

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

Tuesday, December 28, 2021
Pasadena, California, USA

Ohio State Buckeyes Linebacker Steele Chambers

Press Conference

Q. I was talking to Tyreke and I asked him what's his first impressions of being in California with the team, a senior. I know you're an Ohio guy. What's California been like for you?

STEELE CHAMBERS: It's interesting. It was definitely warmer when we got up here. But, I mean, yesterday whenever we had our first practice, it was nice, like, being out in the sunshine seeing all the palm trees and stuff. It's been a pretty cool experience.

Q. How did practice go for you yesterday? Was there anything you noticed in the state of California and practicing here?

STEELE CHAMBERS: I just felt like everyone had energy. It's really nice getting to a new place, being able to practice at the Woody for it feels like five months now. So it's just nice to get into a new environment in practice.

Q. Gotcha. I mean, the California scenery, does that impact how you guys practice, just being able to see everything around it?

STEELE CHAMBERS: I guess. I mean, it's just a cool experience. I think we should still be practicing the same way. But, yeah, pretty cool.

Q. Does it -- how much fuel do you have being able to play in the Rose Bowl? How much motivation are you -- do you have just to play Utah on Saturday?

STEELE CHAMBERS: I mean, it definitely sucks not being in the CFP. But, I mean, we still have motivation. I mean, we're in the granddaddy of them all, and a beautiful place, playing a really good team. So that should be enough motivation for it.



Q. (Question concerning the running back from Utah.)

STEELE CHAMBERS: No, I feel like everyone's -- everyone's their own player. But, I mean, he's a really good guy. He's a big, tough, downhill runner. So, I mean, it's definitely going to be a challenge. But I mean, we've seen guys like that. So I think we'll be fine.

Q. What's the key to holding a guy like that?

STEELE CHAMBERS: Just being physical upfront; in the line, linebackers, filling the holes, and safeties and corners coming down whenever they need to. Just being a defense that really just builds a wall up for him.

Q. What are some of the other challenges that Utah possess against you guys?

STEELE CHAMBERS: They're just big and tough. We were walking around them at Disney and they're just massive guys. So just got to be prepared for that. Just got to be as physical as them.

Q. Are you expecting a very physical game?

STEELE CHAMBERS: Yes, it's going to be a very physical game. Yeah, yeah.

Q. You guys brought in another guy making the move from offense to defense in the transfer portal. What do you say to him about your experience?

STEELE CHAMBERS: I mean, it's hard. But I bet he's going to be able to push through it pretty easily. I mean, it's hard at first. But, I mean, once you make that jump from offense to defense and you don't really look back. I mean, if you're all in, I think it'll be fun. Yeah.

Q. How do you evaluate the way you played this season?

STEELE CHAMBERS: Hmm. That's an interesting one. I

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

think it went better than I expected. I went into the season thinking, like, I would somewhat be, like, a key role, like, maybe in some packages and stuff.

And the way stuff's turned out, I feel like I'm a pretty vital part of this defense so far. So I'm pretty glad with how I turned out.

Q. Do you think where you were at in preseason and all that went into this decision to switch the other side of the football, was there a part of your game that you thought, Hey, I need to work on this the most if I want to be successful?

STEELE CHAMBERS: I felt like every part. I felt like I wasn't ready at all at some points. But, I mean, Coach Wash helped. Everyone in that linebacking room help me. So I feel like without them, I wouldn't be able to be here. So I think they definitely helped me improve my game and helped me to where I am now.

Q. How do you balance celebrating this week, the fact that you guys are playing in a game as traditionally rich as the Rose Bowl and how cool of an opportunity this is with also trying to figure out how to use this as a steppingstone for next year?

STEELE CHAMBERS: I think it's just whenever you're at practice, whenever you're in meetings, you just got to lock in. Really make sure that that time counts.

And then whenever you're, like, you're at Disney or something, you got to have fun. Because, I mean, you got to be loose. Because you're in California, you're at the Rose Bowl, you still got to have fun.

But I mean, it's just -- whenever you're in football, you got to focus on football. Whenever you're away, you got to relax a little bit.

Q. Have you ever been out here before?

STEELE CHAMBERS: A couple times. Yeah, A couple times. I really like it out here so far.

Q. Thank you.

STEELE CHAMBERS: Yeah, no problem.

Q. (No microphone.)

STEELE CHAMBERS: With some things out here, you just got to completely look away. There's some stuff that you really shouldn't be associating with.

