

Big Ten Conference Football Championship Game: Purdue vs Michigan

Sunday, December 4, 2022

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Michigan Wolverines

Lucas Oil Stadium

Coach Jim Harbaugh

J.J. McCarthy

Donvan Edwards

Postgame Press Conference

Michigan Wolverines - 43, Purdue Boilermakers-22

JIM HARBAUGH: First, I would like to thank the parents of the Michigan Wolverine players for raising such tremendous young men. Not just these two super sophs right here, but all of them.

They just help us win in every way on the field, off the field, through perseverance, character, and mostly love. It's been that kind of a team. It's beyond culture. It's a brotherhood. Just truly.

I've talked about it being a happy mission, not a grim mission. It's been a mission of God. I want to thank our parents for how they've raised these youngsters. I mean, they are amazing. Parents, what they've poured into these young men from such an early age. Esteeming them when they're young and all the practices and everything they drove them to and took them to. Just the support and love that they give them.

It's an amazing group of players, and I just want the parents to take a deep long bow for the kind of young men that they've raised.

Q. Jim, the common thread in your big games is the big rushing yards in the second half. It's kind of off the charts. Talk about everything that goes into your running game in the second half of these big games.

JIM HARBAUGH: It's a really good game plan. It's a really good offensive line, and it's been -- I mean, this guy has 401 yards in the last two games. You want to talk about big games? This guy comes alive in the big games.



And Blake Corum has been a warrior too that same way. But, I mean, those are two supreme backs, Blake Corum and Donovan Edwards.

This guy, when it's a big game, I mean, his whole career, whether it was high school, college now, I mean, he just hits another gear. He takes off to another level.

And J.J., I mean, he does the same thing in the running game. I mean, pretty dynamic two guys right there. And credit to a lot of places, you know? But, yeah, that's what I would say.

You do. That's who you are (laughing). 401 yards in the last two games, amazing.

Q. Jim just mentioned it, but, J.J., could you speak to the last couple of weeks and winning without Blake and just leaning on other people to get the job done on the ground game?

J.J. MCCARTHY: It's just next man up mentality. That's something that we preach no matter who goes down or what position goes down. But at the end of the day it's like Coach Harbaugh said, it's a brotherhood that leans on each other.

No matter what happens, no matter what adversity we face, we're always going to get through it together with that perseverance he talked about.

It just shows up week by week. Yeah, it would be amazing to have Blake, and it would do wonders for us, but at the end of the day it's next man up, and we're just going to lean on each other and get through it.

JIM HARBAUGH: I'll just add to that. Blake is so good, it's not a next man up, but when this is the next man up, it's that good (laughing). And they're only sophomores.

Q. Yes, Jim, you guys are 25-2, two Big Ten championships, two rivalry wins since the COVID season. Did having that losing record -- you've obviously had great success before that, but did that



change anything about you as a coach that's led to this tremendous success the last two seasons?

JIM HARBAUGH: No. I mean, I don't think so. I don't think I've changed one bit. I mean, I'm the same as I was before, am now. I think when you get to this age, you're not going to change.

But I really think it's the players. I think the players really appreciated that as well, that there was no change. We made it about the guys on the team, about getting good at football. I mean, I can guarantee you Ben Herbert hasn't changed any of the five years that he has been here.

I point to these two guys. I mean, when they came in, they said, Coach, we're winning the Big Ten Championship. We're beating Ohio State, and we got it.

I think that combination of not changing, I think the guys appreciated that deep down. You know, having these guys that like football, you know? They like football. They like training. They enjoy each other's company. I mean, there's not a day that goes by that either of these two guys have had a bad day.

I mean, they like to -- I'll speak for them, but I think they like the direction of the program. They like the program. They like the opportunity in the program, and I like them back a lot. I'm proud of them, so proud of them.

And talking about J.J. and Donovan, but talking about the entire squad. I mean, every guy to a man. So, I'll probably step out and let you talk to these guys. Otherwise, I'll get a little emotional (laughing). Is that okay?

