



TULSA HEAD COACH PHILIP MONTGOMERY

On the game

PHILIP MONTGOMERY: Well, I thought it was a great team win. Obviously we've still got a lot of things to improve on, but those are a whole lot easier to correct when you get it after a win, being able to go in and fix those things on tape. But I thought the way our guys came out and competed, especially early, I thought we captured momentum early. The big pass to Keevan kind of set the tone there in the first drive, and then defensively coming out and playing as well as they did, I mean, I thought they did an outstanding job stopping the run all night.

I think the majority of their yardage came there late in the game, quarterback kind of scramble stuff. I thought our defense played tremendous. I thought we played really well on special teams.

Obviously the first game of the season, y'all been watching games, too; special teams have been the Achilles heel of a lot of different games, and I thought ours came out and really played well. We scored in all three phases of the game tonight, which is a compliment to our coaching staff and our players for really honing in on what we needed to do, and we had a lot of questions coming in, and we had some young guys that were going to have to play on those teams, and I thought they did an excellent job, and it's always nice to be able to get those young guys in late in the game, get them some experience because you know you're going to need them later on down the road.

With that being said, we'll open it up to questions.

Q. McKinley Whitfield scored that touchdown on special teams. He's really just been having a knack for making special teams for you guys lately. Can you just talk more about his progress?

PHILIP MONTGOMERY: Well, you know, I think McKinley is going to be a special player when it's all said and done. He is growing leaps and bounds every day. We've moved him around quite a bit defensively and playing him in some different spots. Because of his length and athleticism, I think he brings a lot to the table in that sense. Special teams wise, you've been around McKinley a little bit, so the kid is just a playmaker. He has a nose for the football. He did it all through high school, and he's doing it here. It doesn't surprise us and I think he's got to continue to keep growing and getting better, but he's on the right track right now, and we're excited about the progress that he's made.

Q. 512 yards total offense; your quarterback didn't have his best stuff. You guys were able to run the football at will. A lot of promise in the running game this year?

PHILIP MONTGOMERY: Well, we've worked extremely hard on the running game, and that's

always been a staple of what we do. I'd probably disagree with you on the Dane part of it. We had a few dropped balls in there. Had a couple of deep throws that I thought were on the money that we either stumbled on or just didn't look all the way in. But those are things that are going to happen early in the season and happen early in games, and so he did a nice job of executing what we needed to do. I thought our offensive line did a great job of taking control of what they were doing up front because if you look at it, the box was extremely heavy while we were doing that, and our backs did a great job with those guys up front, opening up holes, and they hit them, and we continued to keep moving the chains, and that's what we wanted to do.

Q. All summer long you talked about how the defense had improved. Today 10 points. The field goal came late in the second half. To see it come to fruition, how does that make you feel?

PHILIP MONTGOMERY: Well, you know, those guys have worked extremely hard. We had a great spring ball. We've had a great competitive fall camp. It's one of those things where you feel it, you see it, but you need to do it on a Saturday against somebody new, and for our guys to come out and play as well as they did, I was extremely excited. I thought we did great on the early downs and getting them in 3rd down situations. I think what were the -- 3rd down wise I think they were 7 of 16, so that's a compliment, and a couple of those came late.

You know, their average rushing attack, which they last year ran the ball extremely well, and I thought our defense really stood up and stopped the run, and that really was the key to the game I thought for us.

Q. Talk about some of the performances on defense, first at corner, Keanu Hill, and then rushing the passer, you had Petera Wilson down rushing the passer in this game, so talk about those two guys.

PHILIP MONTGOMERY: Yeah, you know, Nu, he got in here a little late, and so we were excited that when we got him on the practice field -- anytime you're taking a kid and he's not here for spring ball, you don't know how that transition is going to be early in the season, but I thought he played extremely well. He's got a lot of confidence. He's got a lot of knowledge of the game. He sees things and reads things, and he's a gifted, talented athlete. He's going to continue to get better and better, but I thought he played extremely well, just like I thought Kerwin played extremely well, had a chance for a pick there, made a really, really nice break on the football, and so I was pleased with the way our secondary played. I mean, Jeremy Brady did well in coverage but also came down, made some really good hits.

Mitchell I thought played extremely well. I thought that was a bad call there late in that game on the pass interference deal, but I thought our secondary played well.

As far as our pass rush goes, Petera is just kind of one of those freak athletes, and he's a guy that he can help us on some 3rd down situations, and rushing the passer, he did that tonight. But with that being said, I thought Hayden and Jerry U and Jeremy Smith and Brubaker and those guys, Frankie Davis, I thought all of them played well up front, and that always helps you in the secondary when you're getting that type of pass rush.

Q. This team 6-7, same record as you last year, coming off a bowl win, 15 starters I think

back, offense and defense, and yet you guys took it to them start to finish. What surprised you about tonight?

PHILIP MONTGOMERY: You know, I don't know if surprised is the right word, but I am -- I'm really pleased with what we did stopping the run. They had four of their five offensive linemen back plus their tight end back. The only thing they were really missing from that running game last year was their running back. So I thought our defensive line handled that front really well and did a great job of stopping the run, and I thought we -- Coach Young, Coach Norwood did a good job of keeping them confused and giving them different looks and keeping us on the edge right there. Really pleased with what we did defensively today, but we've still got a lot of room to grow.

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