

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

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Pasadena, California, USA

Utah Utes

Britain Covey

Press Conference



Q. I was thinking about the degree of turnover around the Pac 12 during the course of your college career.

BRITAIN COVEY: Right.

Q. Except at your school.

BRITAIN COVEY: Yeah.

Q. What does the stability that Coach Whittingham, knowing he's there, what has that allowed the program to do?

BRITAIN COVEY: Well, I think it helps in multiple ways. One, of course, recruiting. You know, you can pitch that to recruits and say that it will be the same or a similar coaching staff when you get here.

But I think more than anything, is it helps with the identity of the program. You know, I think the identity of the program kind of takes after its head coach or its coaching staff and if it's constantly changing, it's really hard to maintain that, and you can see how the program's identity is embodied by Coach Whittingham, right, and I think that's a good reason or due to the fact that he's been here for so long.

So I think that helps a lot with the identity of a program.

Q. How do you go from being super excited to being in the Rose Bowl to now getting prepared to winning it?

BRITAIN COVEY: It's kind of like the Bowl game experience, right, knowing how to compartmentalize things and having it be fun when it's fun and work when it's work.

Also just understanding that what you'll remember most about this experience is the game, and so I think that

what's cool is I've played in multiple Bowl games, right. I've played in the Vegas Bowl, Holiday Bowl, Alamo Bowl, you don't need any extra motivation for the guys for the Rose Bowl to get them fired up about it, right. You don't need to be getting on people to try and work harder or watch more film because everyone's already doing it.

Q. With that being said, how cool is it that you're wrapping up the Utah experience after the Rose Bowl?

BRITAIN COVEY: It's unbelievable. That's a big reason why I chose to just say this is my last year because I'm so content with how things have gone, and what better way to go out, right. I'm really excited to put on that Utah uniform one last time. Way emotional about it; I'm a sentimental guy, so I'm excited.

Q. A lot of Utah fans making the trip; how awesome has the fan base been this season?

BRITAIN COVEY: The fan base has been huge. We haven't lost a single game at home. In my whole career, I think I've only lost two games at home and I love that they travel, and California is a great spot for Utah fans. Everyone in Utah loves to come down to California. So if we have more fans here than we do at Rice-Eccles, that's unbelievable.

So I'm excited for that.

Q. How does Cam Rising go from a guy who got beat to leading the Pac 12?

BRITAIN COVEY: I think he's always been that guy. I mean, he was the starting quarterback last year and got hurt in the first quarter, right and then he had to rehab back from a shoulder surgery and he didn't have that zip, you know, in spring because he was rehabbing, or in summer. He missed all of spring ball.

I think part of it was we knew that Charlie was going to be the starter at the beginning of the season, just by default because Cam wasn't ready yet. But he's always been that

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guy, you know, when he's healthy.

Q. We're in Hollywood, kind of. What's your Hollywood ending?

BRITAIN COVEY: My Hollywood ending? Well, I get the girl after I score a game-winning touchdown, and I'm already married, so I guess, you know, she can come down on the field and kiss me after.

Q. When you run on to the field in the Rose Bowl, what do you imagine that's going to be like?

BRITAIN COVEY: Oh, man, I haven't even thought that far into it. I just know that I'm going to be taking in every moment. You know, a lot of the times, I don't let myself indulge in the moment, but because this is my last game, I'm just going to try and feel everything. You know, go out there and appreciate how many people are there, and the atmosphere, what it's like, the history.

So for me, I'm just going to be cherishing every moment and letting myself indulge in it and take it in, I guess.

Q. For Utah to have the first Rose Bowl experience, I know you've played here but what makes it different?-

BRITAIN COVEY: Well, it's really cool to be writing history. A lot of times you kind of look back at things and say, we wrote history, you know. But to be in the middle of it and say we are currently in the process of writing history, that's pretty cool to recognize that as a team.

Q. When you realize that, then does that make you experience it differently? Do you stop and smell the roses? What does that mean?

BRITAIN COVEY: Yeah, that's a healthy balance of saying, we've earned the right to stop and smell the roses a little bit and enjoy our Bowl experience and things like that and then the flip side is, the thing you'll remember most about all of this is the game and the outcome of the game. So you kind of have to be able to balance that.

