a lot of time over there on the sidelines with us, he didn't have a crappy attitude. He kept cheering on his teammates, encouraging other guys. I appreciate that because that's hard to do, not go over and feel sorry for yourself, be woe is me. Credit to him.

Hopefully it will be a lesson for him and he'll get better. They say intelligent men learn from their own mistakes, and wise men learn from the mistakes of others. Hopefully he'll learn from his own mistake and hopefully the rest of the guys on our team will be wise enough to learn that, too.

Q. Opinions Smith and Bartosh?

JEFF MONKEN: I thought they did a good job. I thought Rendina did, too. They all ran hard, tried to play hard. We had a few times where they asked them to block. I thought maybe a couple times they could have sustained that a little bit better. We had a boot play that we had to toss on the sideline in the protection. If we had been a little more effective there at the running back position, we might have been able to break, run the ball, find a throwing lane.

There's things like that at every position. Hard to be perfect. I'd like for us to be, we certainly strive to be. It's hard to be perfect. I thought those guys played hard.

