

Quotes from Monday's Football Press Conference

October 29, 2001 · MT Media Relations

McCollum on the NMSU game

I'm very proud of this team. It was a team win and we had a lot of individuals that played well. It was a very big team win because we knew coming off the field that New Mexico State was a very good football team. They were physical and big and for us to be down the way we were down and to come back and believe the way we believed is what it's all about. I'm very proud of the staff because, as I've said all



along, I think I have the best staff in the country. It was just another showing of their belief and the guys came out and executed their plan in the fourth quarter. It was a very big conference win for us and it makes this week even bigger. **McCollum on Arkansas State**

We're going to be playing against a good Arkansas State team that just came off of a big win against Idaho. They only have one conference loss. This creates an even bigger challenge for us this week. We have to have a great week of work and get prepared for it. They have a great running back and their quarterback did a super job coming back against Idaho. One of their linebackers was defensive player of the week against Idaho. We know we have a great challenge ahead of us. We have got to come out and turn loose and play. Going back to last week, we had some seniors that got challenged and they stepped up and a lot of the younger players followed them. That's what winning is all about. I thought Kendall Newson played his best game since I've been here. Not just the catches, but the stuff downfield like knockdowns that the total all-around effort. It might be one of the best individual performances I've seen since I've been here. David Youell used to be called the unsung guy but he's not unsung anymore. He had his best game and made some key plays in the fourth quarter and throughout the game. He made some key third down plays. Michael Woods continued to grow up at his position and he made 14 tackles and continues to make us better. Randy Arnold has grown up this year and he keeps getting better every week. This was another where he kept helping us with his presence in the middle. **McCollum on the health of his team**

We're probably like every other team in America right now; we're banged up. We lost Jamison Palmer, which is a big loss for us. Not just on the field, but off of it, too, because of his character and what he means to the program being a senior. We lost Jason Spray last week, another senior, that hurt us. We're down to two running backs right now. Dwone [Hicks] came out of this game healthier than he did the previous two, but he'll still be limited. We'll get Jon Barry back this week on the

offensive line and that will help us. Other than that, we have a lot of bumps and bruises. When you play a physical team like New Mexico State you are going to be beaten up and sore, so we have to have a great week of work, but we also have to be smart with what we're doing, too. **McCollum on the competitiveness of the Sun Belt Conference race**

That is what conference play is all about. No, it doesn't really surprise me because we're in a conference where everyone picked a preseason finish but it's a league of teams that haven't ever played each other before. There were so many unknowns going into this. We got picked to win because we had a winning season the year before. We're playing teams like New Mexico State, Idaho, and North Texas that we've never seen before. I think any time your in a conference race, you can look across the country, winning on the road is a hard thing to do. If you go back and look, regardless of who you play, when you go on the road its tough and that goes for our conference. When you talk about rivalries, every team in your conference is your rival when you want to achieve your goals. People say, -Well, you've got a winning season now,' but that is only one of our goals. One of a lot that we set for ourselves. Right now the biggest goal we have is to beat Arkansas State, which gives us a chance. We know that if we beat Arkansas State, then no one can take a co-championship away from us. It makes it as big as it comes. **McCollum on the importance of a crowd at home games**

That's why we've been saying that we need the Middle Tennessee people here. We need to have our stadium full of blue. We've been saying this all along and its time that people started listening because that's important to our team. We had the greatest fans that were there in the fourth quarter. I don't know how many there were, but they made a difference in that football game for us. It made a difference to our defensive team to get off the field and it made a difference to our offensive team to make plays and keep drives going. Our kids feel that and feed off of it. That's what we mean by home field advantage. It's not that turf out there, its people in the stands. We're playing for a co-championship and that hasn't been done here for awhile and its never been done at this level. That's why Middle Tennessee people need to be here. I don't care if it's cold. We're going to play if its cold and we need people out here with us. These kids deserve it. This staff still dreams of walking out there and seeing the stadium full of blue and there's no reason that it shouldn't be. **McCollum on keeping his team on an even keel**

