

# College Football Playoff

## Media Conference

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Grapevine, Texas, USA

### Ohio State Buckeyes

### Haskell Garrett

CFP Media Conference



COLLEGE FOOTBALL  
**PLAYOFF**

**Q. Haskell, all year, especially later in the year, we've really seen how talented this defensive line is. How has practicing against a talented front every day helped you guys progress throughout the season?**

HASKELL GARRETT: You know, it's a great opportunity and it's a great look to go against the best. Iron sharpens iron, and going against guys like Wyatt Davis and Josh Myers, Harry Miller and those guys, our attack with Thayer Munford and Nick Petit get us ready for games and to play in big-time moments.

**Q. Kerry Coombs said one of the things he's loved about this season is just how resilient you guys are. What's that been like as one of the team's leaders to know the guy next to you might not be there each week and somebody might be coming back? How do you maintain the leadership ability that you've been known for?**

HASKELL GARRETT: You know, every week me and Coop -- as long as me and Coop are okay and we keep the spirits high in the defense and in our unit, that's all that matters really. We know if we're okay, the rest of the guys are okay, and they feed off of us. We be the Energizer Bunnies for the -- not only for the defense, but for the guys in the room. Whether a guy goes down due to injury or COVID, next guy is up and we're coaching those guys, those young guys, and so it's always been -- it's not about replacing, it's about reloading.

**Q. How far have you seen Taron Vincent come over the last six, seven games? I know it took a while for him to get on the field, injuries and stuff like that, but what's he giving you guys now?**

HASKELL GARRETT: Taron is giving us his all. Everything that he was in high school, he's better now. I don't think anybody has really realized that Taron came off an injury and started playing right away. He had a major surgery in the summertime, and then literally had a little

time to get ready and rehab and got ready for it.

Taron is doing a great -- an outstanding job in my opinion at that position.

**Q. Haskell, you guys are coming off another good performance against the run and you really kind of bottled up Travis Etienne pretty well. How is the Najee Harris challenge similar and how is it different as far as trying to stop him?**

HASKELL GARRETT: Najee is a great running back. I remember seeing him in high school when we were at the opening. Great, dynamic running back, very powerful, big running back, great speed.

Like, again, we have a challenge ahead of us. When you get into this March Madness your talent is going to equate, and so it's just how well you're going to execute, like Coach Day says, and be able to execute the game plan.

We have a great challenge ahead of us and he's a great running back, and he brings a lot of different versatile dynamic to their offense.

**Q. This offensive line just won the Joe Moore Award for the best offensive line in the country, and you may disagree, it sounded like Pete did, but the challenge of going against an offensive line that is that good, is that something that excites you guys as a defensive line, gets you going? Not to take away anything from other guys, but just to play against what is considered the top offensive line in the country? Does that give you a little more animated for this game?**

HASKELL GARRETT: You know, we've got to play our best. This offensive line that we're playing, if they're the best, they're the best. That just makes me more excited. You want to play the best.

They're a great offensive line, very athletic, very fast, very big O-line. I'm more than excited.

I don't think there's anything to motivate yourself that you need to be motivated to play a great offense and offensive line.

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**Q. With the line of scrimmage, and obviously that was such a big key for you guys in beating Clemson in the semifinals, how big do you think that is once again here to have a chance to beat Alabama?**

HASKELL GARRETT: It'll be won in the trenches, no doubt. Games like this will be won up front. If you can't move offensive and defensive lines then you have no chance at winning in my opinion.

You know, offensive linemen and defensive linemen are unsung heroes, so we might not get the glamorous, the flash, but it's won up front. The better front is going to win this game.

**Q. Could you speak to the communication skills and the ability to teach and what makes Larry Johnson unique that way?**

HASKELL GARRETT: What do you mean by --

**Q. Well, there's coaches and coaches. What makes Larry Johnson a good teacher? I'm assuming he's a good teacher and good at teaching technique especially, communicating.**

HASKELL GARRETT: I'd say each year it's something different. He puts his flavor on that D-line he has that year and what he wants to get done. The way that he teaches is very clear. It's very straightforward. He doesn't do all the rah-rah. He touches your soul.

**Q. What do you mean by that?**

HASKELL GARRETT: He touches your soul as in like when you give -- it's to the point where like I trust him in anything and I believe in it. Once you believe in him and everything that he is telling you and teaching you, it'll make your game excel, and I think that it's a true testament to who he is.

When he gives you his word and you trust in it, the sky's the limit.

**Q. Knowing what you went through before you even got into a game this year and what you had to come back from, does you and the Buckeyes making it this far make it even sweeter for you personally this year?**

HASKELL GARRETT: Yeah, not only as the team faced adversity, but I myself -- every guy has faced different adversities and has a different path within themselves and us as a team. Everybody's sacrifice and willingness to go through trials and tribulations this season alone will make it

all worth it.

**Q. I want to ask you about Tyreke Smith. He's always been a guy who's flashed and shown that ability, but it seems like the last -- late in the season he's really become more consistent and a dominant force. What have you seen in him and his development?**

HASKELL GARRETT: You know, I mean, I think we've become more tight knit as a D-line. The ends are kind of -- they do their thing and they have their own check-downs, but I feel like just overall -- usually me and Tommy are on the same page, and now the ends have become more tied in with the inside guys, whereas there used to be kind of a disconnect because they have their own reads.

But now almost every guy knows every position, even the inside guys. So the connection there has allowed us and allowed him to play faster. His knowledge of the game has enhanced, and he knows when he has one-on-ones, when he doesn't, and what is behind him and where his hope is.

I feel that with more games go on he's becoming more dominant. It's a true testament to how he's playing.

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