

# CFP National Championship: Ohio State vs Notre Dame

Saturday, January 18, 2025

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

## Ohio State Buckeyes

## Caleb Downs

### Press Conference



**NATIONAL  
CHAMPIONSHIP**  
ATLANTA 2025

**Q. What was it about Ohio State that (inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Really, I felt like God was calling me there, and He has made the situation come to fruition. So I feel like the Holy Spirit has brought me here to this day. So I can't thank God enough for being here.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: That was probably one of the most difficult pieces in my life, just try to make that decision and dealing with the fact that I had to leave Bama and the fact that the high school decision I made I wasn't going to be able to stick to. And Georgia was a really big school for me just because I grew up here and I was so familiar with that coaching staff and Coach Kirby, Muschamp and T-Rob just went there. So it was a really big opportunity to go there.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: It's a great feeling. But at the end of the day, even if it didn't work out, I would have had to make the decision either way, and I would have had to live with it either way. So it's an honor to be here.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Even through high school, when I was in middle school and he was in high school, just watching him perform and everything, it allowed me to see that I could do it. And when he played in college, it allowed me to see that I could do it. Even watching his highlight film, even now today, it's still an honor to watch him play; and just knowing that that's my brother, it's a great feeling.

**Q. Who's faster?**

CALEB DOWNS: We will see when I run the 40. We will see that day.

**Q. (Inaudible). Jordan Hancock?**

CALEB DOWNS: Jordan Hancock. Yeah, no. I've known Jordan since probably my freshmen year of high school, so just knowing him and knowing that he was really close to my brother. And, also, Caden McDonald, I grew up from since I was like six years old in the same elementary school as Caden. Knowing that I had people here that I could rely on it was a really big thing for me and it allowed me to feel comfortable here faster.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: I feel like Jordan has the best high school football out. The competition level, the coaching is at a really high level, and it creates a lot players, especially in Gwinnett County, they do a really good job there.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: It's a really honor, and it comes full circle for me, just knowing that everybody that has put into me has seen it come to fruition.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: It's been a really funny feeling for me, just knowing the person that he is and knowing how serious he is. He cracks a smile every once in a while. So just knowing that he's having fun doing that, I feel like that's let him come out of the game in an easier way.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: I can tell it was different for him at first, but I can tell he's gotten used to it throughout the season, and he's grown to love it.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: That's probably the biggest contributor that I have to that. My dad was a coach. My dad played. My brother played. My uncle be played. My other uncle is a coach. Just being around the game has allowed me to grow in my knowledge of football and how I see the game.



And I voice my opinion, so they probably -- that's why they probably call me that.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Not at all. Not at all. The coaches make the decisions. I'm just here to play ball.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: It has the buildings like this to be able to hold everybody. The city is great. Everybody is going to be really excited for the game. And then the Mercedes-Benz Stadium, it can't be compared to.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: That was one of the most miraculous plays that I've ever seen in my life. And just witnessing it was a crazy feeling, and I was completely gassed at that point. So just knowing that he had won the game, and that moment for him since he was growing up a Columbus kid was a really big moment.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Yeah. Me, Jordan and Caden, being from Atlanta, we talked about this, that it was going to be a little crazy feeling coming back here, being in Atlanta, especially for this big of a moment. So it's an honor to be here, for real.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: My dad doesn't really talk to me about games before the games happen. So he kind of just lets me do what I do until the game happens. And I'm sure we'll have a couple conversations after the game.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: The day of the game, no, I don't talk to anybody, no matter if my mom texts me, my dad texts me. They'll know I'll respond after the game and they'll know I'll give them a hug and I'll tell them I love them after the game, but they've learned that throughout the years I don't answer any texts before the game.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Yeah. Something she says, Allah, in the name of Jesus, not by Your strength, but by the Spirit. She tells me something like that every game. And I love to get the text, but I never respond. (Laughs).

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: My mom. My mom. Josh is the biggest cheater in the family. My mom is probably the most competitive, because if she loses, she's going to hold a grudge about it, too.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: We will see. We will see. I gotta beat Josh in the 45.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Well, that'll add a little bit more motivation, but we'll see.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Me.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: That's cool. That's cool. Oh, yeah. Me. Me.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Josh.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Josh, I'm guessing.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Okay. Cam.

**Q. (Inaudible) who would I call?**

CALEB DOWNS: My dad.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: I really can't describe it. Just knowing that in any moment I can call anybody in my family and they'll pick up and they'll have some type of wisdom that will help me in any situation I am in. And even through the difficult situation of entering the portal, I didn't really call anybody else other than the people that were around me and the people that know me best. So that was a surreal feeling to be around them.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Commissioner of the sport for the day. That would be a difficult one. Maybe the time that people get to train for the draft, because our teams, we're finishing so late in the season that the players here won't have a lot of time to train for the draft as other players get two, three months to train, and now players here, they only get like a month and a half. And they won't get as much time to rest before the draft. I would say that's a big situation that isn't going to be fair to a lot of our players because they're still dealing with knicky-knack injuries from the season and everything like that, they won't get the time to rest to go into the draft with. I feel like that's a situation that needs to be talked about.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: I've heard a lot about Lathan Ransom. He's a streamer, too. He's really good at the game. And then I would say after that, Sonny or Tyleik would be the best ones that I've seen.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Favorite purchase. Probably just buying Christmas gifts for my family. Buying my mom, she wanted like three Nike -- a bunch of stuff from Nike. Buying my sister a bunch of stuff. And then buying my dad some clothes, because he doesn't know how to dress, so (laughs).

