



OKLAHOMA FOOTBALL

OCT. 3, 2015 • #15 OKLAHOMA 44, #23 WEST VIRGINIA 24 • BOB STOOPS QUOTES

HEAD COACH BOB STOOPS

Opening statement:

"I want to compliment West Virginia and Dana Holgerson and his staff. They've got a good football team and we knew that coming in. It was a hard-fought game and both sides had their moments. I'm really proud of our team to really take a strong lead in the first half and go into halftime with a pretty good lead and playing well. I'm not happy how we came out after halftime, but again that's a part of the game [and] you keep playing.

"West Virginia had their spots there where they made some good plays and closed the gap. I'm really proud of our guys' attitudes then to take control of [the game] after [West Virginia closed the score]. We were making the big plays offensively and defensively; defensively we were making a bunch of big plays. [We were] really playing well to take back control of the game and to seal it in a really good way there at the end. I like the character of the guys in the way they fought and competed."

"Some guys that had really huge games were Baker [Mayfield] again [who] was outstanding and a bunch of receivers, which is really encouraging. [There were] a lot of guys making plays. We all know Sterling [Shepard] always makes a ton of big plays. He had a slant-and-go to beat coverage for the early touchdown. Then Michiah Quick, Dede Westbrook and Durrone Neal all stepped up and had some big plays. Joe [Mixon] had a big run. The way [West Virginia] comes at you defensively, they're going to get their plays. They pressure you and junk-up some run game, but then you [still] have to get your big plays on them; and we did. I thought our guys handled it for the most part pretty well.

"Defensively, we also were again really good. The turnovers, the pressure, the sacks and defending the pass was outstanding. The one drive where we had 45 yards in penalties that's the one disappointment of the day. The hands to the face and just some of the foolish penalties we had, we have to correct. We played really aggressive and I thought our guys played physical. We covered well and defended the run well. Really I was pleased with all of it."

"The first guy getting the game ball was Austin Seibert. Again, guy was just perfect on the day [keeping] the ball down the middle. He punted well and it was a solid day."

On Oklahoma capitalizing on turnovers against West Virginia:

"I believe the law of averages usually works your way. We aren't doing anything differently than other people are doing. We had the ball out three or four times in the previous few games and we weren't able to pick them up. We were able to pick them up today and advanced them. We stepped in front of some balls and guys were in good position to make some interceptions. It was a positive part of the day in the second half for sure."

On how Oklahoma responded after West Virginia came within three points:

"West Virginia fought back through the third quarter to make it a tight game and we responded. Both sides of the ball came up with plays to stretch the lead and to make a difference. The defense [forced] the last few turnovers to ice it and let the offense run the clock out."

On Jordan Thomas:

"Jordan is a really good player. He's much improved from a year ago. He's shown some of this in the last week or two. He's shown some accountability and responsibility to the team and always doing things the right way. He really had a big game; even without the interceptions he covered really well. He had one play, I guess, that he could've [covered] a little better down there at the goal line. In that situation, we [try to] play tighter than that and I don't think he was aware of the position he was in on the field. That gets back to some experience."

On the improvement of Baker Mayfield and the receiving corps:

"They've made a ton of growth. Baker had one bad decision, but the rest of the game he was really finding the right spots. It is encouraging because in this offense you can't survive with just one receiver or two. It can't be just Sterling [Shepard] and one other guy. You've got to use them all [because] that's the only way you space the field. We've got more guys stepping up and making plays and executing the right way."

On Eric Striker:

"Eric's played well a lot. Some people don't give you the opportunities [to rush]. In this game, for instance, we have the lead so [West Virginia] had to throw more. I guarantee it's more than they wanted to. So there's more opportunity [for Eric]. That was the case in the Sugar Bowl, we got ahead, and then people have to play a little differently so you have more opportunity. He was huge [in today's game]. He's hard to block. A time or two he beats the guy, but they get a holding [call] off of a pass [play] that was a first down and it ended up being called back; that would've been a sack had they not held him."