I think we're still very high. I know I am. We proved something to ourselves. When we were 5-0, everyone was coming around and interviewing us and patting us on the back. We lost two in a row and no one wanted to talk to us. Now that we've won one maybe everybody will come back. I think you learn through success, too. The same ones that were patting us on the back when we were 5-0 didn't want to speak to us when we got back from North Texas. The same ones kept asking -How did you get beat by Ole Miss?' Last time I checked that was a pretty good football team that we lost to. Everything is a learning experience for us. We've got a lot of young kids and that's why I appreciate the senior leadership that we've got. Our kid walked out of here the other night with a lot of emotion, but I think the emotion should still be running. We talk a lot about believing and we just found out what believing is all about. We've got to take that same level to the first quarter and try and sustain it for all four quarters. That's what a win like this is all about. **McCollum on Wes Counts**

I'm very, very proud of him. He didn't really play well against North Texas and he came out slow against Ole Miss. We didn't start out well in this game. He came back and the poise he showed in that fourth quarter was as good as I've ever seen. He made plays, the receivers made plays, the running backs ran over people, and the offensive line was as good as I've seen in protection. His leadership and poise and playing in the team concept is as good as I've seen. He's grown up each year, too. I couldn't be more proud of what he's done and what this team has done. **McCollum on Jonathan Adams (Ark. State RB)**

He's a big, physical running back. He's a Doak Walker candidate and an All-American candidate. We know its going to be a physical game. They lost their first quarterback, brought in a second quarterback that did a good job, and brought in another quarterback that led them on a 98-yard drive this week. That's why we have to get ready defensively. Adams is where it starts. He's a good-looking, physical back that breaks tackles. We're going to have to do a good job of controlling him, that's for sure. They're a physical, well-coached football team.

WR Kendall Newson

On last week's comeback: "Last week I practiced like, -If I'm going down, I'm going down fighting.' I wanted to leave everything on the field and not second-guess anything. You can look at the fourth quarter and I started making plays. The team got more into the game and focused. For me, it was a game that I've been waiting to have." **On Arkansas State:**

"Defensively the run around and make tackles and make plays. They're not going to come in here and let us beat them. We have to not get too high or too low this week and stay even in practice." **On playing in the NFL:** "It's something you think about but then you don't. I think about it sometimes off the field, like when I'm watching a game and wishing to play there. But it's not I ponder about. I have to make plays to play at the next level. Everyday I want to go out and get the job done. I give the total effort every time out on the field and my work ethic is good." **LB Randy Arnold**

On last week's win "You get goosebumps watching the film and just want to go out and do it all over again. We knew what we were capable of and had a plan to shut them down. You could see they thought it was over and we took advantage of that and played hard." **On Arkansas State RB Jonathan Adams** "Coach said he is probably the best running back we've played against all year. It's another challenge for us defensively and we have to try and overcome that." **On the chance of winning a conference championship** "It's what I came here for, to win a championship. I planned on having one this quickly. I didn't want to wait until the very end to do that." **FS Michael Woods**

On Arkansas State "We have to get fired up just like the last game. They are a tough opponent just like New Mexico State. We have to come and prove something quickly in the game and set the tempo early. We're playing for at least a co-championship and want to get to a bowl game." "They have a big running back and a big, physical offensive line. We have to get off the blocks and make plays. It's not hard for us to get up right now because we know we have to be focused to get to a bowl game this year." **On last week's attendance** "It was disappointing. We need the support from the fans this week. We have to fight for fans and sometimes they lose interest when you lose a game." **WR David Youell**

On this week's game "We have a chance to be champions this week. It's all we play for. Everything is on the line just like it was last week. It's not difficult to put aside last week and get ready for this week because you can get a ring or go home." **On Arkansas State** "Defensively they run to the ball and are very physical and have some guys who will put their hat on you." **On teammate Kendall Newson** "I don't think there is an if about where Kendall will play in the NFL. He will play on Sundays because he can take his game to the next level, things like his leadership, his downfield blocking and not dropping passes. There really is no way to replace him. As his roommate, he has taught me so much this year. It's really hard to put into perspective how much I've learned from him this year."

