

# CFP National Championship: Ohio State vs Notre Dame

Saturday, January 18, 2025

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

## Ohio State Buckeyes

## Coach Ryan Day

### Press Conference



# NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

ATLANTA 2025

**Q. I think the stat is the opponents have been called for the fewest penalties of any team in the country against you guys. How much do you think about that? And then a follow-up about in the playoffs we have centralized officiating instead of conference by conference.**

RYAN DAY: Well, I think going through this first time where there's 12 teams in the playoffs, I think there's a lot of things that we'll learn from. I think, first off, it'll be how do we learn about the experience for the players, what that means, playing all the way until January 20th, there's a lot that comes with that.

We're figuring those things out along the way and what that experience is like for the players, what that means for our team right now. We have 145 guys on our team, and classes started here a couple weeks ago.

There's a lot of things that have -- the transfer guys have come in, some guys on our team have entered the portal. There's just a lot that we're learning from that.

I also think that the playoff committee is going to learn some different things about what needs to be done in a lot of areas, and I know Commissioner Petitti is certainly looking at those things and making sure he's out in front of those to make sure it's the best experience across the board.

Our focus right now is on this game, and that's what we can control. That's what we're going to focus on.

But I know after the season, there's going to be a lot of things that we need to look at to make things better across the board.

**Q. Can you talk about how the tougher times of the season have really galvanized this team and prepared them for this championship run?**

RYAN DAY: Yeah, I think in life -- that's why they call them "growing pains," because in life you only grow when you go through difficult times.

I say all the time to our players, the first time you got on a bike you didn't just ride the bike, you fell down, and how quickly did you learn from falling down to get back on the bike to learn to ride a bike? Well, it's like that in life.

You learn from going through difficult times like that.

I think our team has done that, but now we have to go finish what we started. There are great stories on this team individually. There's great stories on this team collectively. But I've said this before, the only way those stories get told is if we win, and we have an opportunity to become the ninth team in Ohio State history to win a National Championship and the third team in over 50 years, and there's been a lot of really good football teams in Ohio State history.

We talked about that, looking up at the banners of those years, and to see just a couple of them over 50 years of great teams. We have an opportunity to separate ourselves, so that's it. That's the only thing right now that matters, and how do we do that? By being in the moment, preparing ourselves great.

This is a Thursday practice day for us, so we're here right now for a little while, but then we hustle back to the hotel, head straight to our meetings, our walkthrough, and then we have a practice over at Mercedes-Benz, and that's it.

We've got to be laser focused on that because that's going to allow us to do our job. When you're talking about the playoffs, everyone has to do their job, the players, the coaches, and executing at a high level will be at an all-time premium in this game.

Our goal was to play our best game of the season. Everyone has to be at their best in order to win the game, and that's what we're focused on right now.

**Q. How difficult was it for you mentally to bounce back from Michigan, and how do you protect your staff**



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**from the craziness? You know it's out there, and we talk about this all the time.**

RYAN DAY: Yeah, I think when you look at our guys, when you look at our staff, you see great men. When you go through great moments, you really grab on to the people that are around you, and it's the same thing when you go through difficult moments. That's it. That's why you have family. That's why you build relationships.

We all say you build balance in your life. I think balance is different for us. When I say "us," I mean players and coaches than maybe others. I used to think that balance was an equal distribution of energy and time, but what I found is that's not really the case. It's investing in faith, family and friends and building high ground for hard times.

I learned that from a good friend of mine, Clint Bruce, and that's exactly right, because we can't spend as much time right now with our family at home. We're in that Woody and we're grinding, and the sacrifices that a lot of people have made to get to this moment right now is pretty significant, so that's it.

It's everybody involved. It's our fans. I think about how some of our fans have gone to great lengths to support us, whether it's out of the Rose Bowl, down in Texas or now here in Atlanta or right as we get started in the playoffs in the Tennessee game.

Whether it's driving across the country, taking a loan out to get a ticket for this game, whatever it might be, and everybody is a part of this, and knowing that we're together on this in good times and in bad is really what it's all about.