J.J. McCARTHY: We love it, Coach.

JIM HARBAUGH: Love you. Thank you.

Q. Jim talked about the parents and how it helped him -- how it helped you guys become a better family overall. What do you guys feel like Jim Harbaugh has done to both of you guys and your fellow student-athletes as a father figure to help you grow in your career and education and football?

DONOVAN EDWARDS: You know, he is a great coach. As he just said, he has never changed. Every single day is just like he comes in the same person. Like since my recruitment I haven't seen him change. Not once.

Like, he just shows us tremendous love. You know? He speaks so highly of us, and it's just, like, it makes you want to play for him. You know? Yeah, it's like you want to play for Coach Harbaugh.

J.J. McCARTHY: I would just say, like, that consistency is something that's really hard to find. That's a guy who has got it.

And everything he does from just a leadership standpoint, a problem-solver standpoint, he is to the T. Like Donovan said, it's just genuine, true love. He really does love us like his own sons, and he means that, and that just means a lot because there's a lot of college football coaches out there that just think of their players as numbers. He sees us for the human beings that we are, and it's just -- you couldn't ask for anything better out of your head coach.

DONOVAN EDWARDS: I'm going to add one more thing to that. J.J. said he will do anything for us. One of our teammates had a kid, and he said that he would take the kid in, you know, like raise him up.

It's just the type of guy that Coach Harbaugh is. He is a loving guy and a charismatic guy. He has a lot of enthusiasm to him, and he knows how to lead this program.

Q. For both players, you've won the Big Ten twice in a row. Going back to the playoff. I assume that experience will help. What do you think about your chances going forward?

J.J. McCARTHY: I love our chances. Last year it was kind of the bright lights, everything was new, Big Ten Championship, College Football Playoff. Going into the offseason it gave us so much momentum, and we knew that we could get there, and we could get back. Ultimately, this whole offseason it was about winning it.

So at the end of the day everything is great that happened today, but job is not finished. We've got a lot bigger plans in mind.

DONOVAN EDWARDS: Everything he just said.

Q. J.J., for you I have a nice picture of you here with Aidan O'Connell. He has had a tough week with losing his brother. Can you speak from a quarterback's perspective about his toughness that he demonstrated on the field today?

J.J. McCARTHY: Yeah, I shot him a DM earlier last week, just sending my love and prayers to him and his family. He is from Illinois, and that means a lot just seeing him and what he has done this year and what he has done through his whole career. That kid is a fighter. He is a fighter, from the get-go he stepped on campus.

I was just so proud to see him go out there and do his thing and play the sport that he loves, and he didn't shake one bit.

I mean, that quarterback fraternity, especially like us Illinois QBs, we stick together. We're tight-knit. I love that guy. I truly do. I'm right beside him with everything he stands for, and I'm just really excited to see what he does with the rest of his career.

DONOVAN EDWARDS: I'm sorry. If I could add, I didn't know that his brother that died, and I want to send my wishes and my prayers to his family and to him as well.

Q. Donovan, in the first half I think you had 37 rushing yards. You finished with 185 tonight. Big second half. Big second half at Ohio State. What is it about crunch time that really gets you going in games?

DONOVAN EDWARDS: Like Coach Harbaugh said, I believe, you know, I rise to those occasions. I thrive for that. Excuse me. You know, it's just easy too when I have tremendous teammates that I call my brothers around me. You know, they show me love. They believe in me.

Also, too, I believe, like, I'm made for the big moments, you know?

Q. J.J., I know you were there last year in Miami on the field at the end of the game. Donovan, I believe you may have been as well.

DONOVAN EDWARDS: Yeah, I was.

Q. When Georgia was celebrating, you guys stood there and really took it in. How much did that drive you, and how much does that continue to motivate you as you now find yourselves on the verge of being able to compete in that same game again this year?

