

CFP National Championship: Ohio State vs Notre Dame

Saturday, January 18, 2025

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Ohio State Buckeyes

Jack Sawyer

Press Conference



NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

ATLANTA 2025

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: No I haven't been able to get back there. I'm the same guy. Guy blessed with the ability to make a play. Help my team win. Now we're playing for the National Championship. We know we've got a great challenge ahead of us with Notre Dame, a great football team. All the attention is on them.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I mean, it's been easy too. We know Notre Dame is a great football team, and we've got a lot of respect for those guys and the quarterback and how well they've played all year. Got a lot of respect for Marcus Freeman as a coach. We knew we had to get the last game to rest and get to work on Notre Dame.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I mean, it's an amazing blessing from God I'm able to do that and inspire kids like that. So haven't really took too much time to think about it like that yet. Hopefully can enjoy it a little more after this next game. Like I said, we're playing a really good football team come Monday night. All the attention, all the focus is on that right now. Afterwards, we'll have some fun with that.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I mean, when I picked it up, I just couldn't believe it, you know. Then I'm running. The most awesome part about it for me is I'm running out of gas. I'm like, damn, I better have somebody blocking. I look back and I see all my boys with their hands in the air running behind me. I wasn't convinced I was going to make it until I saw that. That's the most special moment I've had in a while. So it was really cool.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I mean, it's special. This group of guys and everybody involved in the program, you know, is awesome. It's family. Being able to put the scarlet and gray on one more time and it being the National Championship, knowing it's our last game no matter what makes it that much more special and that much more buildup for it.

We're all so excited for it. It's a great blessing to be able to play in a National Championship game against a time like Notre Dame. It's going to be awesome. It's going to be a special environment. It's going to be a special night. So we're really excited for it.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, so I actually didn't write it. Flattered people think I actually wrote it, but the editors did a great job with that. They interviewed me, and they put it together, obviously, because I can't write that well. But, yeah, it was just something my people presented me with and it seemed like a cool thing. Only took a little bit of time so it was a good thing to do.

Q. Jack, congratulations on getting here.

JACK SAWYER: Appreciate it.

Q. You guys have your eye on what you've got to do to contain Jeremiah.

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, they're a resilient football team. They had a tough loss early in the year. They went to work, kind of like we've done, and blocked out all outside noise, and they've been playing great football all year long after that game. They present lot of challenges offensively, defensively. Their head coach is, I think, a phenomenal head coach.

So they present a lot of challenges. We've got to be ready for everything come Monday night. We know they're going to play tough, play hard. Sound football team with a lot of great athletes. Should be a helluva game.

Q. (No microphone).

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JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I mean, I'm just focusing on what's in front of us. We've got a big challenge in Notre Dame come this week. It was awesome to be able to help my team get a win, but it won't really matter if we don't execute on Monday night. So all that focus is on that right now.

And like I said, Notre Dame's a great football team, well coached, great players everywhere on the team so we knew pretty quickly we had to move on and come down from that game and get ready and get focused on them.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, it's awesome. I grew up with Sonny and Ty and 'Zo and Max. So it's been special. Growing up in the same little small town in Ohio, where toughness and football is the only thing that matters. Every little kid in that town, it's special. And we talk about it almost every day how cool it to go from playing AAU with each other, in PYA with each other and competing in a National Championship with each other. It's awesome. And it's been a fun run.

Q. (No microphone)?

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I think that we've put so much into this that after we get a big win like that, we've all done a really good job of putting it behind us and focusing on what's next. There will be time to look back and reflect after the season is something I've learned from being here and being around these group of guys. We need to accomplish the main mission first. Like I said, we've got a great challenge ahead of us come Monday. We knew we had to put it to rest quickly and celebrate that stuff after the season.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I mean, it's something I've dreamed about since I was a little kid, you know. I thank God for where I'm at every day. Right now, I'm at Ohio State, which is one of my first dreams. Playing in the NFL has been a dream of mine since I was a little kid. I'm here right now competing for a National Championship to bring one back to Columbus, what I've always dreamed about. For me, it's easy to put that stuff on the back burner while I'm competing at Ohio State, which was my first dream to begin with. So, yeah, it's exciting.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Any day. Any day of the week. Any day of the week.