On how difficult it is to create momentum in a game that had a combined 23 penalty calls that amounted to 245 yards:

"It's really difficult. I'm not complaining about them. We'll see it on tape. Usually a hands to the face is pretty easy to see. We have to clean it up. [West Virginia] had a lot on them, as well. We'll see it and evaluate it. From what I understand, we earned them and we have to learn to play smarter and in a better way."



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DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR MIKE STOOPS

On creating turnovers:

"I think they have to feel pressure, the quarterback, and [the defense has to] make his job just as uncomfortable as you can. I thought we were able to do that. I thought we were able to make him hold the ball a little bit longer, so our coverage was better overall for the most part. Those are all parts of getting turnovers. They want to run the football. That team wants to run the football if you let them."

On pressure created both up front and in the secondary:

"What's interesting about this defense is that you have to work it a little bit with [Eric] Strike[r] and Devonte [Bond]. It's not the easiest thing to do because those are two of our best players. It's hard to make it work with both of them on the field at the same time. It limits you. You can't play with five DBs. That's something we have to be better at. That's something we'll continue to get better at, playing in our nickel package. But I think we did some good things out of that, too."

On Jordan Evans:

"Jordan's upside is that he continues to grow. He's got a lot of ability. He's got a lot of range to his game. That was good for Jordan. I'm happy for him. He bounced back and really came up big for us. He needed that. I'm sure he feels a lot better about himself and his game. He's growing as a player and a person."

On all the penalties:

"That was frustrating. I saw Texas get 16 for 400 yards last week. You just have to look at them. It just seems that's the way the world is now. It's the NFL, it's college each game. That's the way the game is officiated now."

On Eric Striker and the blitz packages:

"That's what has to happen with us. We have to create a lot of different angles. I thought they did a good job learning some zone plays because they kept you in pressures. They can put a gash in the run game, too, and they kept forcing the runs. . . We have to continue to build on what we're doing. I think this is a team that can really roll as the season goes on and get better on both sides of the ball. . . We're playing a lot of young guys. We played 80 snaps again today. We played a lot of guys.. That's always good, too."

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR LINCOLN RILEY

On beating West Virginia's defensive pressure:

"We anticipated the game would go that way with their mentality. That's been a question mark here. When people do blow it up and if they're ready to commit to something and run it. Can we be good enough to beat it? The first half we certainly were, but I didn't call a very good game in the second half. There were a bunch of errors by me. I have to be better. . . We knew it was going to be like that against a group like that. . . against people like that who are so aggressive. They have good players. They're the number one scoring defense in the country. They're going to make some plays and put some good pressure, so you have to make big plays."

On how far the offense has come this season:

"I don't want to use the word 'pleasing', but it's what we expected. It's what you have to do. I think it shows how much they've taken the risk. They've accepted our coaching from day one... We've coached those guys really, really hard and they haven't backed down from it. They've responded. . . As good as they want to be, we can't rely on one guy."

On Durren Neal:

"Durren's a guy who grinds it out. He never wants to take a rep off in practice. He never wants to let the young guys get in. You appreciate that about a senior. I'm a big believer that if you want to be a good football team, then those guys who are seniors have to play their best football. He's taking some steps for us and made some big plays today."

On the offensive line:

"They did pretty good. They missed a couple things. . . a few blitzes. Sometimes we're out-manned. If we bring six, they're going to bring seven. A couple times, I had bad calls in or we didn't recognize it. Protection-wise, they did a good job. In the run game, we have to continue to make strides. . . There's still some things in the run game early on that we're not getting."

On the offense being able to answer:

"That's been this group's M.O. We're so far away from where we want to be, but we do seem to make some plays when we need them. Starting off the game, we emphasized what we knew was going to be so important, especially against an established defense like that with all the starters and experience they have. We did a nice job with that. . . We don't back down in the important times. I can't compliment our guys enough and how much they've trusted and believed in the system."



