

College Football Playoff Media Conference

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Coach Jim Harbaugh

CFP Media Conference

BRETT DANIELS: I'd like to welcome everyone to today's call. We are joined this morning by head coach Jim Harbaugh, University of Michigan, Rose Bowl champions.

Coach, I'd like to turn it over to you for any opening remarks and then some Q & A.

JIM HARBAUGH: Thank you, Mr. Daniels. On behalf of the 2023 Michigan Wolverine football team I just want to say to you how delighted and excited we are and appreciative to be playing in this game.

Very much looking forward to a great week of preparation. It's going to need to be. I want to congratulate Washington on a tremendous season. Coach Kalen DeBoer, tremendous, fantastic job that he has done in a short period of time at Washington.

Their entire football team looks real tough to beat right now. We are in full preparation mode to get ourselves ready for this game.

Q. Just wanted to speak to you about the mindset coming off of such an emotional high, 25, 26 years in the making, but you guys at the same time have talked about the one-track mind towards the National Championship. Can you speak to the last 24 hours and how you guys have enjoyed that moment but also pivoted toward Washington?

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, it was a glorious victory. Just so proud of our players and our team. The things that jump out are just how we responded in the pressure moments, in the pressure times, offense, defense, special teams, and rose to the occasion.

Tremendous play during the pressure moments of the game. Yeah, happy flight home, and really focused the last 24 hours on rest for the players. I figure that's going to be very important for this week, especially traveling back from the West Coast. Spend today, tomorrow, the next day, Friday we fly to Houston, and we'll continue our



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preparations there.

Q. I know you're in the here and now, but thoughts on this being possibly a future Big Ten match-up for championships for years to come with the match-up of two future Big Ten opponents?

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, I guess I have thought about that. I'm thinking more about the here and now for sure.

Taking a look at Washington, they're an outstanding football team, and as we said, just a very one-track mind of today, getting our team prepared, get them back moving around, but also schematically on to what Washington does and preliminary plans for pretty in our game plan.

Q. With scanning y'all's roster, with y'all coming to Texas and Houston, you have some Texans on your roster but most of them are from the Dallas area. And just speak to the importance of recruiting Texas, as well.

JIM HARBAUGH: Well, great love for Texas, Texas football, and tremendous respect. It goes back to my -- it actually goes back to my playing days. I'll tell you that story sometime.

But yeah, one of the finest areas for football. No argument there.

Q. Is there a certain connection to Dallas you have, because you have so many players right from that Dallas area?

JIM HARBAUGH: Just about everywhere. There's Michigan graduates, alumni all over the country, all over the world. Yeah, personally have many friends in Dallas, guys I was close with before, gotten to know many of the coaches and their families very well in the Dallas area.

Houston, too. I've got a lot of good history in Houston. Got some known friends and trusted agents from Houston, as well.

Q. Obviously high praise from JJ in the postgame the other night. What impressed you most about his



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demeanor and his command when you guys were down a touchdown, he leads that drive to tie the game. I know he hasn't had a ton of chances to do that because you guys are typically ahead in the second half.

JIM HARBAUGH: Well, like I said, the pressure moments, I thought our team handled extremely well, as well as they can be handled.

JJ, tremendous in the way he handled the pressure moments in the ballgame. I'm really proud of -- there was a few guys that had a bad play in the game. JJ, first play of the game, he's clearly throwing the ball away, and I can tell you having made a bad play in a football game, it's like a train going through your head of -- I mean, you see red. It's like a deafening siren.

There's a lot of guys that will hang their head and go in the tank or get that deer-in-the-headlights look, but every guy that had that happen to them in our game came back and made a phenomenal play. Kris Jenkins had a bad play early in the game; came back, dominated in his block destruction.

JJ had the ball he should've thrown away that was a look pick -- looked like it was a pick and then it was reversed. That was the first play of the game. Dropped punt, comes back and makes catches. We had a bad snap, and then that snap and hold has to be perfect and kick made or else we don't go into overtime.

So many plays that could point to -- I'm just really proud of those guys. Roman Wilson had a block in the back that could have cost us that big drive at the end. He comes back and makes a phenomenal catch and scores a touchdown.