That's it, at the end of the day. I'm proud of this team. I'm proud of our fans. I'm proud of where we are right now. But again, the only thing that matters is winning this game, and that's what we're going to focus on.

**Q. Emeka Egbuka just got done speaking really highly about your personal growth over the four years he's been at Ohio State, just you as a human. How do you feel like you've grown over the last three or four years as a person?**

RYAN DAY: Well, you learn every time. Every time you go through a season, every time you go through a game, you learn. The key to life is you're going to make mistakes, things are going to happen, but you learn from them and you grow.

I had an unbelievable opportunity because of Urban Meyer and Gene Smith to become a head coach at Ohio State, but that was my first time as a head coach. Every year you

learn and grow and surround yourself with people that tell you the truth, to grow and to get better, and that's really all you can do, and surround yourself with great people.

You're talking about Emeka Egbuka, I could talk to you about probably 20 guys on this team that are in the same boat of how proud I am of their growth as people in all areas of their lives. Physically they look different, mentally they're different, and emotionally and spiritually they're different.

That's why you get into college coaching. It isn't anything else. It's to see these players reach their dreams and goals, and to support the staff and their families and everything else.

This is just part of our mission, is to obviously win these games, but also it's to help these young men grow as people. That's it.

Again, all things that we need to talk about after the season. Right now it's about how do we get the 1st down and get the first stop on defense and take care of the football and create turnovers.

**Q. You mentioned some truth tellers in your life. Who are some of those truth tellers?**

RYAN DAY: Well, number one is my wife. So she'll tell me exactly what's on her mind. And you need those. And I think these players need those, as well. I share that with them, that you need to have at least one person in your life. Mick Marotti for me is the other, and a couple others, but number one is my wife. Probably my kids are two, three and four.

**Q. How has the addition of experienced coaches, coordinators like Coach Knowles and Coach Kelly tried to get you over to hump to actually go and win this National Championship? Because you're a heavy favorite now.**

RYAN DAY: Yeah, we're to the point in the season where we've played 16 games, so people can talk about who's favored, who's not. We know what we need to do in this game. That's for other people to talk about. We know this is a very, very good team. We know what we have to do to play in this game. When you've played now 16 games, our focus needs to be on the game and execution. The rest of that stuff doesn't matter.

But I think first off, when you talk about Jim Knowles, I think Jim Knowles is the best defensive coordinator in the country. I think what he's done this season and how he's built it over the years has been tremendous, and I think he

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deserves all the credit in the world for building that because we've come a long way on defense in the last couple years.

Chip Kelly obviously is a mentor of mine and a friend and a colleague, and so I would never be where I'm at right now without Chip, and certainly the same thing is to be said for this season, as well.

**Q. I heard you talk about Emeka, and then the way you spoke about Jack Sawyer and Will Howard after the Cotton Bowl really stood out to me. What has it been like coaching this group of seniors?**

RYAN DAY: I think when you listen to our guys speak, those three that you just mentioned, but you could listen to Tre or G or Donovan Jackson, I could go through the list of guys, but you just become so impressed so fast. And I think Ohio State brings out the best in all of us. I think we all have to step up our game because the expectations are so high. I think it makes us better across the board.

But to answer your question specifically, we haven't reached our team goals yet. We have one more game to go. But to see these guys overcome adversity and have success is really what we want to see as coaches.

I'm proud of who these people are. I love these guys. I love this team. That's why our focus has got to be on winning this game so these guys can tell that story and be able to cement themselves in Ohio State history, which I know means the world to these guys.

**Q. What's the deal with that golf ball-sized thing on your quarterback's hand, and are there any other injury updates --**

RYAN DAY: No, no, real healthy. It was just, I guess, a blood vessel or something that looking a lot worse than it is. He's doing great. Guys are healthy, had a great week of practice, and for game 16 we're doing good.

