

# Rose Bowl Game presented by Capital One Venture X: Ohio State vs Utah

Tuesday, December 28, 2021

Pasadena, California, USA

## Ohio State Buckeyes

## Tyreke Smith

### Press Conference

**Q. Tyreke, you're out here in California. Have you been out here to the Rose Bowl before? I think we've talked to you about it before. What are your impressions so far?**

TYREKE SMITH: It's been beautiful out here. It's been a blessing just to get this time with the brothers, this time to just enjoy that camaraderie we've got. Just go out there and practice hard and to spend time with them, just enjoy the brotherhood for the last time, just enjoy the little last ride. It's been good.

**Q. You mentioned the last time, the last ride. I'm assuming that this is your last year in the program.**

TYREKE SMITH: Yes.

**Q. How was practice yesterday? What was your impressions? How did the team look?**

TYREKE SMITH: We looked good, practiced hard. It wasn't nothing too crazy. We just locked in. You can tell the team's locked in. You can tell everybody's got that look in their eye. Everybody's just ready, trying to prove something. That's all we were doing yesterday.

**Q. With Haskell opting out, what do you tell the young guys coming in? Obviously, it's a huge game to play in. How do you explain this game to them? What do you say to them?**

TYREKE SMITH: Like the model is next man up. You can't worry about what's not there. We've got to go on. We've got to play. I'm proud of Haskell. He gave us everything he had.

We've just got to have that next-man-up mentality coming into the game, ready to dominate. You can't be worried about who's missing, who's not. You've just got to worry



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about the moment, just be in the moment and play in that game.

I think everybody's going to be fine. Everybody has been practicing hard. We're getting acclimated to the team, watching film. I feel like we're going to be good.

**Q. And how have you kind of seen Tyleik grow since the season started and up until now?**

TYREKE SMITH: He's definitely grown. Everybody has grown. We are watching film, just learning how to break down film, learning how to really read the game, read key points, just have some key reads.

I think he's definitely growing, definitely becoming the player he needs to be. Just got to keep working, keep grinding. He'll definitely be where he needs to be at.

**Q. This is obviously your last game here. Is it a bittersweet feeling? You get to play in the Rose Bowl, but it's your last time here.**

TYREKE SMITH: Just a blessing, taking it all in. Just being humble and enjoying the process, not being too far ahead of the moment. Just being in the moment and enjoying what I can enjoy. I'm definitely enjoying it. Just blessed to be here.

**Q. I want to ask you about the last game. Now that you look back on your Ohio State career, do you get emotional as you get ready for one final game?**

TYREKE SMITH: I'm not really an emotional guy, but I definitely do think about it. This is my last game. Just want to go out with a bang. I want to leave that last good impression.

Just to play with my brothers for the last time, have that camaraderie go around, have that brotherhood, that tight bond, it's just a blessing. I'm just taking it all in. It's just a blessing, and I'm thankful to be in this position.



**Q. You've played in one Rose Bowl before. Do you remember about this game, what's so special about the Rose Bowl?**

TYREKE SMITH: Like they say, it's the granddaddy of them all. It's such a historical bowl. Like you said, we were in it a few years ago. It was a great bowl then. It's still a great one.

We're coming in here, taking it as a serious game, taking it as any other game we play. Just going in there with that mindset and that chip on our shoulder and that edge.

Yeah, the game, it's a beautiful place, beautiful game. I can't wait until we get to the stadium and get to take the team picture and stuff like that, do that type of stuff, get the in and out. It's just a rich history here. You've just got to take it all in.

**Q. You guys have played in a lot of these, Ohio State has. I'm curious, you're probably going to get a pretty motivated, fired-up Utah team.**

TYREKE SMITH: Yeah, Utah is a good team. They've got good players on the board. We're locked in. We're ready. We're practising, and they're practising just like us.

We've got to go out there and, you've got to play tough and play hard. They're a physical team. You've got to go out there and stop the run. That's what they want to do. You've just got to go out there and buck up.