Q. A quarterback that runs the ball like Riley does, what kind of layer does that add?

JACK SAWYER: He's explosive, man. He can run. Great athlete. Seems like a great guy too. I don't know him personally. I've got a lot of respect for him, just like the rest of the guys on their team. We know he presents a good challenge to our defense and we're excited for it.

I think he's excited for it as well. We're really excited to get out there and play against them because we know they're great across the board and really well coached. They run their stuff. It's going to be a fun match-up.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Man, I could name about 20 things. A couple weeks ago -- he makes spectacular catches look routine, you know what I mean? He'll make a one-handed catch, tap a foot down and walk back to the huddle, not say anything. Everybody's looking around, like, did you guys just see that?

It would be hard to pinpoint one. In fall camp, he made a couple over three guys. Makes it look easy. He makes it look so smooth and effortless. So there's been a bunch of them.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: It's a good one. If I was the commissioner for the sport for one day. Are you talking about college football, obviously? I don't know. I don't know if I want to be making those decisions. They get a lot of scrutiny. I'll let them stick to that. Appreciate it.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Like my personal love for the program? As early as I can remember, really. I just remember being a little kid running around with a Ohio State jersey on in the back yard, wanting to be like the guys I see on TV every weekend. So, really, I know it's cliché to say for a hometown kid, but probably as early as I can remember.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: I just think that trusting in God's plan, continuing to play as hard as I can, showing up every day and working, good things will come from it. I was fortunate to make some plays in the playoffs, helped my team win. That's what I plan on doing.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, man, it would mean everything to me. Growing up 15 minutes down the road, Buckeye football was the talk of the town, talk of fifth, sixth grade classrooms for us growing up. So being able to be one of the guys to help bring one back for the city and for the State of Ohio would mean a lot to me and the guys I work with every day. It would be a super special moment. God's blessed me with an opportunity to do that. We're really excited for the opportunity to compete Monday night.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I mean, NIL, I think, is a great thing for the sport. I think we've all had a lot of great opportunities. Making it this far and into the National Championship has definitely opened the door for a lot of us. For me, the main focus is always on the game, and I don't really -- haven't really even entertained NIL deals throughout the postseason because I'm focused on playing ball and winning the next game.

But, yeah, I mean, we've all got a lot of great opportunities when you start winning games and getting to the National Championship. Great opportunities present themselves.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Probably Max Crosby.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: I think it comes with being happy where God's got me right now. I love this team so much. I love the State of Ohio and Columbus. I'm living my dream every day. I try to take that approach every day to work and really enjoy where I'm at, you know what I mean? Don't get too high or too low and be excited for the opportunity in the moment and don't take it for granted. It comes and goes quickly. I can't believe I'm a senior right now. I remember when I was a sophomore here playing in a semifinal game. Snap your fingers and you're in your senior year. So just being grateful for where you're at.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: It's been awesome. It's been a dream come true. I play with four guys I grew up with. Bunch of guys who will be my brothers for life on the team and Coach Day and all the guys. I couldn't be more happy and more proud for a group of guys I'm playing with right now to get to this point. It's been awesome. We've got one more job to do left. So really excited for the opportunity.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Me and 'Zo talk all the time. We've been tight since we were, like I said, 8 years old. 'Zo is a funny guy. He'll always say stuff like that. I'll be like chill out, man. We've got one more game and we can get soft and gushy after. It's cool. It's a special moment when you think about it. We've got four guys on defense from the same town starting on the same defense for Ohio State. I've said it a lot, but it's a dream come true for all of us, and it's a special moment.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: My message would be keep on working. Anything is possible. I thank my parents a lot. When I was a little kid, all I wanted to do was play football. They never made me feel told I couldn't do anything I wanted. They gave me that dream and fed that dream. I'm thankful they're the ones in my corner, helping me know anything is possible if you work hard enough.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: They do a good job with a lot of things. You I think Riley Leonard doesn't get enough credit for how he can throw the ball. We know they're going to present a good challenge for us everywhere with all the things they do. Collectively, keep playing fast, keep playing hard like they're going to do. It comes down to whoever executes the best will win the game. Really looking forward to it.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I think it was very important, very pivotal. Guys got off their chest they needed to get off. It got heated in moments, and then it all came together pretty good at the end, and we ended with a team prayer and knew we had to get to work. We all put our heads down, flushed the last game and moved forward.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: I couldn't remember exactly what day. Somewhere around there, yeah. Yeah, Coach Day was in there. Yeah, he was in there.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: You've got a bunch of guys who care about the team and the program. As competitors, guys are mad at a bunch of different things. We talked it out like grown men, got together and knew we had to chase this thing. Here we are, month and a half, two months later, playing for a National Championship.