**Q. I was curious how you lured Donovan Jackson out of Texas where there are a few good schools to come to Ohio State. Have you ever seen a guy go from left guard to left tackle in the middle of the year and do as well as he is?**

RYAN DAY: No, and I think it's a great lesson for our young players to see somebody who came back to be the best guard in the country and had to transition to tackle midway through the season, but then take that on, never make an excuse, never complain, and just own it. And then the leadership that he's shown has been tremendous.

We had a lot of conversation around this time last year. Actually, it was before this. Yeah, it was probably the first or second week of January, and he was on the fence. He had an opportunity to go play in the NFL and would have been drafted significantly high, and I think there was a point where he actually said he was going to go to the NFL and then had a change of heart.

I think it had everything to do with the brotherhood, everything to do with his teammates and having unfinished business.

**Q. Notre Dame has not been able to defeat Ohio State since 1936, but historically Notre Dame has been able to win a championship in their head coach's third year. With those odds, how do you see it working in your favor or against you?**

RYAN DAY: I think when you go into games like this, there's a lot of ways to look at it. There's a lot of stats we can look at. The truth is we've played these guys three years in a row -- well, this will be our third time in three years. So our guys know who these guys are and have a lot of respect for them and are excited to play in the game.

This game has nothing to do with the past and what's gone on. It's all about what's going to happen in this game, and that's what we'll focus on.

**Q. You mentioned faith, family and friends earlier today. Who among your family and friends are going to be in attendance on Monday night?**

RYAN DAY: Yeah, I think when you go to a game like this, one of the most important thing is to avoid distractions. So I'm letting my wife handle that right now, which is a lot. But the number one thing for us right now is focusing on this game.

I said that to our team, that we have to avoid all distractions right now. We have a lot of family, a lot of friends, a lot of people who certainly want to come to the game. And obviously those things need to get taken care of, but ultimately we have to do our job. They're all there to see us, and that's we're going to focus on.

It's an opportunity, obviously, to be on stage and finish our mission, but we have to make sure we avoid all distractions.

**Q. Going off that, you mentioned avoiding all distractions, leaving the past in the past. Your senior quote was high school was, "Along the way you may stumble and your mind go to waste, but as long as you've had a good time you'll be back for another**



**taste." Looking back at that quote, how does that resonate with you ahead of Monday night?**

RYAN DAY: It just makes me realize I've grown up a lot since then (chuckling).

**Q. Talking about distractions and avoiding them. What specifically are you looking to do? What do you want the team to do? Stay off social media, stay off their phones?**

RYAN DAY: Again, I feel like our guys are men. All 145 guys on the team right now, which is -- when you hear it, it just kind of blows you away you have that many guys. And everybody's job on the team, and that includes coaches and staff, is not to be a distraction to the other player as they prepare.

But also just in general, avoiding distractions for yourself in terms of your focus.

The question right there about tickets and all the different things, some of the stuff -- the stories that are written, talking about previous years or previous games or things that have nothing to do with what's going on in this game and just being focused on this game and how we execute, that's been the message, without overdoing it, but our guys understand what the message is, and I believe they're locked in.

**Q. You guys have talked about how incredibly grateful you are for this opportunity. Just looking back, there's so many great teams over the past, including some you've been a part of that did not get this opportunity with Urban and Tressel, and even talking to Coach Cooper this week, probably five teams from the mid-'90s could have made a run. He's really pulling for you. I know all the focus is on Monday, but in a way are you guys playing for every team that maybe didn't get this chance at Ohio State?**

RYAN DAY: Well, I know that we need everybody. Former players, people who are going to be at the game and having a great presence in Mercedes-Benz Stadium and being loud, we'll need them, so we're playing for them.

People who are back home in their living rooms, whether it's back in Ohio or another country or across the country, just sending great energy, our guys feel all that.

We're playing for everybody who's pulling to be a Buckeye. We're playing for Buckeye Nation for sure. We're also playing for each other and for this team. But that's it. I'm not going to get too far into it right now, but that's it, yeah.