**Q. Is it starting to set in that your last game of college football is coming up?**

TYREKE SMITH: Yeah, it makes it bittersweet. It makes you want to go as far as you can. You want to run through the wall for the team really, just to give everything you can give your last game.

Like I just said, I'm taking it all in. It's a blessing to be in this position. I'm not trying to be too ahead of the moment. I'm trying to be in the moment and just enjoy the process.

**Q. How important is it for you to go out on a win in your last game here and have your best game?**

TYREKE SMITH: Very important. You want to leave a last good impression. I feel like the last impression is the best impression because that's what people will remember about you. I want to go out there and play the game like it is my last. I'll go 150 percent if I can.

I'm going to go out there and give it my all, everything I've been doing, all of my technique, make sure I'm in my game

and go out there and try to do it with a bang.

**Q. What was your reaction to Haskell Garrett deciding to opt out? How is it going to be to play in your last game without a guy like that?**

TYREKE SMITH: Haskell, that's my brother, I love him. He's got to do what's best for him. It's next man up. We can't worry about what's not here. We've just got a next man up mentality and pick up Haskell's role and just play for him.

That's all we can do. I'm thankful to what he gave to us. That's my brother for life. I'm happy for him. We've just got to keep trying.

**Q. Which guys at tackle -- you talk about next man up. Which guy has been looking good during bowl practices stepping up for Haskell?**

TYREKE SMITH: Everybody for real. We've got tackles that all can really get in there and make a splash, make an impact. Taron, all the interiors, Antoine, Jerron, Tyleik, all them guys, they're all in there doing their thing. Mike Hall, he gets in there. Everybody's excelling because everybody took on a different role.

I feel like in a way, it kind of helped us because everybody had to mature, put that different role. It might be one play away from 50 reps that they have to play. Now everybody is practicing with more -- I feel like more intensity. That's the main thing I've seen.

**Q. What do you think you guys will miss most about not having Haskell?**

TYREKE SMITH: I feel like his dominance in the game, his presence in the game. Haskell, I feel like if he was in, if he's in the whole game, he's going to make plays. He's that type of player. He has athleticism. He's a great player. He knows the game. He's really a student of the game too.

I've always asked Haskell questions. That's why I'm going to miss about him, just being out there and being able to ask questions. He always used to help me on the field, with the film training, Haskell, he's that type of person. Just going to be missing that leader part.

But everybody got, like I said, next man up. It's not only on the field, but you've got to bring the leadership qualities that he took with him, and you've got to fill in the void for him. I think that's what we've got to do.

**Q. How did he let you guys know that he wasn't going**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**to play in the game? Did he tell all of the defensive line together?**

TYREKE SMITH: Yeah. He made sure we all know, but we were happy for him. You've got to do what you've got to do. We all love him. He gave this program so much. We're just proud of him. Can't be nothing but proud and just wish him the best.

**Q. What's been the highlight? If you had to pick one game or one play or one moment, what's been the highlight of your Ohio State career?**

TYREKE SMITH: Probably the Clemson game. That was definitely -- I feel like that was just a bittersweet game because that was the first one win. Coming back and making plays in that game. I feel like all the plays were highlight moments. Those are the memories you're never going to forget.

So coming back, bouncing back on that team like that, playing that dominant game we had, I feel like that was just a whole moment, a whole memory that I'm always going to have forever.

**Q. What do you feel like the young guys can kind of learn from your career? What do you feel like you've given them?**

TYREKE SMITH: I feel like -- Coach Day is big on effort, big on 4 to 6, A to B plus two, our motto. I feel like I could instill that in the guys. I'm a 150 percent type guy. I go hard every play. So I think I can instill that in the young guys, how to have that mindset, just have a nonstop motor because people love that stuff. If they can do that, just take that from me, what I have, that will be good.

**Q. Tavion Thomas, No. 9, does he remind you of anyone you've played this year?**

TYREKE SMITH: I don't know. I don't really think of anybody in particular. His frame, I feel like is kind of different than everybody else's. He's kind of got a bigger frame than a lot of the backs we've played. We're just going to play him like any other back. Those are the backs you've got to make them feel you. You've got to put bodies on them.