OKLAHOMA FOOTBALL

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LB ERIC STRIKER

On how effective he was today:

"I was just out there having fun, doing my assignment and going hard on every snap. It was a very tough opponent. I'd be lying if I said it wasn't tough. It's always a fight until the end with them (West Virginia)."

On responding with a better performance this week than last (vs. Tulsa):

"We knew going in that we still have nine straight Big 12 games. We knew against West Virginia, a good opponent, we had to come out ready to play tough, be more physical and just be the better team. Every year West Virginia is always a tough game. Getting turnovers was one thing we emphasized in practice all week, and that's what we did."

On intensity for Big 12 play possibly leading to penalties:

"Guys were ready to go, and sometimes you kind of get overexcited and do a little bit too much. It was unfortunate, but guys came out ready to play today."

On the game going back-and-forth with big plays:

"Like I said, every year with West Virginia it's going to be a difficult game. They are a tough team for everybody in this conference."

WR DEDE WESTBROOK

On the big hit he took in the first quarter and how it affected him:

"Back in the country, we just get up and play the next play. Afterwards I felt it a little bit, but as I got running a little, I got back into it and everything was all right."

On the fast-pace and amount of big plays:

"That's exactly the way that we practice. We try to be on and off the field quick, get our defense out there to get a stop for us and go do it again."

On if this was the best game of his career thus far at OU (statistically):

"I'm getting there. I wouldn't say I'm all the way where I want to be, but with the guys motivating me every day, I'm getting better and starting to learn the ropes."

On recovering well after fumbling:

"It's just our relationship (with QB Baker Mayfield). Things happen — it's football. You have to be willing and ready to forget about it and play the next play."

LB DEVANTE BOND

On if it makes his job easier when Eric (Striker) is getting after the quarterback:

"Yeah definitely, if you're going to leave one of us free, I know Strike's going to get there. He's a great player, it was good to see him go out there and play like that."

On if it is just a matter of time with the turnovers:

"Yes I think we're capable of getting a lot of turnovers so when the play is there we have to capi-talize on it."

RB SAMAJE PERINE

On how difficult it is to get into a rhythm because of penalties:

"It's pretty tough. We tried to cut back on a few of those, but they still happened. We have to do a better job of fixing that. Playing a team like that, you're trying to not put yourself in those situations, but it's going to happen. We have to do a better job at limiting the number of penalties that we have."

On key offensive players:

"This offense, it has a lot of key players. It isn't about one or two people playing. That doesn't work. You have to have everybody all in every play for it to work."

On the importance of wide receivers:

"We knew that we were going to have to swing the ball around, and we did. Our receivers did a great job of catching the ball. We had one little hiccup with the fumble, but he got back up and shook it off and got back in it."

QB BAKER MAYFIELD

On handling the pressure as a unit:

"We had 44 points when we should have had 60. Self-inflicted wounds. Yeah, good win, good team, but we've got to do better."

On the touchdown by Durren Neal:

"It was huge. We had no momentum at the time and the only slight momentum that we had was on the kickoff return and they called it back. We were backed up from the 5. We got a few plays before that and then Durren faked a little smoke screen on the left and he got wide open. That's easy for me to get there. It's a huge momentum shift and it kills their confidence when we put a dagger in their gut."

On his first time playing against Texas:

"Yeah, it's always a game you want to play in as a little kid and now it's finally here. Preparation starts now. Even with how they're playing right now, you can't go in there and take them lightly. That's how rivalry games are. We're going to go in there and give it our best shot."

On the game today:

"We played a better team defensively than we have. We've been able to handle the pressure and just execute early on. Like I said, could have executed better later in the game but I feel like we did some stuff really good. When they blitz, that's one-on-one and our guys love that. . . For the most part we made some good plays. It's very important when we play good teams like that to come out and get on a roll and have the confidence knowing that you can go score."

