

CFP Semifinal at the Rose Bowl Game presented by Capital One: Alabama vs Notre Dame

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Arlington, Texas, USA

Alex Leatherwood

Alabama Crimson Tide

THE MODERATOR: We're here with Alex Leatherwood.

Q. Wanted to get your thoughts on what it means to play in a Rose Bowl the College Football Playoff, and what are some of the difficulties you see from Notre Dame that presents some issues for you all?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: First and foremost, it means a lot to play in a game like this, just because of how historic it is and the history behind, like, the meaning of the game and stuff like that. And I'm appreciative to get the chance to play in it.

But as far as Notre Dame, the issues we'll face, they've got a very aggressive defensive coordinator and his players are also that -- they play great as a unit. I mean, like, the front seven and the DBs, and they play super technique sound and well in what they do. And they don't make a lot of mistakes. So, it's going to be a fun game.

Q. You guys lost your best run blocker in Landon Dickerson. We've seen what Chris Owens can contribute as a pass blocker, but how confident are you that he'll be able to provide a push in the running game against a really stout front seven of Notre Dame?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: Very confident in Chris and anybody else we may need to play. We're just all prepared for whatever may come our way. So I feel like we're good.

Q. How big of a loss was it both on the field and off the field for Landon to go down with an injury like that?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: Of course it was a big loss because he's a great leader, you know what I mean? Emotionally, stuff like that. He's great in the run game, great in the pass game. But I feel like we'll be fine because Chris is not a rookie. He's played before and we trust in



him to get the job done.

Q. What has Kyle Flood meant to this team, especially as the offensive line coach? People talk about him as a recruiter, but what has he done as an O line coach that's helped you and the whole group?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: He's done a lot for us in this group, but one thing that makes him a great coach is he knows how to create the relationships with his players, you know what I mean? He knows how to, like, coach people at an individual level and really get to know you and knows how to coach each player a different way to bring out the best in that player. So I feel like that's his biggest plus as a coach.

Q. Can you chat about what John Metchie III is like as a teammate and his impact for the team this season?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: John Metchie as a teammate, I feel like he's the ideal teammate. He's a very hard worker. He's super selfless. He does everything that the coaches in the program ask him to do. And he's just a hardworking guy, you know what I mean?

He's a good dude outside of football as well, a great friend of mine personally. But I like him a lot.

Q. Looking back at your recruiting class in 2017 and the talent that was in it, what do you think of it now? So many guys playing in the NFL already from that class and more guys going to be playing. What's your sort of -- you look back in awe of how much talent was in that class?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: Yeah, I do a lot. I feel like we're the greatest of all time, if you ask me. We had a lot of talent. But aside from us all being talented, things like that, we're all hard workers. And we all had a common goal in mind and that was to win a National Championship and be the best players that we could be and that's why we came here.

Q. When you think back to your decision a year ago to return to school, just how much do you think this



season validates that and your development as a player in these past 12 months on top of getting a degree and finishing school?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: I feel like it was a great decision, and of course now I'm seeing the benefits from it. We're getting a chance to play in the playoffs again. And I feel like I've improved as a player week in, week out. It may be like small things in my game that I feel like I'm just taking to another level with every week, and I want to keep trying to build on that.

Q. Wondering if you could talk to me about what you've seen out of Notre Dame's front seven and what kind of challenges they bring?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: The front seven is very physical and they're very, like -- they're physical, tough, technique-sound, and aggressive. I can keep going on and on about their defensive front.

But their interior, they're super stout. They're super high-effort guys, you know what I mean, and just like the D ends, they're strong, good with their hands, they know how to pass rush, they can stop the run. They're a great defensive front.

And linebackers, you've got the dude, No. 6, he's the Butkus Award winner, and he definitely plays like a Butkus Award winner. He's good. And all the other linebackers, it's a great group, and I'm excited to play them.

Q. How important is it for the offensive line and for the offense to establish your running game early against Notre Dame?

ALEX LEATHERWOOD: That's important for any game, you know what I mean? You've got to establish the run game so you can open up the RPOs, the pass game and stuff like that.

But not only that, but we have head-to-head match up with Notre Dame's O line to compete for the Joe Moore Award. And I'm excited to compete and showcase what we can do, even with a backup center, you know what I mean? Because I feel like everybody in our offensive line room is just committed to being the best that we can be. You know what I mean? I'm excited to see that matchup.

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