**Q. When you get the job, one of the first stops I imagine you made was with Jack Sawyer, local kid. It's like a lifetime ago in college football. Obviously work to do, but what is your relationship like, and what do you think his legacy will be as a Buckeye?**

RYAN DAY: Yeah, he's like family. He is. Being the first really commit and guy who recruited the other guys, especially on defense but also on offense, he was a leader from the jump. Being a Buckeye meant even more to him growing up in Columbus, Pickerington, Ohio, his family, just great people.

This is a guy who overcame some things. He just didn't come in his freshman year and dominate, leave in three years and go on to the NFL to be a first-round draft pick. This is a guy who, again, I say it all the time, wears a hardhat to work every day, bring his lunch pail to work, and has the respect of his teammates.

You're seeing his play do his talking this year.

I know he wants to play at his best this game. Being a captain, again, in August, having his teammates vote him in was a big deal for him, was an emotional moment. Winning some of these games has really built him more and more confidence and knowing that this is what he wants. He wants to win a National Championship more than anything, and that I think represents our entire team.

**Q. This game has come to the South, but for the second straight year no team from the South is in this game. Do you take some pride in the chance to bring the Big Ten back-to-back National Championships, and what does this say about the base of power in college football?**

RYAN DAY: I just think this year with the 12-team playoff, it's just been a little bit different. And everyone has their own story, and there's a lot of great teams out there. A lot of things come into play when you make a run like this, injuries and just different things.

We'll look at it at the end of the year and figure out the adjustments that need to be made, I think, internally. But I also think that we all need to look at how this is playing and what this means, playing 16 games. I think it's a great learning opportunity to see what that's going to look like moving forward.

But I know it's been exciting for college football and for the fans.

**Q. When you look at Notre Dame's offense, what are some of the challenges that quarterback Riley Leonard**



## presents for this team?

RYAN DAY: Yeah, I think they do a great job on offense. Coach Denbrock has done a great job wherever he's been. Riley Leonard is an excellent leader. Jeremiyah Love is one of the most talented backs we've gone against. And they have a very good offensive line. Evans is really good at tight end. They have multiple tight ends. Receivers are weapons.

They're going to challenge us in a lot of different areas. So we have to play Big Ten football. That's what it's going to look like. Every play matters when you play in a game like this, and certainly against this team it'll be the same way.

### **Q. The emotional ride your team has been on the last two months, and we see you locked in, playing well, how does it speak to the culture of your program that you guys are able to do something like that?**

RYAN DAY: Yeah, I think we've built -- we say this all the time, that when you have momentum, you've got to keep it. When you don't, you've got to go get it. We didn't have momentum at the end of the season. We had to create our own momentum.

Then we started to build some momentum, and now we have to keep it.

But I think the ability for our guys to sustain throughout the season has been significant here, and now it's got to be at the best. It's got to ramp up. And, again, our goal was to play our best game and finish the mission.

But we talked early in the season building a foundation for down the road. Just like anything else, you build a foundation of a building, when storms come, it has to withstand those storms.

But now we've got to finish. We've got to finish what we started. And that's it. I think, again, there will be time to reflect on some of those things after the game. Right now we're just going to continue to look at Monday night and playing our best game.

### **Q. We talked about the wear and tear of the extended season on the players mainly, but in what ways have you and your family had to adjust to this extended season?**

RYAN DAY: You know, it's been enjoyable to be able to -- started off with the home game against Tennessee, and then went on the road to the Rose Bowl in LA. So that was an experience. So went through that, and then went down to Texas and played Texas in Texas, which was very much

like a road game.

Now we're into Atlanta. We have a lot of guys on our team from the Atlanta area, from the Southeast. So for a lot of these guys, it's like coming home. So that's exciting.

But it's allowed our families and team to kind of be on the road together for the last month. But we just -- I kind of say, we're like trained rats, we just come to work and figure out what the next mission is and get back to work that way. That's really what it is. Every once in a while you've got to come up for air and realize that it has been a great run, but now we've got to finish it.

Every once in a while you take a step back, but then you get refocused on what matters. But to your point, it's about everybody, and certainly it all starts with the players and what they do.

