HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: Good afternoon, everybody. Thanks everybody for being here. We're just going to go right to questions if that's okay.

Q. Ciarrocca talked about how maybe the quarterbacks last year weren't reading read option, looked like Tanner was maybe a little bit more and had some success with it. How would describe the running game from quarterbacks and where you want to see it?

HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: From the quarterback perspective, you don't look at Tanner Morgan and think he's a running quarterback. He's a quarterback who can run, which I think there's a big difference. I think when he runs, it's an effective run. I don't think you're going to see a lot of big designed runs, quarterback power, quarterback counter, those types of things for him.

But he's effective enough and he's smart enough to be able to understand his reads and when he should pull it and when he should give it. I thought the one he pulled was perfect. He might only pull one or two a game at times, but he does it very effectively.

I thought he played a really good game. He's got to get better in a lot of areas. It's like a catcher calling a baseball game. There's some pitches you want back, and some calls maybe you want back, but other than that, I thought he handled himself in a very poised way for the entire game.

Q. You want to be a physical running team, kind of methodical, control the clock but in your mind, or have you told Kirk, when you have a Bateman -- X number of shots down the field?

HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: We only had 56 plays, which wasn't a lot for us. That's below our average of plays.

But when you look at it, they did a really good job, right, of giving us looks that we had not seen before, which you give them credit. They came in here, this was their huge game that they have been waiting three years, four years now, to play another Power Five team.

They came in here ready to go in terms of game plan-wise, putting us in positions that maybe we had not seen, and they took -- double-cover Ty Johnson, so 13 had a heck of a game and a big game.
Run game we have to be more consistent and we have to continue to be more physical. I think too many guys are trying to do too much instead of just their job on both sides of the ball, but you have to give them a lot of credit for having the right game plan and type of game plan they had; that every time we would adjust to one thing, there would be another thing that was maybe a little bit different.

Andy asked me that question before, preparing for ghosts. That's what that means is when you don't know what you're really going to get, and then when you get it, you have to adjust to and there's something else you don't know you're going to get, you have to adjust to that as you go through the game and takes you awhile to get caught up with that.

Last year to answer your question, we had Tyler Johnson. We didn't know about Rashod. We knew about Rashod, but nobody really knew about Rashod, and he was making plays that maybe surprised people.

Well, I don't think anybody is doing things that surprises anybody anymore. So now you have two weapons, plus you have Seth, plus you have your backs; the offensive line which has to continue to get better.

So we have a lot more options which I think it's going to -- as we keep going through, we kept it very basic and very simple in game one, but as we continue to go, I think you're going to be able to see us use everybody and use them in very creative ways.

Q. When you watch back the tape, what can you evaluate from the offensive line and how do guys like Daniel and Curtis have to get better before Fresno?
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: The way Daniel and Curtis get better is they have to play more. Curtis is a redshirt freshman. Daniel is on his third year playing football. They have got to be able play more.

They are going to continue to get better every single week, and that's where nobody is going to be as patient as I would want that to be able to look at, but that's the best five and six that we have; if you throw John Michael Schmitz in there; that's the best six we have.

How we are able to rotate that, move that as their performance goes, is based on them. But they have got to get better and there's some simple things we missed that we shouldn't miss. And there's some complex things they missed, and there's some complex things they did really well. But we've got to play cohesively better as a unit, way more physical.

And time with those guys is the No. 1 thing for them, which we don't have when they are
really young, right, so you've got to do everything you can, more film study and give them more looks and just continue to get them that much better every single day. You're not going to be able to jump to their senior year right now. They have to get this much better every single day and that's what we are going to keep focusing on.

Q. Talking about players doing too much or being overhyped, how do you go about dialing that back without overcorrecting?
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: You show them, show them exactly what you're talking about. It's one thing to tell a player something and to teach them on something. It's another thing to show him exactly what you're talking about, right, and you've got to match those.

You want your message to be able to match the video and match the performance, right, no matter what that is: Whether you're correcting or whether you're praising the model, it's got to match or you lose credibility, right.

