

# Big Ten Football Media Days

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## Michigan Wolverines

### Coach Jim Harbaugh

#### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the head coach of Michigan, Jim Harbaugh.

COACH HARBAUGH: Wonderful to see everybody, start of a new football season. Seems like we just finished the season and we're starting another one. Honored to be here.

As Dave mentioned, really the offseason has been one of work for our entire football program. Our players have had a tremendous offseason and look forward to starting practice on the 2nd.

**Q. J.J. McCarthy has been in the fire for two straight years now. What would be the next logical steps for him this season as a quarterback?**

COACH HARBAUGH: Well, talking about J.J. McCarthy, the first year he played, he played as a true freshman in games sparingly, became a full-time starter in 2022. I have searched my memory for somebody who has been a first-time starter and had a better first year as a first-time starter and I can't come up with one.

He's a once-in-a-generational type of quarterback at Michigan, and his progress continues to grow. Daily he's at the top of his game right now, really in all aspects. Everything that he does athletically, everything that he does throwing the football are at the elite level, and then I think the thing that makes him the most special, differentiating good and great, is that he's willing to do anything for his teammates, anything for his team.

I think some compare him to Patrick Mahomes, Josh Allen, would be two. And I know there's others that have that level of talent plus the quarterback position willing to do anything for their team.

I base that off of watching the way that Patrick Mahomes interacts with his teammates, what he says about his teammates, what they say about him. Josh Allen, what he says about his teammates, what they say about him. So just looking through the keyhole that way. But that's what I

see in J.J. McCarthy every single day.

**Q. Ryan Day yesterday said he thinks there should be a conversation of playing the Ohio State-Michigan State game earlier in the year. What's your opinion on that?**

COACH HARBAUGH: We'll play that whenever it's scheduled to be played. We know we're going to play it every season at least once. I don't have a particular opinion of when it should be played. Right now it's played the last game of the season. I think everybody's used to that. It's part of the Thanksgiving tradition now. So that's when we'll expect it.

**Q. I think it was three or four years ago here at this event you were the first coach that I knew that proposed a one-time transfer. And now, in the category of perhaps of a watch what you wish for, looking at where it is right now, how would you evaluate the transfer portal, how the NIL is working into that, and is the 60 days too much availability, the 45 days right after the season, then you have that April 13th to April 30th, is that too much to deal with as a program of players going in and out?**

COACH HARBAUGH: So three years ago, four years ago when I talked about that, the main reason was -- I mean, the only sports that you could not transfer without penalty were football, men's basketball, women's basketball, and I believe hockey was the fourth. I remember there were four. And every other sport could choose what was best for them and best for their families.

So now we have that in football. A young man can choose what's best for him and his family. However many years we're in on that now, I would say so far so good and no need to change. Surely we need more data.

Of all the players that I've talked to -- so the ones that were on our team that went into the portal, good thing. Those that came from the portal to our team, they categorized it as a good thing. And at least it was their decision -- their decision and their family's decision. Even when I talk to our own players who haven't gone into the portal, asked



them what do you think of the portal, and they say does more good than it is negative.

I think that's a tremendous way to categorize it at least from my view from the players' view of who I've talked to. And certainly too soon to change it.

**Q. I want to know, where do things stand with the NCAA investigation and your own situation, if there's any discipline that's been agreed upon or where things are right now.**

COACH HARBAUGH: As you probably already know, I'm not allowed to talk about any aspect of that ongoing situation. I'm with you, I would love to lay it all out there. Nothing to be ashamed of. But now is not that time. That's about all there is to say about that.

**Q. This is more of a contextual question to the last two seasons, but you talked about what J.J. had been through. How much of a benefit was it for him to learn from a guy like Cade McNamara? And in what ways did you see Cade push J.J. and help him get to where he is now?**

COACH HARBAUGH: So many great ways. I remember being here last year at this time, going into this training camp with two players that were starter caliber. And I love the way they competed. It was never combative.