But I mean, like I said, you still got to have fun, still got to do some stuff. But you just got to focus. This game, you just got to focus. That's all I got to say.

Q. There's a perception that Ohio State didn't want this bowl game. What's the mindset of the team playing here in the Rose Bowl?

STEELE CHAMBERS: The mindset is that we got to beat Utah. I mean, we've been practicing for a month. So, I mean, if we're going to be doing all that practicing, why not do our best in this game?

Still got to win a game. We're still a bunch of competitive guys that want to win. So you should have motivation for this game.

Q. It's a pretty good consultation prize, though, for not being in the College Football Playoffs, right?

STEELE CHAMBERS: Yeah, I don't really like consultation prizes. I mean, that kind of sucks. But, I mean, still, it is the Rose Bowl. I mean, this is the most traditionally, rich bowl there is. So if we had to play somewhere, this would be perfect.

Q. What do you see from the Utah offense that you guys need to take care of on Saturday?

STEELE CHAMBERS: Just big, physical guys. Load the box and try to run it down your throats. So we just really got to prepared for that. We got to really stack the box and we got to go at them.

Q. Is that kind of Big Ten football?

STEELE CHAMBERS: Yeah, it is kind of Big Ten football. So, yeah, you're right.

Q. (Question concerning rugby.)

STEELE CHAMBERS: I can't imagine playing rugby. It's ridiculous.

Q. To start off: How special is it to be here with this group of guys after all you guys have been through this season, and just seeing how you're all coming together at this point of the season?

STEELE CHAMBERS: I mean, I think it's been great. It's been a pretty crazy season, especially how it's ended so far. I mean, it's great to be in a place like California with this group of guys. I mean, it's been fun as hell so far. So I'm really looking forward to the rest of the week.

Q. When you look back at this and say you were a part of the Rose Bowl tradition, not just for the legacy of the game and the legacy of the Ohio State program, how special is that?

STEELE CHAMBERS: It's really special. I didn't really realize it until Coach Day mentioned some of the names that have played here in the past. But it's crazy just being here and realizing you're going to be a part of history. So, yeah, it's pretty special.

Q. I'm just curious: When you put the tape on and watch Utah, what y'all seeing?

STEELE CHAMBERS: Just physical, big guys. Guys that just want to run the ball down your throat. Just want to out-physical you. Run the ball, like, 30, 40 times a game. So, yeah.

Q. (No microphone.)

STEELE CHAMBERS: If I had to compare them to anyone, I guess the team up north because that's the team we just recently faced. So, yeah.

Q. They use a multiple number of backs, like you guys do a little bit. (Question concerning TJ Pledger and Utah's running back roster.)

STEELE CHAMBERS: They got a little bit of everything. Big, physical. Got guys that are shifty. So, I mean, we just got to be prepared for everything. We've seen it every day in practice. So I think we'll be good.

Q. How about the quarterback, Cam Rising? Anything stand out that you've watched?

STEELE CHAMBERS: Sneaky athletic. Whenever he gets out of the pocket, he can really run. So, yeah, got to be prepared for that.

Q. What's it mean to be in the Rose Bowl? Everybody gets a chance to think about playing in the Rose Bowl. At Ohio State, you guys play here from time to time. So what's it like being here and being able to represent the university for the Rose Bowl?

STEELE CHAMBERS: It's just crazy, really, to think about all the games that happened in the past. Personally, me, I remember watching the Georgia and Oklahoma game I think, like, back in 2016, 2017.

So watching that and then realizing that I'm going to be in it now, it's pretty crazy to really just put that into perspective, that, like, we're on this stage now and we're really going to

be a part of tradition and history.

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

STEELE CHAMBERS: 100 percent. Wouldn't expect anything else from them.

Q. If I were to tell you that you would be here at defense on media day, a pivotal linebacker on the team, how does that feel?

STEELE CHAMBERS: The last 12 months have been weird. It kind of feels chopped in half between, like, whenever I was on offense for literally, like, the first half of the year, to now being on defense, but, I mean, at the end of the day, the journey worked out. So I got no problem with it.

Q. (Question concerning the physicality of Ohio State's defense.)

STEELE CHAMBERS: The challenge has been being more physical, really. It's pretty simple. I think we've been doing that in practice. We've been going pretty hard. So I think we're definitely making adjustments to just be tougher in the run game and just tougher, in general.