And so I think what we need to be able to do is just to make sure that our guys understand that we have 11 guys on the field, especially on defense, that can all make plays. You don't have to make somebody else's play. But I like that. I like them being a little bit hungrier, trying to do too much, than have it the opposite way.

But that's what they were doing in my opinion watching the film, trying to do too much, trying to do somebody else's job; and not because they didn't know their job and didn't trust somebody else, it's just they were a little overzealous. I want to keep that edge, and it's just showing them exactly what we're talking about.

And I thought our players did a really good job in film study. They are very honest with themselves, and that's the key. I can sit there and say it till my face is blue. When they see it, they have to be honest with themselves.

Q. Do you do anything to adjust for the late kickoff time?
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: We're staying on Central time. So we won't adjust our clocks at all. We are heading out west. We have a lot of numerous -- heading out west, whether it's coaches from the past in terms of on our staff going through it, talking about it, having different schedules; we've done this before. We did it at Oregon State. We've done this numerous times.

I think it's best keeping them Central time. We'll fly out in the early afternoon, very early afternoon and spend as least amount of time as we possibly can, but again, when you look at it, the way I break it down to our players is listen, you just went through training camp and now it's hot.

And then two, all you're doing is flying in an airplane for four more hours. Other than
that, you're going to play football. Half of you just moved into a new dorm, anyway. So you're going to sleep in a different place. Well, you just slept in a different place yesterday.

Doing everything you can to make it as familiar as possible to make it not seem as big as other people make it seem. We because are doing everything we can to put in their heads what we want them to be able to see and you see it our way, but that's how we'll prepare for the trip. Hydration is absolutely critical, and we have already started that whole process with our nutritionists and things like that.

Q. How would you evaluate your linebacker play on Thursday night?
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: Average. Average. I think it was average. And I've got to be better. I've got to be a better football offensive coordinator and we have to be able to play better. It's very simple.

Again, going back to people trying to do too much. There's a lot of guys who got their shot to play the position that haven't played it yet, right and with Kamal being out. It's a little different than when you're practicing than when you're actually playing it, and playing it with live bullets and not having a lead of 30 points or something like that. There's a big difference.

But I thought -- I thought they played hard. Just didn't play the system correctly at times, which hurt us.

Q. Also getting lined up, around the goal line --
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: On the goal line when they hurried up, which we've covered, that's -- I could have burned a time-out here and there -- that's on me, if they didn't get lined up quick enough.

But we worked on that this past week. We've worked on all of that. And again, did some things that they haven't shown, which we have got to be ready to go. And again, we weren't.

Q. Did Rodney look like the old Rodney to you?
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: I think he looked closer to the old Rodney as possible, yes. We had a scrimmage kind of halfway through training camp and I remember watching that, and Rodney being very honest with himself, that didn't look like Rodney. It was the first time really taking live bullets in terms of going through and getting tackled and having those live reps.

But when you look at where he was in the scrimmage to where he is now, I think it's night and day. The scrimmage, you can tell he's very hesitant. Didn't really want to make those cuts. Didn't make them as hard as he usually does, and he's really bought
into that and bought into his body in terms of trusting it a lot more, and he looked like it.

He had his burst back, and that's the biggest thing, especially the way he accelerates on contact and I thought he had that back.

Again, they always say, it still takes a full year for everything to feel the same way, and we're right about that time for him. But I thought he played well. Did he play as good as he could play? Probably not. Like all of us, I. Just think that with game one, I didn't think we played as well as we could, so just too inconsistent in every position. But he looked like he was getting back to him.

Q. Johnson is going to be a focus for opposing teams. Is there a next step -- fight through those double teams, or can you win with him getting three, four catches a game?
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: We have to be able to -- even when you're going to your game plan, you don't know how anybody is going to play, either, right. Especially when you don't have any type of film and any type of -- when you're sitting there saying what are they actually going to give us against us and how are they going to be able to do that.

Usually once you get during the season, you can start to see how people play. But they mixed it up a ton. But the biggest thing they were going to do, they were going to take Tyler Johnson out of the game, and you have to give them a lot of credit because they did the best they could.