Q. (No microphone).



JACK SAWYER: Yeah, it was a painful loss, obviously, two years ago. I just remember, you know, the stadium's awesome. The stadium is awesome and we're excited to get back in there and have a chance to redeem ourselves in that stadium and against a great opponent for the National Championship this time. God's got a great way of bringing you back to the place you failed at before. We're taking it as a great opportunity and are looking forward to it.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Caleb Downs is a phenomenal player. One of the best I've been around. We joke around. We call him the co-DC how smart he is. He sees things and reacts so fast. He brings a different element. He's a sophomore but has a mature attitude like a veteran. We have seen it since day one. We knew Caleb would be a great player and he hasn't been anything short of that. Having Caleb has been awesome.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: A lot faster than it looked on TV. I tell you that. I felt like I was moving in quicksand. I don't have predictions on that. Faster than people think, though. I tell you that.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: It's awesome, something we always dreamed about doing. Like I said, 'Zo loves to talk about that stuff. I do too. We just have such, such love for where we grew up in Pickerington. It was an awesome spot. Super competitive. Look at the guys who played in Pickerington and played in the NFL, played in the NBA. It's special. People say there's something in the water there. It's really cool to see our former elementary schools are supporting us still today. That's really what we do it for.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, man. It means everything to me. I grew up a Buckeye, grew up 15 minutes from the Woody. Always loved the Buckeyes. Putting on scarlet and gray is a cream come true for me. Rest of the guys will say the same thing. Knowing it's my last time, it's going to be an emotional moment. We're excited and ready for it and what better way to could it than a National Championship?

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, man, it's special. God is great. He's blessed me with so much. To be able to know I'm

impacting kids and giving them hope and something to cheer about, it's really exciting for me and the rest of the team. It's cool.

I can remember vividly being in the jersey in the front yard. Never taking it off on the weekends. My mom would be mad, it had grass stains and she just washed it. Had to catch a couple more touchdown passes before she could take it off again.

It's been special, nothing short of a dream come true. I thank God for every day I can wake up be a Buckeye. What better way to play it than being in the National Championship. You couldn't have wrote it better.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Donovan Jackson, I could talk about him for hours. You talk to him, he's got a bigger than life personality. He's a great guy to be around. I think he's one of the best offensive linemen in the draft. Me personally, I think he was the best guard in the country. Then the last couple months, he's been one of the best tackles in the country too.

Donovan's a guy never wants any of the credit, shows up, does his job. Joy to be around the locker room, and he shows up and works every day, and he's a great guy to be around. I love Donny. We all do. He's what it means to be a Buckeye too. So, you know, he's been awesome to play with and that's my brother for life.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: We knew we would get in and knew we were going to swing as hard as we can. We knew the adjustments we had to make, change some things and get back to work. We knew it comes down to execution. We didn't execute in that game. They did. They beat us. The team that executes the best is going to win the game. So we know that execution is paramount come Monday night, and it's going to be fun.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: I think it's a good question. I think we really didn't do too much anything different. We had the extra bye week, which helps. Getting that extra bye week, not playing a game, kind of letting your bodies rest late in the season helps a lot. So I think that structurally, I mean, we were about the same as we've always been, you know what I mean? Maybe little tweaks here and there. I think that second bye week helped a lot. Appreciate it.

