

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

Tuesday, December 29, 2020

Arlington, Texas, USA

Najee Harris

Alabama Crimson Tide



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Najee Harris.

Q. First of all, what does it mean playing in the Rose Bowl game, you being from California, what that means? And also you average about six yards a carry. So what do you have to do to be successful on Friday against this physical Notre Dame defense?

NAJEE HARRIS: It's an honor to play in the Rose Bowl, like you said. Supposed to be in California; but due to circumstances of COVID, it's changed it. I love watching the Rose Bowl; to actually play in it is an honor.

But back to Notre Dame, I mean, yeah, I average -- I didn't know I average that. That's not really my goal going into the game. It's just doing -- when my number is called, really just performing at the best. So whatever that is, between passing or running, just performing, doing it at a high caliber.

Q. It's really inspirational how you kind of went from the homeless to now playing in the Rose Bowl, reminiscent of Jacobs, actually. What's your relationship with Josh like, and what does this place, the University of Alabama, hold in your heart?

NAJEE HARRIS: You asked what my relationship with Josh is like?

Q. Yes.

NAJEE HARRIS: Oh, Jacobs. I'm sorry, I know a couple of Joshes. Josh, I was here -- he was here my freshman and sophomore year. I observed a lot from him, Damien and Bo. We don't really talk that much obviously because he's in the league, he's doing his thing, he's busy, I'm over here at Bama, we're busy.

But from what you're saying homeless, I overcame a lot at

a young age. But I guess I wouldn't take any of it back because I learned from a lot of it, from financially and being grateful for the little things that I have. So I'm grateful, I guess.

Q. Yesterday Ian Book was talking about your 7-on-7 days and playing together. I'm wondering what you remember about Ian's skill set and overall impression of what he's become at the collegiate level?

NAJEE HARRIS: Ian's my guy. He's been doing an amazing job in college, from freshman to now.

Back on 7-on-7, we played for TMP in Sacramento. The way he dissects defenses really and how he throws the balls in tight pockets and stuff like that, he does a good job at it. Even now, today, he does an amazing job of getting the ball to his playmakers and really being a leader, a vocal point of his offense.

Just back in 7-on-7, when we played, it was fun to play with him. Really just an honor.

Q. By the way, John Metchie invited you to be part of the Ryde Outs earlier today.

NAJEE HARRIS: (Laughing.)

Q. After your performance against Florida, were you a little bit disappointed to not be a finalist for the Heisman? Did you pay that any attention?

NAJEE HARRIS: Back to the first question, the Ryde Outs, no, first day after the practice, after the game, they finally accepted me. They said: You're a Ryde Out now, Najee. So tip my hat to that. They're letting me in their room to be a Ryde Out.

But the Heisman thing, I'm not sure of that. The two guys they've got in there is good enough. I play my part when my name is called. So it really doesn't matter if I'm in the race or not. That's really it.

Q. Najee, going back to Ian Book, he said that -- he actually complimented you. He said that when you



needed to go one-on-one situation, he knew he could throw the ball up there and you would come down with it. Can you comment on that? And talk about the Notre Dame defense you'll be facing this Friday?

NAJEE HARRIS: He said that, about throwing it up to me?

Q. Yep.

NAJEE HARRIS: That's true. Throw it up to me, I'm going to catch that. True stuff.

But the defenses, their defense is good. They got the Butkus Award winner, of course. The secondary is really good. Their front line is good, their linebackers is really good of tackling the run, reading out stuff.

They're really, really good. Really, really good, well-coached defense. High motors all across, never stop. They fight all the way through the whistle.

And that's what you want in a defense, of course, in playing us. You always got to keep going and play through the whistle. And they do a good job of that.

And obviously the record shows that they're a good team all across the board, good players. And the No. 6 guy is a really good player.

Q. How do you -- first of all, how do you remember the last few days of your recruitment? And spinning off of that, what do you remember thinking about that 2017 class you were potentially going to be a part of at that time?

NAJEE HARRIS: Potentially going to be a part of?

Q. At Alabama, the 2017 class that you were potentially going to be a part of when you were making your decision?

NAJEE HARRIS: Going back to recruitment, I didn't like it. It's too much attention, way too much attention for me. I think I just showed up here. I just showed up. I didn't even tell them I was coming here. I just showed up. I was tired of it. I popped up at the airport with Tua. And I didn't even know all the recruits that was here.

So first day of practice, I seen all these recruits I knew in high school. I look around I'm like, man, we've actually got a pretty good recruiting class here.

And, I mean, obviously it showed up in the championship game freshman year and now ever since. I think it took off. Coach Saban did a really good job of recruiting. And

hopefully we get to bring one home, Naty home.

Q. What do you think your biggest challenge will be going up against Notre Dame's defense?

NAJEE HARRIS: I would say my biggest challenge for me personally is not getting blowed, to be honest. The last game I barely played the fourth quarter this whole year. I probably played in maybe like three of them, fourth quarter.

Really me getting back to my cardio, getting back to playing through four quarters, not sustaining -- like not getting blowed. Last game I gotta say I was blowed, first time I played fourth quarter. Playing through the whistle, finishing out every run, finishing out every play. Blocking techniques.

Really being fundamentally sound, I think, is where I need to be good at for this game, because they're a well-coached team. For me being fundamentally good in all the little things, I think, is going to help me out a lot. They've got good players and have a good defense, good defensive front. Good linebackers who can run. Like I said No. 6 is a really active player, the way he blitzes.

He's not blitzing to make a move or nothing like that and look good and flashy, he's blitzing to come with bad intentions. And that's what you want in a linebacker like that. Really just being fundamentally sound in all the things.

Q. It's been a joy to watch you play for the past couple of years. Wanted to ask about your famous touchdown celebration of Megan Rapinoe, and what about her inspired you to do that, and was that just kind of a spur-of-the-moment thing for you or what?

NAJEE HARRIS: Megan go crazy. She's from California, first of all, and she listens to Nipsey. Nipsey Hussle, one of my favorite rappers, too. She gave a shoutout to him.

Really all the stuff she stands up for. She's a feminist and how the females, how women in the world gets treated unfairly and how they get paid different and different stuff than men.

She stands up for all that. I like how she does that. And obviously the social injustice that happens, she plays a part in all that. And for her to be a woman and saying all that stuff, and it could be scary for her, for being a woman in what they will say is a man's world, and her just playing a part, standing up, not listening to all the naysayers out there and really just standing up for what she believes in, it's motivating. And it's inspirational.

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Me as a male, I guess you could say, like maybe not too many males will like say they look up to a woman nowadays. But I really look up to her, just for what she does outside of sports. And I guess I had to give her a shoutout and stuff.

Q. You're wearing 22 at Alabama. A lot of legends before you have worn that number: Johnnie Musso, Tony Nathan and Ingram. And Johnnie Musso told you to tell you you've worn it well.

NAJEE HARRIS: Appreciate that, man. Thank you.

Q. Have you ever seen those players on film or met any of them, Johnnie Musso, Tony Nathan or Mark Ingram?

NAJEE HARRIS: I have met Mark Ingram. I think anything besides that, I would have been in California chilling. I don't know how old them people are. I'm guessing they're -- when did they play?

Q. Johnnie Musso was a two-time All-American, '70 and '71?

NAJEE HARRIS: I wasn't even born.

Q. Weren't even born.

NAJEE HARRIS: I haven't seen him since I've been here. But shoutout to him. Like, what's up with it. Hope I get to see you. I have not seen him. Only seen Mark.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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