You've got to swarm to the ball, swarm and tackle. With teams like this that like to run the ball, you've got to make sure you get them on the ground. Everybody's got to get to the ball, all of the hats to the ball.

**Q. A lot of other running backs, they have different styles, different size. Do you always have to be aware**

**of who's back there?**

TYREKE SMITH: Yeah, I feel like you do got to be aware. You've got to know who's in there. If they're throwing certain backs in, it might be a higher percentage run. If they throw another back in, he might be the back that catches passes out of the backfield and say see ya.

You've just got to know your personnel, just be aware of who's on the field. That's just things you've got to look out for.

**Q. Utah's kind of known for its physicality. Have you seen that on film, the kind of physical play they like?**

TYREKE SMITH: Yeah, it's on film. They like to run the ball, try to get the ball on the run edge, try to run the ball probably a high percentage of the game. If a team can't stop it, they're not going to stop doing what's working.

I feel like it's the mentality to stop the run, get some third downs, and get them off the field. That's all we have got to do. It's one play at a time. You can't be thinking about the pass rush. You've got to think about one play at a time. You do one play at a time. All you've got to do is get tackles for loss. You get tackles for loss on the first play, then that sets you up for the next two plays.

We've got to have that mentality. Just get out there, get stops, get third downs, and that will get them off the field. That's what we've got to do. Try to give our offense more opportunities.

**Q. What's it like to be here? I know you guys had your sights set on being in the playoffs. You lost that last game. You're here. In some ways a great runner-up prize. What's it like to be here? You kind of put that game behind you?**

TYREKE SMITH: Yeah, that game's behind us. This is a great bowl game. We're not looking past it. We've got to come out here with a full head of steam going out to this game.

Everybody I feel has got a chip on their shoulder and has intent to play in this game as hard as they can and give 150, 200 percent. Our motto is 4 to 6, A to B plus two, so we're always going to do that. We're always going to have that mentality. I feel like going into this game we're keeping that same thing. We're not taking this bowl game lightly. We're trying to win it just like we're winning any other game.

**Q. How much did you know about Utah before about two weeks ago? Did you see them on TV much? Did**



**you know much about them?**

TYREKE SMITH: I watched them a little bit.

**Q. The Oregon game?**

TYREKE SMITH: Yeah, I watched the Oregon game a little bit. I've seen some games. Definitely now I'm watching them more. I'm seeing they're a run type team, things like that. Just watching them more, seeing the physicality, knowing how I've got to go out there and play. We've got to set the tone early, stop them on the run, get the third down, and get them off the field that way.

**Q. What stands out about them when you put them on tape?**

TYREKE SMITH: High run team. They want to get around the edge. They want to stretch the ball around the edge. They want to try to seal you off and try to get that ball running. If they can keep running, they're going to keep running on you. That's the main thing. You've got to stop the run, stop the quarterback, set edges.

**Q. Are they similar to anybody you guys saw this year, stylistically in what they like to do?**

TYREKE SMITH: I feel like it's only so many runs. All of them kind of -- all the teams kind of get mixed up. There's so many teams that run similar plays.

I don't know, I feel like I look at every team differently. I try to find different things about the team, different things that I could find that could help me about the team, whether it's just the running backs, the tackles, the formations. I'm looking at everything.

**Q. Their season changed a lot when they changed quarterbacks early in the season.**

TYREKE SMITH: Cam Rising, yes.

**Q. What have you seen from Cam Rising?**

TYREKE SMITH: Definitely his athleticism with his legs. He definitely shocks some people when he runs the ball. He's a tough kid. He can take some hits.

I feel like you've got to close the pocket on him, make sure he's in the pocket at all times, make sure he can't get out. Make him make tough throws when he has to throw the ball.

**Q. What are you expecting from Utah Saturday? What kind of effort?**

TYREKE SMITH: Expect them to go 110 percent. Someone said this is their first Rose Bowl. Yeah, I'm expecting them to come out with 110 percent. We're doing the same. We've got something to prove in this game, so we're coming off. We've got a chip on our shoulder with an edge. It's going to be a dogfight.

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