Q. (No microphone).



JACK SAWYER: I actually haven't. I let Quinn take the last week by himself. I think he just declared for the draft. I'm excited for him. Quinn is such a good guy, man, good dude to be around. He'll always be my brother too. He was my roommate and got a lot of love for him and his family. I know Quinn's going to be successful in whatever he does. I'm excited for him and will definitely give him a call here soon. Like I said, me and Quinn are real good buddies, and he's just a good dude. So I'm always rooting for Quinn, and I'm happy to see, excited to see him have success in the NFL because I know he will.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, gave me one of my first interviews when I was a sophomore, freshman in high school, yeah.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Really, in Pickerington, it starts as soon as you're old enough to throw a football or shoot a basketball. You're at the park playing. That's the one thing I love about Pickerington, they're tight. Even though they went to Central, we all hung out all the time. Always competing, doing something. It's such a competitive place for being such a small town. Not that small, I shouldn't say that, but you know what I mean. Just competition was always what was on our minds playing basketball, playing football. Summers when there's no school, that's all we were doing all day, playing pickup basketball. I think it starts at a young age.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: It means everything to us. We talk about it all the time, setting a good example for kids across the country. But more importantly, the kids in our community growing up. Growing up, we were on the sidelines of the high school games. We wanted to be like Jake Butt and Pat Elflein. Not only were they great players, but they were great people too. You talk to 'Zo and Ty and those guys. They're great football players, but they're great people too. That's one thing that you see about Pickerington is all the guys that come out are successful. They're not only good players but they're great people too.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, they've been giving an outpouring of love and support to this team and to all of us. It's been fun, you know what I mean? It's been awesome to see that the community we grew up in supports and loves us that much. And we just hope that we're doing our part. And setting a good example for the kids watching us and

people in general. So it's been fun. It's been awesome to see.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Riley Leonard is a great athlete. Seems like a great guy too. We've got a lot of respect for him and what he's been able to do this year and in his career in general. We know we've got a great challenge ahead of us come Monday against him and the offense as a whole.

We know we've got to execute at a very high level. If not, they'll hurt us. We know that. Like I said, got a lot of respect for Riley Leonard and what he's been able to do in his career. He's a great player. Marcus Freeman is a great coach and I'm sure they've got stuff ready for us. The team that executes the most will come out successful. It's going to be fun.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: I don't know. Like you said, we've played a lot of athletic quarterbacks, but Riley Leonard pulls away from safeties and corners on film. He can run. He can move. He's a tough kid. He gets hit. He'll get slammed and get right back up. That's something as a former quarterback I respect that, seeing a tough quarterback like that.

Like I said, he's a great player, seems like a great person too. It's going to be a good battle against them and we're excited for it.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, man. I think it's a combination of a lot of things. We've been trusting in God's plan and letting him guide our steps and playing as hard as we can not worrying about anything, not worrying about the draft. Not worrying about this or that. Just playing football and getting to the basics and busting our ass every day and playing as hard as we can.

We're having so much fun playing with each other for the last time. The love we have for each other on this team and as a group is something I've never been part of for a long time. I think you see it in the way we play. The love we have, how hard guys are going, and the seriousness about it.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, man. Like I said, I think there's a lot of different reasons. I think one -- I think this team has been close-knit. When you go through things as we've

done and continue to get up and battle with each other and the talks we've had with each other and going through the fire, when you go through the fire with guys and show up to work every day with the good and the bad, you naturally build that bond and chemistry.

We've got a bunch of great leaders bringing the tome together through the toughest times. Scott hasn't gotten enough credit for the leader he's been. Javeon, Emeka, JT, all those guys. I could go down the list. The leadership and the poise the group's had through the toughest times.

It trickles down through the head coach. Coach Day has been through a lot. He's family to me and the rest of the team. Seeing our coach go through what he's been through and his family's been through, when we have the love we have for him has made us grow that much closer in unity to come together and try to get this thing done not only for us, but for him as well.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, I mean, Caleb Downs is a baller. That's really the only word I can use to describe him. I've never seen a guy his age approach his practice and meetings and everything the way he does and the manner that he does it. He's business. Business 24/7. Caleb Downs is one of the smartest players I've been around and he flies around and makes plays nonstop. In practice, in, walk-throughs, and you get to see it in the games when the lights are on. So Caleb has been special. He's a great guy. Great guy to be around. He's made this defense that much better.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Oh, a bunch of times. A ton of times. There will be times in the meeting room he'll bring something up. Like I said, we call him the co-DC sometimes because he's so smart. He makes plays sometimes and we're like how did you read that that fast. Gosh, this guy just knows ball. His brother plays in the NFL, was a good receiver for the Colts. I think Caleb Downs one of the most special football players I've ever been around.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: I'm happy to be competing in the National Championship one last time, put the uniform on one last time for these guys, for Coach Day, and for the city. The plan is to bring a National Championship back to Columbus. We've got a great challenge ahead of us in Notre Dame and I'm excited for the opportunity to play in this game.

Q. (No microphone).

JACK SAWYER: Yeah, huge. I love this team. I'd do it again. So I love these guys and I'm really excited for the opportunity come Monday night. Thanks, guys.

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