On staying in the pocket:

"Right now I don't want to be out of the pocket unless I'm being forced out. (I'm) just staying in there, not getting happy feet and just trying mature and just stand there and hit my guys because there's somebody open. If there's somebody not open or nobody open, I need to scramble, but until that time comes I just need to sit in there and deliver the ball."



OKLAHOMA FOOTBALL

OCT. 3, 2015 • #15 OKLAHOMA 44, #23 WEST VIRGINIA 24 • OU PLAYER QUOTES

LB JORDAN EVANS

On the defense's performance:

"We've been coming up short on some of the turnovers and forcing quite a few. . . Today we had a whole bunch of guys come up making good plays and it was just great defense on our part. Regardless of who we play, we're really just focused on us. We just control what OU does, so each and every week we just try to raise our bar and get better each and every day."

On West Virginia's start to the second half:

"When West Virginia started getting their runs, they're a great team so it was kind of expected that they were going to do that, our offense and our defense and our special teams as well buckled down and made plays when they needed to make plays."

On the West Virginia offense:

"Well, we knew they wanted to run the ball; we knew they would take their shots. When they were passing the ball, we knew that we wanted to get in his face. We had the quarterback scrambling and that makes the coverage a lot easier and forces more turnovers. Yeah, we wanted him to run and we were glad. It obviously benefited us."

On what's being said about Texas this year:

"Yeah, we're not going to listen to that. We're just focused on us this week. It's a rivalry game. . . They're going to be really focused on beating us, so we're just focused on us getting better and have a great game against Texas."

On how the game against Tulsa influenced them:

"Obviously, Tulsa was a good offense, and at the same time our defense felt pretty embarrassed. . . We wanted to come back with a little edge. We'll go look in the film room and we're going to see some things we still need to improve on."

WR STERLING SHEPHERD

On how the penalties affected the flow of the game:

"The penalties, they can't happen. That is one of the things that we stress at the beginning of the game, no stupid penalties. We had a few of those, which we have to eliminate. That kind of comes with the game. It's one of those high-intensity, high-emotional games, so guys are going to have some penalties, you just have to hold back from them."

On the defense making plays:

"The defense did a great job today. If you beat a team in turnovers, you are mostly likely going to win and that is one of the things that we have to do. We have to take care of the ball on our part. When the defense is getting turnovers, it is on us to go capitalize and get six. We could have done better of that today, but we had some later on in the game where we were trying to play the clock out a little bit. It is always great when the defense is able to get us the ball."

On where the offense is currently:

"I feel great. We made a big jump going into Tulsa week, we had the bye week, and to see come out like that is better. We still have areas that we can clean up, coming out in the second half we have to keep our foot on the gas and keep things going."

OL TY DARLINGTON

How tough it was with all of the penalties:

"It was just hard to get into a rhythm at the beginning of the game. We were just sort of killing ourselves. Really, we stop ourselves. I mean obviously some teams have done some good things to stop us, but for the most part when we are struggling, it is because we are killing ourselves. The same is true today. We should have had more points on that scoreboard."

On the running game today:

"Not good enough, I think we all know that. We just have to move people off the ball better. We've rushed for 300 yards every year I've played them up to this point and we didn't get it done today in the run game the way we needed to. We did some decent things at times, but as the offensive line we have to play a lot better, we need to continue to improve. I'm sure we'll see some good things, some bad things on tape, but we've just got to be more physical in the run game and create holes, especially when they load the box in certain formations. We've got to create holes by creating movement and being a more physical team."

If today's win made a statement:

"I don't know about that. I think it is a good win. I think they're a very good football team, but we'll see going forward how their season plays out, how our season plays out. I think we're just trying to take it one game at a time and try to go 1-0 every week. We've been able to do that so far and we're going to have plenty of opportunities to make statements down the road. It was definitely a start today, great way to start conference play, but now we've got eight more conference games in a row, so we're going straight down the gauntlet and will have plenty of more opportunities to make statements."