Now we had two drops, right, which are going to extend drives, which gets us more plays and opportunities to get him the ball. He's just going to have to be able to understand that for us game plan-wise, we're going to have to put him in a position where he can't do that, or it's going to hurt you in the run game, right.

But he's going to be able to have to make some plays in a lot of -- his spatial awareness is going to have to be better. He's going to have to be able to make plays in chaotic situations and have people around him a lot more than maybe he did even last year, but that's going to represent Rashod. That's going to represent the running game and that's going to help everybody else, and I think we're going to see how that unfolds as how we keep going forward of how people continue to defend us.

Q. When Blaise was called for the blind side hit, it was at a critical time, fourth and four, trailing by one, but you were pretty composed after that call. Why was that something you were taking in stride at the plank (ph)?
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: I work on myself every day (Laughter). Just like players are always evolving, coaches are always evolving, right. I'm getting -- I can't say I'm getting older, but I am. You're getting wiser and you know what your team needs on the sideline.
But that call there's nothing you can do about that point and whether I agreed or disagreed with it, that's irrelevant. I think the blind side block is in play for all the right reasons. It's just got to be -- I think when we're calling it, it's made for those big hits that people see. Maybe not when two people are running towards each other. That's hard. That's a harder one to call I think.

But there's a reason why it's in, a reason why the official saw it and a reason why the official threw it. We use it as a learning experience, and then be able to move on.

This team learns really well. We didn't have many penalties but we had penalties that are really costly. That was one of them. And then we had a holding call on Sam Renner, which it's 20-7 at that point, but you get a holding call on the defensive hold, but they also have a holding call.

Now all of a sudden it's second and 12 for them, and we get the ball back at midfield and maybe go down and make it 27-7 and now it's a different ballgame. It came at really critical times, but we weren't penalized a lot.

I'm proud of our team for the discipline they showed and they should be proud of that, but there's also some things we've got to continue to work on. We won the turnover margin which we needed to do but we've got to expand that as we keep going.

Q. One turnover, did Tanner stare that guy down?
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: It's interesting when a guy throws an interception because the first question we always ask is what did you do. The last thing you want to do is start telling what he should have saw because you're not on the field.

I think Mike Leach said it last week or two weeks ago. He said, "All do I is give suggestions. The plays are suggestions to the quarterback." I thought that was -- it was awesome. It's almost genius the way you saw that. I give the suggestion and you're the on the field, you get to pick.

But with Tanner, it was very similar. He thought could he fit it in there. I thought he didn't see the guy. He goes, "No, I thought I could fit it in there." So he obviously saw it and thought he could fit it in there.

Now he knows, you can't touch the stove, right and if he had waited just a split second to let him pass he wouldn't be able to hit him for a big play. Again, those are the things that you go back on film and watch and you can correct, but I appreciate his aggressiveness, but I didn't know what he was going to say, and he said, "I thought I could fit it in there." Now he knows.
The one thing about him is he responds really well. Tanner is really good at letting the play go, good or bad. He’s got those intangibles and that’s what makes him unique and different and a six foot quarterback playing in the Big Ten because he’s got this intangible level of being able to respond to certain things that happen; that he just moves on, and that’s what you want from your quarterback.

Q. What do you take away from Fresno’s game as you face another quarterback?
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: They are really good. That’s what I took away. They are really good. Finished 18th in the country, 12-2. I think when people look back to the win we had here, you beat Fresno State, and they are a group of five team. That’s uneducated, right, when people say things like that because that was a big time Top-25 team. They were that close from representing the group of five.

So they have got a really good quarterback. He can run. He can throw. He likes to be on the move. They have got some guys with speed on the outside that can really run. Their tight end is a big part of what they do, similar to last year. Might have lost their coordinator to Indiana, but when you look at what Tedford has been able to do offensively that doesn’t matter.

They haven't missed a beat. They have the ball with right around two minutes to go to beat USC, and that's impressive, so they are a tough group of guys. Their defense is very similar to last year, very aggressive, great tacklers, all play really well within the system, especially up front with their inside -- their inside guys, very powerful, very explosive. They create a lot of havoc inside, and they force you to beat them.