J.J. McCARTHY: Me personally I feel like it drove me so much that this victory tonight doesn't really feel like anything. That's something that's really hard to come by.

I mean, back-to-back Big Ten Championships is amazing, but just that feeling that we had last year, this is just in the way of making sure that feeling never happens again.

And, yeah, it was just a drive and a fire inside of us that was just ignited, and it's still burning.

Q. For both of you guys. How would you feel about a possible rematch against Ohio State?

DONOVAN EDWARDS: I mean, you know, I don't really

know. You know, we play who is on the schedule. It doesn't matter who the opponent is. We're going to play whoever is on the schedule.

J.J. McCARTHY: Please. Please. Bring it on. That would be truly a blessing if we get a shot to play those boys again.

Q. J.J., I don't know how much you guys faced Will Johnson in practice. Two picks today, ball-hawking. Is that what he is like in practice, or what have you seen that he has developed like that?

J.J. McCARTHY: 100%. I mean, he is a freshman that came in that he didn't play like a freshman, and he just had so much God-given ability that was backed up with his tremendous work ethic and his skills.

I mean, his skills are top of the charts. I just can't wait to see him keep growing, keep grooming into the great player that he is going to become. I mean, every day in practice is just a blessing to go up against that guy because he really is the truth. He really is.

Q. J.J., from the start of the season there was you working to get the starting quarterback position against Cade McNamara to start things off, and he accomplished the same thing that you guys just accomplished this year last year. And now to get to this point yourself as one of the leaders of this team this season, just talk about that journey to get to this moment as yourself being the starter and really helping to lead this team to a lot of success.

J.J. McCARTHY: Yeah, the journey has definitely been a roller coaster. Just going back to my injury in the offseason and then obviously the competition with Cade. Cade is a great quarterback. A lot of it at the beginning of the year and fall camp was just focused on trying to beat him out.

Then once I did, it was like, okay, now we have games to win. It was just that constant kind of -- a bunch of obstacles that just made me improve in every way I possibly can.

So I was just super blessed to have that opportunity to be able to compete with a great quarterback like that, but ultimately it's the team around me. I mean, it's the team around him that brought us to this position, and we couldn't have done it without the other 140-some guys.

Q. This is for both Donovan and J.J. Talk about your offensive line, and you've been talking about them all season, but what they did tonight and how they wear

people down and the confidence you have in them.

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DONOVAN EDWARDS: I have 100% confidence in my line, our line. I love those boys to death, and they play a full complete football game, you know, and that just makes it easier.

They have trust in me. They have trust in J.J. and everybody else on the team. So, I mean, it's just easy running behind those boys.

J.J. McCARTHY: It's something we just expect every week because they put it out every week. I mean, I'll say it and keep saying it. Best offensive line in the country, hands down.

We're able to pass and run as efficiently as we've been doing all year, and it's all because of them.

DONOVAN EDWARDS: That's right. Hey, please give them the Joe Moore Award, again, please.

J.J. McCARTHY: They deserve it.

DONOVAN EDWARDS: Come on now, quit playing with them.

Q. For both of you guys, Purdue is only an hour away, and yet this game almost felt like a home game. For you guys, what was that experience like in that atmosphere, kind of in a home-away-from-home kind of a setting?

DONOVAN EDWARDS: You know, it's kind of -- this is basically -- I would say this is our home too, you know? We've been here last year, this year, and when we did our walk-through yesterday, it was just like, yeah, this is -- like, this is our home right here.

So, you know, we were, like, completely comfortable because a bunch of us, like, have already played here last year, so it was just another day in the office.

J.J. McCARTHY: I think it speaks testament to our fan base. Now it's the greatest fan base in the country. They travel. We're out Northeast playing at Rutgers, and it feels like a home game.

DONOVAN EDWARDS: That's true.

J.J. McCARTHY: They do such an amazing job supporting us, and we can't thank them enough. Appreciate y'all.

DONOVAN EDWARDS: You all have a great rest of your night.