J.J. saw everything in the way Cade would compete and grind. He wasn't there -- my most memorable moment with Cade was the 2020 game, we're at Rutgers, we're down 17 points and he went into the game. And it was just like the spark, throwing the ball with no conscience and just playing free.

And from that moment on that was the player he was. I remember he got a big hit right before halftime, too. And then just gravel in his gut went out there. Love Cade and certainly J.J. was in the same quarterback room and saw all those same attributes. It was tremendous.

Now, there are going to be some situations like that this year. As I go into training camp this year -- and now at the quarterback position, J.J. he's our quarterback.

But there's other positions where it's going to be very similar to having two starting players and then watching it unfold, who is going to start. We're going to play the best players. How do we know who the best players are? They play the best.

I see that at corner. One of the starting corner position, Amorion Walker, Josh Wallace, Ja'Den McBurrows, some

other very fine players, newcomers. But I think it will come down to a situation where will Mikey be a starter? Will Johnson be a starter? And then we've got, who is that other starter, whether it's at nickel or corner? And it may training camp. It may take into the first couple of games. Probably the same thing at edge rusher, the edge position.

I see four really good edge players there, at least, and probably going to witness the same situation there that may go into the game one, game two, very similar to what we saw last year at the quarterback position.

And there's some other type battles. Offensive line, I look at 10 guys right now that are starter caliber.

Our running back situation is two great players, Dono and Blake, Blake and Dono. It doesn't get any better. I could go through the tight end position, Colston Loveland. I know I'm on camera. So the longer it takes him to realize how good he is, the better off he'll probably be. But I think the secret's out, he is really, really good.

AJ Barner has been a great addition to our team. We'll have two really great players there. Matt Hibner. Max Bredeson, four outstanding guys. Marlin Klein's coming. Pretty much I could go through our roster right now and paint a similar picture.

We do this thing called KPIs, Key Performance Indicators. It's about 47, 48 categories, strength and power, speed and agility, flexibility, mobility, and every guy is always trying to up their grade.

By far, I look at this offseason and the work that's been put in and just seeing those key performance indicators just rise weekly and monthly. Excited, very excited to turn that loose and start training camp.

I think our team's as healthy as you could ask for. Very talented and extremely hard work ethic, and not one of them wants to hear about what they did last year or the last two years; it's always: Coach, we're doing it again, doing it now, and now is the time that matters. That's the kind of attitude and effort and talent we're taking into the start of this training camp.

**Q. Running back salaries have been talked about a lot in the NFL over the last couple of weeks. With Blake's decision to come back, how much is that part of the conversation when you're talking to running backs and how they get paid at the next level?**

COACH HARBAUGH: Has it been part of the conversation? Blake said he's coming back. I mean, it was pull it in, pull it down, that made my day. Made my

week. Made my offseason.

What he shared with me was he wanted the full offseason. He wanted to be able to get not even back to where he was but better, stronger, faster, quicker than where he was. He wanted that season.

And then when it was time for him to go into the NFL, he wanted to be able to go in fully prepared with a full workout leading up to those combines and to that draft.

And when that time comes, I mean, nobody's going to get a better guy. They're not going to get a better more talented player. They're definitely not going to get a player that works harder or cares more or is more of an infectious, positive to his teammates in terms of being a leader.

Heck, the three guys that are here, Kris Jenkins, Mike Sainristil, Blake Corum, each one of those three are walking, talking billboards for how you should attack each day with an enthusiasm unknown to mankind and it's infectious on our team.

I think Blake's in a great place. Everything he thought of, everything he visualized in terms of where he would be right now. He's well trained, well thought out, and he's in a great place.

**Q. Perhaps building off that last question, there was one more year fund designed to retain four players including Blake, what was it like to have that campaign designed to retain key players from last year's championship game in the Big Ten?**

COACH HARBAUGH: I'd have to say we support our collective. Former player Jared Wangler, everybody that cares about Michigan, can't wait, have a great golf tournament coming up on July 31st, and looking forward to building on that.

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