Q. So practice hasn't been a laid back, California style practice, you guys are going pretty hard?

STEELE CHAMBERS: I mean, we've only had one practice here. But everything back in Ohio, yeah, it's been pretty tough.

Q. Do you guys sense that, that this is different than other bowl games?

STEELE CHAMBERS: Yeah. We were walking out to practice and just, like, looking around, it felt like it was 70 degrees, seeing all the palm trees, just realized like this is a pretty damn cool place.

So, yeah, everyone's enjoying being here. We've only been here for, like, a day and a half and it's been pretty great so far.

Q. The transfer, DeaMonte Trayanum, from Arizona State to Ohio State, have you talked to him at all about the transition from running back to linebacker?

STEELE CHAMBERS: I have not, no. But I feel like that's something we're probably going to be talking about once he gets here.

It's a tough transition, but I feel like he's going to be able to do it pretty easily. I mean, he's a Ohio guy. I'm pretty sure he's mentally tough. So I think he'll be pretty fine.

Q. What was the most difficult part for you?

STEELE CHAMBERS: I feel, like, just transitioning to defense, whenever you know the offense completely. So just having to go to, like, extra meetings, it's really having the -- kind of to start from square one on the learning process.

Whenever you know one side of the ball completely, you just know the side of the ball, like, really well and then having to make the transition, it's just mentally kind of frustrating.

Q. How hard is it to just give up on offense?

STEELE CHAMBERS: Looking back on it, I don't think it was that hard. Because I did not really like offense at all. Now that I think about it, I definitely should have been defense from the start. But yeah.

Q. So what do you think your potential will be next year?

STEELE CHAMBERS: I feel like my potential's pretty high. I feel like there's still a lot of stuff I can work on. Definitely just start learning from, like, linebackers from the past and stuff. Definitely work on fundamentals and stuff. But I feel like I got a lot of room to improve.

Q. Have you been looking into this Jim Knowles defense?

STEELE CHAMBERS: Not yet. Got to wait until after the season. Still got to focus on this defense right here we got.

Q. (Question concerning trends from running backs transitioning to linebacker.)

STEELE CHAMBERS: I mean, it's only been two so far. So I wouldn't really call it a trend. But if people want to switch, then make the switch. You can do whatever you want, man.

Q. One of the kind of the evaluations that I saw from you, and maybe what Trayanum can do, is -- Joshua Perry was saying that there's a lot of similarities between the positions; read and react, get somewhere in a hurry, running downhill, making contact. How much of a similarity do you see there?

STEELE CHAMBERS: Oh, that's a good question. How

much similarity would you see?

Q. I thought he made a good point. I mean, I remember --

STEELE CHAMBERS: Like, just instincts and stuff? Is that what you're saying?

Q. When you're trying to read a hole, keys may be similar, linebackers reading the running back, getting into the hole, hitting hard. I mean, I never played it at the level you have. You've played both positions.

STEELE CHAMBERS: I mean, I would personally say linebacker is easier. I feel like there's less leads. Running backs, you got to really -- you got to really see, like, all the holes you can possibly hit.

And linebackers work much more -- more focus key on the running back, maybe, maybe like a tight end. It's just one read, and read and react.

I feel like it's more instinctual at linebacker, where running back you just have to make a lot more reads. You got to know, like, what your lineman's doing exactly. I think it's just a lot harder on the other side of the ball.

Q. You got to be careful.

STEELE CHAMBERS: I'm just curious, man. I've been getting all the questions.

Q. (No microphone.)

STEELE CHAMBERS: No, not really. I think at the end of the day, just got to get him on the ground. Just got to tackle him. I mean, that's really the goal of every defense, tackle the guy with the ball.

So, I mean, if he's 250 pounds, 200 pounds, you just got to get him on the ground no matter what. Really simplify it.

Q. What kind of similarities are you seeing between the Michigan offense and Utah?

STEELE CHAMBERS: Really, just stacking the box and going right at you. Yeah, a lot of similarities as far as, like, the run game. They just come at you downhill. So just got to be prepared for that.

Q. Is there a benefit to getting back on that horse a little bit after what happened in that game, having an opportunity to prove yourselves?

STEELE CHAMBERS: Yeah, I feel like just get the really



bad taste out of your mouth. We've had that taste for -- it feels, like, two months now. I think it's only been like a month so far.

But, yeah, I feel like it's just good to end the season on a good note, really, getting that bad taste out of your mouth after a game like that.