I think our energy has continued to grow. I think you talk about like the mental fatigue, I just don't see that with our guys. I think it's only increased, the energy is increased, the focus is increased. I think our team is fresh right now.

If we had to, we could continue to play for a few more weeks. But that just shows you the experience, the maturity, the depth that we have, and I think that's all important.

But we're not going to play anymore. We've got one more left, and it's got to be our best.

### **Q. What has your encounters been with the Haitian American community? Have you had Haitian American athletes on your team or roster before?**

RYAN DAY: Yeah, we have. Excellent football players with just great focus on family. You can see how important relationships matter.

When you have an opportunity to recruit families and get into their homes, you've got to feel for what that's like at home. And you can certainly see how in the Haitian community, family matters, relationships matter, so that when you bring somebody into your family, in the football family, they grab on to the culture, and it's been a huge asset to our team.

### **Q. Both these programs are top 10 all-time for tradition. How do you walk that line between honoring that tradition, hitting all the checklists, but then also a modernized business model to stay relevant in the game?**

RYAN DAY: Yeah, I guess that transition has been



happening the last few years, but you can see obviously this year it's really accelerated. The thing that's hit me is that we're in the middle to late January, and we're still playing, and some teams are starting spring ball in another week or so. It's just very, very different.

I think it's all things that we have to learn from when we assess what's going on, but it's been hard to take a step back and look at anything because you have a short period of time to get back and win the next game, and every single ounce of your energy has to be to go win the next game. Then you wake up and you realize you're on to the next one.

We're not there right now, but I know after the season, we'll wake up, what just happened, and then we'll try to assess it the best we can and make it better.

I know there's a lot of things we can do to make this all better, and I know institutionally we'll continue to make those adjustments, like you said, and do things the way we've done before, but also adjust.

But also I think in college football we need to look and see how we can make this even better as it's gone on because every year it's gotten better. And I think it's great right now, but when you think about the potential and what it can be for the players and these teams, it's pretty extraordinary.

**Q. You've still got to do pecan rolls -- how important is it to make sure you keep a foot in that?**

RYAN DAY: That's it. That's it. Our strength coach, Mick Marotti, really symbolizes kind what if that means. He has this old-school work ethic, because the line is still the line and the cone is still the cone. You've still got to have your foot behind the line, you've still got to run through the cone plus two.

But there's so many other things now. There's sports science, there's GPS, there's a longer season. So being able to adapt with those times is important. And it's the same way with our program and how we run things and the tradition is not going to change at Ohio State. That's one of the reasons these guys come here. It's one of the things we sell in recruiting, is just over 100 years of football and the great teams and players that have come before and what the expectation.

We have an obligation to be the best in the world at what we do, and that's the expectation, whether you're a player or coach. And we own that. We absolutely embrace that, but then also adjusting with the times, and now we have a new playoff system in place.

But all that being said, here we are. A couple more days before the game, and we've got a chance to finish the season and finish the mission and cement ourselves in the history of Ohio State football as the ninth team to win a National Championship and the third in over 50 years. A lot of good teams along the way. That's been the message to our guys, and it's not about how you start, it's how you finish.

**Q. After a tough loss against Michigan, what's it mean to you to see this whole concept of Ohio against the world, everybody being galvanized behind you guys, and what would it mean for you to continue in this particular venue after coming so close to beating Georgia last time you were here?**

RYAN DAY: Try not to get too much into those nostalgic thoughts because it's a distraction. When you're in a game like this, it's easy to get distracted, players and coaches. What matters is what we do on Monday night, how we execute, how hard we play, and that's it. Then after the game, I think there's a great opportunity to sit back and think about all those types of things.

But yeah, there's a lot that I could probably go into if we're able to sit back and talk about what Monday night means. But ultimately we have to go win the game, and that's it right now.

48 hours out, I know a lot of people want to talk about different things. We're just going to focus on executing at a high, high level, everybody doing their job and finding a way to win the game in the fourth quarter, and that's it.