WR MICHIAH QUICK

On getting the ball in the offense today:

"It means that I know I can execute with the rest of my teammates, so we can be able to make big plays to win the game."

On his confidence in his second catch while the replay was going on:

"Yeah, when I had seen it. I didn't know I was that close to the sideline, actually. Luckily I was inbounds."

On if penalties affected the rhythm offensively:

"I wouldn't say it was tough for us to stay in a rhythm. We've just got to start fast and keep going fast, regardless of penalties or not. I'm pretty sure we're going to work on executing better that way."



OKLAHOMA FOOTBALL

OCT. 3, 2015 • #15 OKLAHOMA 44, #23 WEST VIRGINIA 24 • OU PLAYER QUOTES

If penalties were brought up at halftime or after the game:

"Not much. Our coaches tell us what to do and we execute it. We don't worry about the penalties. During the game, or before, or halftime or after the game. They're letting us know what we need to do, what we're doing good, what we're doing bad."

DL MATT DIMON

On the team's overall play:

"I think overall we played pretty good. I wish we would have come out at halftime and really put it to them, but you've got to fight through adversity sometimes. I thought we did a good job of that coming out in the third quarter. I don't think we played as well as we wanted to, but I thought we responded pretty well."

On the constant penalties and flow of the game:

"Stupid, foolish stuff that we need to control. They're going to call it every time, regardless of who the ref is. You never like to have that many penalties, but they have to do their job and we've got to do our job to not get foolish stuff like that."

On the secret to getting turnovers:

"I thought that we really fixed a lot of things that Tulsa exposed us on, and I think that they tried to come out and run a lot of those things, rightfully so. I think that today was, just at a certain point, it was like it's just kind of our day right now."

Big plays on both sides of the ball:

"In the Big 12 it's kind of what you're going to get. You're not going to get a grind-it-out, unless you have two grind-it-out offenses. It's just the way the game flowed today. I feel they had more drives than we did, but if our offense scores in one play or 10 plays, I'm happy either way."



OKLAHOMA FOOTBALL

OCT. 3, 2015 • #15 OKLAHOMA 44, #23 WEST VIRGINIA 24 • WVU QUOTES

WEST VIRGINIA HEAD COACH DANA HOLGORSEN

Opening comment:

"I want to congratulate Oklahoma. Coach Stoops and his coaching staff do a great job. This is a very successful place and I want to congratulate them on the win. As far as our team goes, we successfully got it to the fourth quarter for the fourth time in four years. Going into the fourth quarter at 27-24 we are right there in the game. I didn't think we played well in the first half, but that is on me not having the guys ready to go. I thought we had a good halftime and our coaches did a good job on making some adjustments. We were in a good place going out into the second half. We knew it was going to be a four-quarter game. I commend our players for getting out there in the second half and playing. We had a great third quarter. Comes down to their defense was better than me. I am the one calling the plays. Just do a good job calling plays in the fourth quarter the way that we needed to to beat these guys, so this one falls on me."

On how much field position affected the play calling:

"It was bad. A lot of that was special teams. Probably all of it was special teams. That hurt us, but they started backed up once and scored in three plays. Regardless of where we start we work parts of the field, and we didn't do a very good job of that. The field position wasn't good. With that said, we didn't do well on offense either."

On the start of the second half offensively:

"We did a good job up front and made a few runs. We played better in the second half offensively, until the fourth quarter. Then some of those calls were on me."

On what he tells his quarterback Skyler Howard:

"Just play like you have played before. Some of that stuff is on me. I will tell you right now, I have coached against these guys for a long time, if you start forcing things down field it is not going to turn out well. That is why we have had a specific gameplan against these guys for a while and we probably lost sight of that a little in the fourth quarter."