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: I give him anything that doesn't fit me, too. So that goes to him, too. I have to think. I would say for my brother, I bought my brother a retrovert outfit, which is royal blue so he can wear with the Colts. I brought my mom some stuff that she can wear to school. My dad, I'm drawing a blank. I don't know. I'm sorry. I'm drawing a blank.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Really just take every moment one at a time. Don't try to put too much pressure on yourself. Don't try to think about what a game means. I probably learned that from my dad the most: Just play every game the same. Play every moment the same. Still want to practice with the same intensity that you always have. I would say that's the biggest thing that I've learned.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: I would say "Blacklist" is one of the best shows on Netflix. I watched "Prison Break" recently. "Power." I've been watching that recently, too, just

because I never finished it when I was younger. I watched "Scandal," which is an interesting one. I would say those are probably the most recent ones that I've watched.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: I wouldn't lie to you like that. No. I'm not one of the best. I would probably say -- I would say I'm top 10, though. Not on the starting five, though.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: It's an honor to be here. It's an honor to be here, and it's a really good feeling to be back to my roots, back to where I grew up. I've been in this World Congress Center. I've been in the Mercedes-Benz center more times than I can count, so it's just an honor to play here and honor to be back home.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: I grew up watching my brother play here when he played in the (inaudible) and stuff like that. Grew up coming to Falcons games, even though I'm not a huge Falcon fan. And even in recruiting, the games that were played here, I came here a couple times just to watch games. So it's a really historic stadium for me at least.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: At the end of the day, winning the game is the most satisfaction I'll need for anything. So but it's a good feeling knowing that it's probably going to be a defensive game and that we're going to have to play at a really high level.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: He's a really caring person. He does everything that he can for the team. And you can know that in his heart he truly cares about his players and that he'll do whatever he can to help us.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: I'll say it's made it easier for me knowing what I have to put in, knowing how much effort it takes to really get what you want out of this game. And then knowing that my brother has done it has been a big thing for me, knowing that he's put the work in in high school, college and now he's having success in the pros, it's a really good feeling for me.

**Q. (Inaudible). How do you become a smarter football player?**



CALEB DOWNS: Really think it's just being around the game, learning as much as you can, either that's watching film, talking to coaches and just playing. I feel like Georgia high school football you play so much and there's so much competition level that you learn and you grow from that. And I feel like that's helped my football knowledge throughout the years.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Coach Day is probably one of the most ecstatic people you can be around. He's so happy to see us have success and to see the work that we put in come to fruition. So just being around him post game, you definitely get a smile on your face because you can see how excited he is.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: He'll come in and say 1 and 0 after every game. He's fired up when he says it, and it's always a good feeling to have him come in there and say that.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: I feel like it really makes you take advantage of the training room and everything that you can do to help maintain your body throughout the season, and I feel like the players that do that the best will have probably the most success throughout the season.

And for me, it's really just been trying to stay mentally focused through everything and try to keep my body at the highest level. So mentally focused really just is making sure I get in the cold tub, making sure I stretch out every day, roll out every day, do everything to help my body recover so that week 16 we can play at a high level.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: I'm sorry. (Indiscernible) is one of my favorite players to watch on the team just because of how intense he plays the game and how much passion he plays with. And early in the season you could see that he was a little grabby, but I feel like if I'm a scout, that's really what I'm looking at, has he progressed throughout the season and limit that? Has he played better throughout the season, yes. And I think he's done a great job of learning from his mistakes and finding ways to get better even with the holds and grabs that he's had throughout the season. And the last three games he's played lights out.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: He had a really good memory when it came to football. Outside of football I wouldn't say his memory was the best. I'll say he paid me a lot of money based off of him personally. That was the difference between him and Coach Day. Coach Day has more of a light-hearted spirit than Coach Saban. A lot of times Coach Saban is more stoic, and you can see that how he runs his program, and Coach Day is more interactive -- more -- not interactive, but more bubbly with the players, and you can tell his energy is higher. But they run the program how they want to run the program, and I respect each of them for it, and you can only run the program in the way that you are. So you can only do what you do.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: It's been really different for me just knowing that he's probably had to work on that throughout the season, and he wasn't like that last year. Because when we were all on the field, it was business, so I know that that's been a change for him and will continue to be a change for him, but I can tell that he's really enjoyed it, and every time I've talked to him about it, he's like I'm having so much fun doing it right now, so it's a good feeling.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: Ms. Bonds and Mr. Arrington, I was best friends with Ms. Bonds' son from the time I was born until eighth grade. So she was like a second mom for me all throughout elementary school and middle school. And me and her son still talk today. So it's an honor to really allow her to come to the game. And that was actually Caden that gave them the tickets. I was just a part of the video and everything.