**Q. I watched a video interview with Nina about your temperament the morning after the Michigan game and what you said to her about "I need to dig myself out of this." I can't imagine the turmoil that you might have been going through that morning, but can you take me back to that mindset, and do you think that that mindset became contagious on a roster that seems to have come together at the perfect time?**

RYAN DAY: I think in life, you have to work through tough times, and it's how you respond to those tough times, and that's it. And that's been the message all along to our players. It's not always how things happen in life, it's how you respond.

I think our guys have learned a lot about that. Again, I've said this before, I think there's some great stories to be told about what went on behind closed doors and some of the things that were said and the personal challenges that we had for each other and collectively the story, but the only way that gets told is if a banner gets put up in the Woody,

that's it.

That's the sobering reality of this game, that nobody cares about what you go through, and you've got to win that final one to finish the mission. That's it for our guys, and as much as some of these wins have been great wins for us, to me, it's about winning this final game.

All that being said, I think our guys will have learned a lot about life over the last month. I think it's been a tight group. We've seen the good, the bad and the ugly. And it's a special group of guys that care a lot about each other and that are going to go on to be very, very successful moving forward because they're strong, they're loyal, and they're very mature.

You're going to see 10, 20, 30 years down the road these guys make an unbelievable impact not only on their families but in the community and on the game of football.

**Q. Take me back to that morning where you were at and what your point of view or your vantage point was with you and your wife.**

RYAN DAY: Yeah, it's football. I say to my wife all the time, we signed up for it. It's the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. This game will take you to knees and give you some of the greatest experiences in the world, and that's it. Not a lot of people get to experience those highs and lows and you have to manage the tough times and enjoy the good ones, and that's it.

The more you're in this game, the more you've got to realize that, and that's it. Those are opportunities to show strength, and that's it.

We're counting on that to make a difference on Monday night.

**Q. For the guys who have been there, from two years ago and everything that went down there and then some of the tough losses, have you been impressed by just how they've embraced the adversity and kind of just continued to lead and lead the younger players?**

RYAN DAY: Yeah, that's it, and set a great example for the younger groups. One of the good things about having 145 guys on the roster is some of these new freshmen and transfers that are coming in get to see what it's supposed to look like, get to see great leadership.

If this wasn't the case, they wouldn't have an opportunity to see what Emeka Egbuka is like, Will Howard, TreVeyon Henderson, Lathan Ransom, Denzel Burke, you go through the list, Cody Simon, Tyleik Williams. What does it

look like? How do they prepare, not only for one week, but several weeks. And these guys are men. They are. The way they go about their business, not only do they love being Ohio State Buckeyes, but they love their teammates. And all those things matter.

Again, they want to play their best game here and finish themselves and cement themselves so when they come back they can see that banner and have a big ol' ring to show for it.

We'll get back to the hotel, get back to work, get to these meetings and focus on what matters right now.

**Q. What has Emeka's leadership meant to this team? Coming back and his career track, what's he meant to this team this year?**

RYAN DAY: Yeah, hard to put into words what Emeka has meant to this team or to me or to my family or to Ohio State. It started when he first got here. He had a different look in his eye. He's extremely competitive. No job is too small for Emeka. He's selfless. He's really made unbelievable strides in his life but also just in his faith.

When he speaks, people listen. He's very well thought-out. You sit down and have a conversation with Emeka, you're going to walk away extremely impressed. But then when you talk about his play on the field, he's made a lot of great plays. He's been very clutch. He's been very consistent.

This is a guy I know who wants to finish his career out with a great game Monday night.

**Q. I know how much pride you take and how physical this team plays and how tough it is. You talk about it all the time. Was there a point in your tenure where you felt like maybe you had to do something differently or approach things differently to build a little more of that callus, that toughness with this group?**

RYAN DAY: I think when you're starting out the season and you're putting a roster together, you have to start from this game and move back. I think when that happens, you have to build a team -- I think now the Big Ten has allowed us to do that with the addition of some different styles of play on the West Coast, and then certainly the traditional Big Ten play.