On the play of quarterback Skyler Howard:

"I think he was in control. Made some good decisions in the run game and some good decisions downfield. Any time you throw the ball downfield you are throwing the ball into a group of good athletes. It becomes challenging."

On the play of the defense:

"They didn't play great in the first half. Got beat on some double moves and some fake screens and what not. We need to be more disciplined than that. I thought we did much better in the second half. We had a lot of momentum and had them pinned back, and then they scored in three plays. They have a lot of good receivers that can play. We better get used to it because it's going to happen, again and again and again."

WEST VIRGINIA RB RUSHEL SHELL

On what adjustments were made at halftime:

"There weren't really any adjustments. They were just, 'play harder.' When things are not going right, you've got to fix them."

On overcoming offensive turnovers:

"It's really hard. When you're playing a really good team, mistakes have got to be very minor. There's got to be at most one or two, and we had more than that, and that's why the game turned out the way it did."

On what is next for the team:

"Just get back to work tomorrow, get prepared and just keep playing hard."

On facing Oklahoma's veteran defense:

"We feel that the better the team we play, the better we play. We like playing good teams; that's when you bring your A-game. Like we said, this was a money game, and we let the money go out of our hands."

WEST VIRGINIA RB WENDELL SMALLWOOD

On the anticipation leading up to this game:

"We knew it was going to be tough. We knew it was going to be a fight. We knew they weren't going to give it to us easy, but we had a game plan. We thought we could come out and win today, but unfortunately, we didn't."

On the first two drives of the second half:

"I think we didn't really change the game plan, we just started getting more aggressive. Guys started buckling down and started moving off the ball, and we started using our tempo and we started getting to them, I think."

On overcoming offensive turnovers:

"It's hard without turnovers, so I think we put ourselves in a hole a lot of times with turnovers and penalties, shooting ourselves in the foot. I think it was hard to come back and win."

On going into the fourth quarter:

"Guys were just pumped up and we were ready to come out and win. We were right back in the game, and we knew we could get right back in the game. We wanted to get in there and execute it, but we didn't."

On what is next for the team:

"We can't stay too busy worrying about this loss. We get the film out of the way tomorrow, and Monday, it's a new team coming—Oklahoma State. We get ready for them and not let this bring our season down."



OKLAHOMA FOOTBALL

OCT. 3, 2015 • #15 OKLAHOMA 44, #23 WEST VIRGINIA 24 • WVU QUOTES

WEST VIRGINIA LB NICK KWIATKOSKI

On positives on the defensive end:

"We knew he [Baker Mayfield] was a mobile quarterback and he could make big plays, so that was just something we emphasized: just getting to him, keeping him in the pocket. We did that at times. Some of the time he got out of the pocket, and that really hurt us, too. So, we go watch the film and see how we can improve."

On playing a game with numerous penalties:

"Penalties are part of the game, but any time there's a lot called, it definitely affects the rhythm and just how things are going. It was called on both sides of the ball, but there were a lot of penalties called today."

On if there were adjustments made at halftime:

"Nothing really. We just kind of came out and got the defense together and just said, 'Look, it's the second half. The first half's not us. We need to pick it up.' Other than that, just little things here and there, but no big adjustments."

On going against Samaje Perine after his performance last year:

"He was someone we focused on doing film this week because of last year and how dangerous he is. We just emphasized knowing where he is at all times, and then, once you get up to him, make sure you wrapped up and brought him to the ground. He broke a lot of tackles last year, and that's something we emphasized."

On defending Baker Mayfield:

"The biggest thing is just getting him out of the pocket. He was able to make some plays downfield by getting out of the pocket and keeping plays alive. At first, he wasn't really finding receivers, but once he got out of the pocket, coverage kind of broke down in the back. His ability to extend plays hurt us at times."

On being so close:

"It's hard for us because we know we could have done better, and looking back, we could have done this, we could have done that. We've just got to take everything that we can from this game, watch film, and move on next week."