I just really appreciate her, especially because she allowed me to go into her home, spend time with her son and her husband, Mr. Bonds. I just thank them so much for that.

Mr. Arrington, he probably had a really big role in how competitive I am just because at recess he was the quarterback always, and just playing football at recess was a big thing for me, and it made me more competitive when we actually played really football. So I appreciate them both, and I'm so thankful that they're here and that they're going to come to the game and support us.

And it's a really good feeling to be back in Georgia, especially because everything that I put in before college was here and everybody that I know that put so much time into me, they're here, too. So knowing that I have all the support right here is a really good feeling.

**Q. (Inaudible).**



CALEB DOWNS: Notre Dame is one of the most historic programs in college football. I always respect their coach, Marcus Freeman. He's a really elite person to me, and he's a really elite coach to me, and I had a really good relationship with Coach O'Leary, the safety coach there. And I talked to him when I was in the portal, too. He's a really good guy. I'll probably talk to him after the game, too. He's a good person to be around and fun person to talk to.

I'm not going to talk about why I didn't go there. That doesn't make any sense to me to talk about that. It was one of my top five schools.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: They were the top four or five school, yeah.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: We'll see if I have a moment like that. Jack's moment was unspoken for. So I think he did a great job with that.

**Q. If you were an NFL scout (inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: He's really elite talent, really physical player. If you want to have a physical element to your team, he's going to bring that every single day, and he's going to be really intense at what he can do. Whether it's you need him to cover, whether it's you need him to play the post, whether you need him to be the box, he's going to do it at a high level. And if you need somebody to set the tone, I would say that's Lathan Ransom. And if I'm an NFL scout, I'm banking on him to do whatever -- whatever I draft him to do, he's going to do it.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: What is the offense going to do, what down and distance is it? What does the offense normally do with his down and distance? And really just what is my assignment and what can I do as a player to help my team?

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: Yeah, I did play linebacker in little league. I wouldn't say it reminds me of that. I would just say it allows me to roam and allows me to make plays in the back end and in the box, and I'm really thankful that he puts me in that position.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: I would say really early. I feel like I see the game at a high level, and I feel like ever since I was six or seven years old, I could see the game at a high level, just making plays and feeling like, okay, this is coming at a pretty easy level to me, it's allowing me to play at this high level today.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: I mean, I trust the coaches and I trust their opinions and everything that they do, and the coaches make the final decision no matter what. I'm not scared to voice my opinion about it, but just I appreciate the coaches and their viewpoints and everything.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: That came at a huge shock to me. I didn't see it coming at all, and even when he said it, I was still like, did this really just happen, because that was one of the main reasons I went there to Alabama. And it was a really difficult time for me.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: No. I didn't know right away that I was going to hit the portal. I tried to give every opportunity to stay. I stayed for like an extra like six days, five days, just to feel out the new coaching staff, see who they were going to hire and see if I could stay, because at that time I didn't really want to leave, and I wanted to stick to my choice that I made in high school to stay there. And it didn't turn out that way.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: He was an Ohio kid, a leader on the team. He plays at a high level, and he truly cares about the Buckeyes. Without playing for them or anything, he grew up a Buckeye fan.

**Q. (Inaudible)?**

CALEB DOWNS: I feel like he changes up the looks really well. One of his big things is disguises and everything like that. Just how he disguises the field and how he changes up the run fits, I feel like that creates a lot of indecision for the opposing teams.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: We've worked on -- I think I know what plays you're talking about, probably the last two plays. We've run that the whole season. We've never run it in a



game. And he told the other coaches that we were going to end up running it at some point. So we did practice it that week, and it came and worked. So it was a really good feeling to know all the work that we had put in throughout the whole season, it worked out.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: I wasn't thinking about that at all, honestly. I was just thinking where can I feel like I can be comfortable with, where can I feel like I can continue to grow as a player and continue to become better and where can I create brothers on the team where I can create good relationships with. This never really came to mind, if I'm being honest.

**Q. (Inaudible).**

CALEB DOWNS: I mean, yeah, we had a couple conversations, but honestly, the programs aren't that different at the end of the day. At the end of the day, you're supposed to win games at a high level. You're supposed to play at a high level every game, and if you have that same type of focus and you have that same type of intensity and you have the same drive, then there's really no difference.

**Q. Practice wise, more tackling, less tackling?**

CALEB DOWNS: Every practice is physical at both places, and that hasn't changed for me, because you practice at the same level of intensity here as we practiced there.

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