USC had to go beat them. And that's -- they came down to the last play, they are a very talented football team. They have great special teams work and players, well-coached, it's a very good football team.

Q. What did you think of the kicking game and are you going to stick with Lance?
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: Yeah, it was inconsistent. There's a lot of freshmen kickers all over the country. I look at perspective all the time. I give our players perspective the best I possibly can. In terms of everything, right. So in the last 12 years, there were 99 FCS teams that beat FBS teams and I gave our players that stat, so they don't know that it's just -- for the last week, it's not just South Dakota State coming in here. That was a huge game for them, one of the biggest games they played in and we were going to get everything they got.

Then when you look seven points, or a win or a loss, but the game ended within seven points, it's 210 games over the last 12 years with FCS and FBS when you look at that. That's crazy statistics. When our kickers didn't do -- or Michael Lance misses the extra point which is huge, and maybe we didn't perform the best we possibly can on our
specialists, you go back to: Hey, listen, there's a lot of people who didn't perform very well. We just need you to perform better. You're not the only one that did this, okay.

A lot of freshman that come in -- we don't have Carpenter anymore. There's a new era, we're going to have to develop into our kickers, develop with them, help them grow, teach them, get them to be really confident on the field and again the same way just like the offensive line they need experience and get out there and play and get out there and kick, miss some, make some, and that's the only way you grow, experience.

When somebody becomes a junior and senior and you look at the Patriots why they always go back to the Super Bowl, it's experience. Experience matters. But I'm very, very proud of how they responded in practice the last two days. Very proud of how they have done that, but we just got to be more consistent and then we got to be more consistent in the coverage teams and they know that.

The one thing I like about this team is you can tell them the facts and you can tell them the reality and they don't take it personal. They know it, they see it and then they want to fix it, which has been fun. That's why I said it's a fun group to coach because they are not resisting the growth.

Q. I heard on the radio you said Carter was limited in practice. Was he dealing with the same thing he was early in camp?
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: Similar. Similar.

Q. Dunlap and Williamson missed some time during the game --
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: Yeah, they are fine. They are back.

Q. A lot of teams probably didn't play the way they wanted to in that first week. In your experience, from one to two, is that where you see seems kind of look more like themselves or what you think you're going to be?
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: Well, you want to. I've always believed that it doesn't matter if it's one to two, two to three, three to four, five to -- four to five, five to six.

To me, you've got to grow every week. You're an ever-evolving team, from game one all the way through whatever your last game is and each week you've got to get better. You've always got to get better at certain things.

I do everything I can to focus on our players, hey, what do you mean get better. We focus on one to two things every week that that position group's got to get better at for the next week.

Then you play the next week, and there are certain things, maybe you fixed that, but now this is an issue. We wouldn't have a job if we didn't have anything to coach. There's
always something to coach and there's always something to get better at and that's
where players have to have that open mind of I'm constantly growing, constantly
changing and that's why we say failing is growth, change is constant, it's going to
constantly come up and you have to be okay with change.

So for us, we have to get better at all those things, I'd like to see an improvement from
week one to week two in a lot of different areas. Every coach in America wants to.

But to say your best comes between that, I don't know if I necessarily believe that. I
have seen incredible growth from seven to eight, eleven to twelve, last year would be an
example for the second half of the season.

But we just want to focus on the smaller things we need to get better at, the details, the
fundamentals of what we didn't do because it wasn't a lot of schematic issues. It was
just us trying to do a little too much at times. We just want us to be our best version of
ourselves.

Q. What are you focussing on on the offensive and offensive line to be better at
the line of scrimmage against Fresno State?
HEAD COACH P.J. FLECK: Defensively we have to be able to get off and separate and
on the offensive line, we have to be able to finish. Simple, right. It's one thing about
blocking your guy. It's another thing about blocking your guy through the whistle and
knowing what gap you're in and being able to dominate your gap and own your gap on
defense and that's what we have to be able to do better as we go into Fresno State.