It's a combination of being able to get big and strong and heavy and stop the run and run the football when it matters but also being a spread-out game where you can be in a little bit of a track meet and have the skill to play with anybody in the country. I think that's the combination that you need to have.

That's the goal every year, to do that. When you need to go get that yard, get that yard, and when it's time to get that stop, you get that stop, but also having the skill to be able to run with everybody in the country. That's how we start, and then as the season goes on, we look to identify the areas where we have to get better or whatever that might be.

But I think it all starts in the off-season with our off-season program and what Mick Marotti does, and I think our off-season program -- I know it now because when I see players come from other teams, you get great feedback. You get guys who come in from different programs and say, Talk to me about what your program is compared to our program, off-season, during the season, all that. It really gives me confidence knowing we're doing the right things.

**Q. Is it fair to say maybe you were too one-note stylistically maybe four or five years ago, that you guys were built for the track meet but maybe weren't built for the kind of game you played last week?**

RYAN DAY: I think every year you learn, and I think -- to be honest, I think every year I learn and grow and figure out what needs to be done to get it fixed and identify the issues and be honest and call it out for what it is and get it fixed and get it addressed.

And that's what leaders do. They look out on the horizon, see what's coming because the soldiers are fighting right in front of you. That's what we are. So what's coming down the road and then what areas need to get addressed and get fixed.

That always starts with who's in the right seats, players, coaches and staff, making sure that's organized, and then building it from there. Every year you grow to try to get better, and then identify it the next year, move on from there and keep growing.

We all have to continue to learn, and I think I've done that, as well.

**Q. Last year, Caleb Downs in the transfer portal, obviously a very coveted recruit. Why do you think you guys were ultimately able to land him, and what has he brought to this team this year?**

RYAN DAY: Yeah, Caleb is mature beyond his years. He's a tremendous player. But he brings a work ethic that's tremendous. He and Lathan Ransom both. And the way that they bring energy to practice every day, and they let their play do the talking for them. But they're great

leaders.

During the recruiting process, I went all the way down to the wire. It's been told before, and we were right there at the end, and I wished him good luck. Understood, Coach Saban is an unbelievable coach and certainly his success speaks for itself, but also just as a defensive backs coach. And I totally understood and was pulling for him in his freshman year, and you could tell, my family and wife and kids were all pulling for him because he's just a unique talent and great person and great family.

Then when Coach retired and he was in the portal, it was an opportunity to reconnect with him. And I think he had great relationships with our players, and it's been great to see him this year really flourish within our culture, and you see the best version of him now.

**Q. (Indiscernible) Atlanta two years ago, playing against Georgia. What sort of lessons did you learn from that game and how might that help you on Monday night?**

RYAN DAY: Well, it's going to be a great environment. We know that. Great crowds on both sides, so it'll be electric. Different than in the past where you kind of had these bowl game and then a final game, these playoff environments now are something that we've become accustomed to.

So we need to focus on what really matters and the execution and find a way to win the game in the fourth quarter. That's it.

This is a team that continues to come at you, so we know it's going to take four quarters. It went all the way down to the last play the last time we played them, and we have to be prepared for that. But that's it. Great environment, and it's good to get over there today to have practice just to kind of see it again, feel it again. I know our guys will be ready.

**Q. What do you feel like you learned from (indiscernible) this year?**

RYAN DAY: Yeah, I think he's built confidence as an offensive line and throughout his career, especially this year. And he's become a leader for us up front, and we'll need him to be at his best in this game, as well.

**Q. You always hear about the Notre Dame mystique. Can you talk about the Ohio State mystique and whether or not you feel like the ghost of Woody Hayes and the shadows of Urban Meyer and that sort of thing?**



RYAN DAY: Yeah, I mentioned this before that this is about these players and this game. It's all going to be about who executes well during the game. That's it. I think our guys understand that and feel that, and there will be a lot of conversation, which is great. It's exciting for the fans to talk about.

But we know what really matters, and that's what our focus is, is executing at the highest level we possibly can.

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