



VS



RAZORBACKS 2017 FOOTBALL

ARKANSAS VS FLORIDA A&M • AUGUST 31, 2017
WAR MEMORIAL STADIUM • LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

POSTGAME QUOTES: ARKANSAS HEAD COACH BRET BIELEMA

Opening Statement . . .

"You always say hold your breath. It's exciting to see the players that you've seen play in the past, and see the growth that they've made, and also see new guys step into roles. I thought today was kind of a little culmination of all that. I think when we came into the game we obviously had a plan in mind offensively and defensively.

Special teams, when the other quarterback wasn't playing, I think our defense made some adjustments, changed our game plan a little bit based on what they've seen offensively. We had so many new guys, we had a new lineup with Ty Clary in there. We had three running backs that really haven't played a lot. Wide receiver, had a lot of new faces. And then obviously (senior center) Frank (Ragnow) and (senior quarterback) Austin (Allen) returning playing really good football. It was a little bit of everything.

I think we had some speed bumps in that first half, which was good to overcome, get those out of our way. As coaches we always talk about getting improvement from game one to game two and we're going to need that.

I thought your guys responded really well the second half. We talked about starting fast, starting on kickoff coverage and then following it up with defense. And we had a good teaching moment because we got a sideline penalty. So this type of game, it was good to get a lot of real good visual learning. We'll be able to take from the film and teach other guys, and come out relatively healthy. I think (junior defensive back) Ryan Pulley, obviously hurt his shoulder, so we'll have to wait to get back home to figure out exactly what that is. But other than that, came out pretty clean with everybody else.

Our plan was to get this one out of our way. Most of the guys, the team will fly back tonight. We'll just need to rest tomorrow, watch film. We'll move into TCU preparation tomorrow night. We've already done a lot, in spring and summer and with fall camps. We'll give players a day off on Saturday. They've earned it. They've had 13 straight days. I'll give them a day off. We'll watch TCU Saturday night, add that to the scouting reports on Sunday morning, and have a significant practice Sunday night, which is a two-day jump, more than what we do for any other games. This is going to benefit us for preparation our next week."

On freshman running back Chase Hayden's big game . . .

"I kind of reserved saying anything about him. His level of competition in high school was a little bit different. As soon as he came to campus the ability that he has to learn, regurgitate the game and understand the way that we play here was quick. We could see right away, that he was going to have an impact and we were going to play him. I thought he was a little loose on the ball when he first started repping. He can make a lot of things happen in a short amount of space. He's dynamic. I think the combination of him, Devwah (Whaley) and David (Williams), who are three unique players at that position, will present a preparation nightmare."

On using three different running backs . . .

"You know, (sophomore running back) Devwah (Whaley) had gotten in, had a little bit of limited prep, the two weeks prior, but was very healthy for game day. So I think we just needed to work on some runs that first half. (Senior running back) David (Williams) had never played in our system or scheme. So it was really important to give him a lot of reps and a lot of opportunities. As you can see, he's got great hands. He's a pass threat. He is really a quick learner. And Chase (Hayden), just kind of wanted to rep him more and more and get him game ready. Obviously David played in the SEC and Devwah has as well. It was important to rep him, that's why we kept him a little longer. (sophomore wide receiver/running back) T.J. (Hammonds) has basically just started practicing this week. He's been out about two weeks with an injury."

On Freshman Ty Clary starting (at right guard) in his first career game . . .

"You know, really I think after the first week in camp you could see he could do some things, was very impressive. His athleticism, very powerful. I know Kurt came up to me after the first two weeks of summer camp and he says, his lower body strength is unbelievable. He had a third or fourth year player, just strength in his lower body.

Then after that first scrimmage, he kind of showed up on film. We were looking at trying to find our best five combo, we were trying to bring them along a little bit, so we all made a decision and see what Ty can do with a right guard, and he blocked some very good players. And that's why we made the move. Still didn't know if he was going to be a starter. He's obviously a true freshman, in my opinion totally under recruited. And made the decision about ten days out when we made the preparation that he was going to be our starter. I didn't release the two guys because I wanted to protect him a little bit, let him prepare in the way he needed to play and he'll be a lot better in his preparation for TCU."

Did Austin Allen play more than you would have liked or did you try to get him out earlier?

"Yes, no matter what happened in the first half, not no matter what, but our goal was to make him play through the third quarter. Today as many reps as we could get, we haven't been able to simulate that in any practice or scrimmage. To get him to work for three-quarters, I think he was good. But he's got some things he needs to work through, especially with new guys in there, new wide receivers, new tight ends, a couple new offensive linemen. So I don't think, although it was played in the first half, those guys need to understand that's not just a dropped pass, that's a dropped possession. So one of the things that we're constantly on our guys about is football IQ, and we have to raise our awareness on third downs, especially offensively."

On the speed of the defense . . .

"I was happy with the way the guys ran the ball. They tackled really well. I don't care what level you're at, they had some good players, good athletes over there to tackle as efficiently as we did. And there were a couple great examples that probably go without being noticed to the untrained eye. We leveraged the ball really well. Turned it into pursuit. Case in point, start of the second half, I think that play was created by the leverage that (senior defensive back) Henre' Toliver got to force it in, and I think Henre' got the fumble recovery for the touchdown."

You got a sack out of the Razor and Hog positions tonight ... is that your expectations out of those spots? . . .

"We ran through quite a few guys. (junior linebacker) Randy (Ramsey) actually plays both, based on the personnel groupings. Randy to me is a guy I've been real quiet about. I think he's got some special skills. He's just beginning to scratch the surface of how good he can be. I give a lot of credit to our two defensive coaches, defensive line coach (John) Scott and outside linebackers coach (Chad) Walker, really have had a nice impact getting those guys to play. In particular the outside backs, Randy and Dwayne Eugene, who have been kind of just role players to this point, I think it showed up today that those are the two guys that belong at this level."

What did you think of the first game in the new 3-4 defense? . . .

"Gave up minimal points. I don't think they have a lot of big plays. We put it out there to try to get -- I don't think we had any glaring misalignments. A lot of good communication out there, played a lot of different guys at those positions. And you saw Dwayne Eugene get that sack late, I think they thought the rotation was going to be the other way. All of a sudden a guy they think is going to be driving and he's rushing and it brings a lot of problems."

What did you think of the play of the freshmen cornerbacks? . . .

"Chevin Calloway and Kamren Curl, both of those guys, because of Ryan's (Pulley) situation, we thought both of those guys -- and it's really a three-man rotation, (sophomore defensive back) Britto Tutt, Chevin and Kamren. We kind of wanted to play those guys all equally. Kamren probably took the majority of the reps. But Chevin the last two weeks has come along really good. He's very fast, very athletic, and very conscientious young man, very attention to detail. For a freshman he's very mature. Him and Kamren both are very mature beyond their years. I think there's a couple of options. You also have the Swiss Army knife of our defense, (senior defensive back) Kevin Richardson, who plays corner, so I think we'll take a step back, take a look at it and see what Ryan's situation is, and come up with our best personnel."

Talk about (redshirt freshman quarterback) Cole Kelley getting his first playing time . . .

"Two completed passes, one for touchdown. I think they were both screen plays, which we have to remind him of. He's a fun guy. You just saw the way the way the kids reacted and fans reacted. He's got a great personality. He lowered the boom. He's not afraid of much. He realizes he's six-seven, 270, he puts the shoulder down, which I wouldn't recommend. It's his throwing shoulder, too. We'll have some conversation about that. But it was really good to get him in. He goes in to kind of piece that altogether. And I thought he owned the moment and it was good to get him in."