Just the mental toughness that takes for an individual to be able to do that, plus the other thing is the support that they get and have gotten from their families, but also a teammate or teammates, leaders on the team, I saw that taking place.

That's unanimous support. That's unanimous support from every guy on the team, and you know every guy has your back. That's special to be a part of. I'm really, really proud and happy to be a part of that.

And JJ, how about the catch he made? How about the one-handed catch he made on the trick play, the throw-back, and then he turns, wheels, and throws the ball?

There was just a ton of great plays made in pressure

moments. Rod Moore, open-field tackle on Jalen Milroe; he had three in the game like that. I mean, open-field, game-saving tackles.

That final play of the game, Josiah Stewart, what he was able to do to a man 110 pounds heavier than him, and Derrick Moore on that same play. And then there was Rod Moore with contain on the edge and then Mike Sainristil contained on the perimeter. Boy, pressure moments.

Our guys full stepped up in executing their assignment and executing the fundamentals and executing and making a play that was really the difference in the game.

Yeah, I thought our guys passed with flying colors when it came to handling the pressure.

Q. Wanted to get your thoughts on Michael Penix and what you've seen over the evolution of his career. Obviously you saw him way back when he was playing for Indiana, and to see him now with Washington, what are your impressions of him?

JIM HARBAUGH: Super great. Thanks for that question. He's a super great player. My impressions of him when he played at Indiana were the same.

Big-time arm talent, tremendous presence in the pocket, sees the field really well. He is so polished. Watching him and his accuracy, his decision making, timing, he has really just continued to have this tremendous presence of going through progression, feels pressure, will drop it off to a check-down.

Yeah, it's at an elite level.

Q. You mentioned the pressure situations. What have you and your staff learned during this march to playing for a National Championship the last few years and getting your players prepared for those situations?

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, there's some of the U's, some of the uncontrollables, some of the unfortunates, uncontrollables like officiating. I thought some of the -- like I thought some of the ways our guys kept their composure were -- that's a way to control the uncontrollable situations.

Another U, unanimous support from everybody on the team. When you know that each player, each coach has your back and is going to be doing their job, doing it to the best of their God-given ability, that's a great way to control some of the uncontrollables, which is pressure, which is some of those unforeseeable moments.

Yeah, there's ways to do it, and our team is built for them.

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They're really built for those U's, the uncontrollables, the unfortunates, things like that.

Q. Can you just please talk about the job Jesse Minter did against Alabama and what you like about his play calling philosophy?

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah. Phenomenal. The job that -- game ball, guardian of victory, I give one to Jesse Minter. The coaching in the game, the play calling.

Sherrone Moore, same thing. The coaching, the play calling, the pressure moments. The calls they made. The rest of their lives they can go back and go, man, I did it. I did it in some of the most high-pressure moments.

It's just a tip of the cap, really. We know that we're so confident in those two play callers as an entire coaching staff and an entire team.

Q. Jim, with the college football calendar kind of necessitating that the one-track mind also include looking at the transfer portal and roster building at the same time that you're trying to keep the one-track mind on the CFP, I guess how involved have you been in looking at guys who could help your roster while simultaneously preparing for Alabama and now Washington?

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, great question. I mean, it's not uncommon. When recruiting is in December, now it's getting to open back up where business can be made. It was so good for us last year. We're very open to any really good football player that -- any good person, someone that would want to come and help our football team, we're open to that.

Q. In the NCAA vacates or forfeits some of your wins from this season or past seasons, how would that play with you or impact you with where you might be at the time?

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, as I said, getting ready for this game, one-track mind. I don't know if you want to live in rumorville or speculation, but we just don't really have any room to be doing that at this point. That's done elsewhere.

Q. What was the Texas story you referred to earlier about you might tell us that story one day. Can you share that?

JIM HARBAUGH: I mean, it's kind of a long one. A good one, but some other time. It's a good funny one.

Q. It's been a long time since the Michigan area, metro

Detroit, that we've had a championship in this area. What would it mean do you think to fans to bring that trophy to Michigan, not just to Ann Arbor but the state as a whole?

JIM HARBAUGH: Yeah, we're thinking about, we've got one phase line to go here, and that's Monday night against Washington, and we're going to do anything and everything in our power to get ourselves prepared for that football game.

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