I think that coaches have done a good job of helping us realize, like you've earned the right to enjoy this time and enjoy this experience and appreciate and take it all, and just play in the game. But also, remember that the thing you'll remember most is the outcome of the game.

Q. What do you see in Ohio State's corners?

BRITAIN COVEY: Yeah, the corners are really good. They play a consistent technique across the board, and I mean, that freshman corner is just a stud. You can tell he's

a ball hawk and got great ball skills. Just really intelligent player, and so you know, their corners are going to definitely present some interesting challenges. I think they are the best corners we faced all year, no doubt in my mind.

I'm excited to see how they play us because we present challenges of our own on offense that are difficult to match up against, and sometimes teams have to adjust how they play because we play three tight ends a lot of times and so you know, where do the corners funnel the receivers to or things like that.

But just as players, their corners are really good.

Q. Is it a challenge to prepare for them since they flipped a lot between two-high and one-high and not necessarily sure --

BRITAIN COVEY: But it's similar to any other team where you look at the team they are playing against, and their strengths and you kind of get a feel for what you think they will do against us.

So I'm curious, I believe they will play a lot of one-high cover three or they will just play one-high man and stack the box a little bit. Because I think they trust their corners and that's a luxury that you have if you trust your corners that you can play some of these coverages. That's what I think they are going to do but who knows.

Q. Man coverage can be a challenge but also an opportunity.

BRITAIN COVEY: Exactly. I think Coach Ludwig puts us in a good position to recognize that early in the game because whatever they are into two high, cover four, one-high man, cover three; if you can recognize what their tendencies are early in the game and then say, okay, we prepared this portion of our Bowl prep was based for this, let's, you know, start throwing this into the mix. And so it's nice to trust your offensive coordinator, I guess is what I'm saying.

Q. What does it take to be an effective punt returner, because that seems to be -- I wouldn't want a team running head strong right into that and yet you excel at it.

BRITAIN COVEY: Oh, well, I think the first thing it takes it courage, right, courage and confidence in catching the ball because that's the first aspect. But then there's a lot of little skills that you build, you know, just things like from the time the ball is snapped to the ball is kicked, it's about 1.8 seconds, and in that time you're looking at the whole line

and who gets down the field fast. Then from the time the punter punts the ball to the time it's at its apex is about two seconds, and that's the two seconds you read where the ball lands. And then it's about 1.5 or to 2 from the apex to the point, or to the ground, and that's when you're using your peripheral -- anyway, so there's a lot of like different tricks that go along with it.

Q. So it's just not: I've got the ball, I'm going to run for daylight?

BRITAIN COVEY: Well, there's definitely an element to that, too. I just don't want to get run over.

Q. What does Cam Rising mean to this team? He can go out there and have those 400-yard games. You've been very successful then and getting off the 1-2 start and beating Oregon twice in three weeks. What does Cam mean?

BRITAIN COVEY: I think Cam is like kind of a symbol for our team in the sense that we had a slow start and we finishing strong, and when he got here, he had a slow start. He got injured the first game last year against USC and battled his way back, didn't play the first three games and now he's finishing strong. They are similar stories.

Q. I've gone up and down the staff roster and it's not like there's one guy for receiver.

BRITAIN COVEY: Totally.

Q. One guy leads in receptions. One guy leads in yards. One guy leads in touchdowns, six or seven deep. Sometimes is that more dangerous because it's not like we are going to put our best corner on this guy and lock him down.

BRITAIN COVEY: Yeah.

Q. And then are we are good everywhere else.

BRITAIN COVEY: I think that there are pros and cons to each style, right. I mean, we are the winningest team in the Pac 12 over the last six years and yet we have had ever in a one-thousand yard receiver in any of those seasons.

So I think that that -- it just shows our identity a little bit, right. We've never been Receiver University, right. Like Ohio State has almost got three guys -- or three guys at a thousand, which is insane.

But they each present their own challenge, and I think that it goes more long with the identity of the challenge that we

are trying to present.

Q. In Big Ten country, everybody looks at Utah, this 2021 team like it's a physical team. Is that your identity?

BRITAIN COVEY: Yeah, I believe it's our identity. I think that's the identity that Coach Whitt has tried to carry throughout his whole career.

Q. Obviously you've been around for a while and you've had your LDS mission in the middle of it. What year did you graduate high school?

BRITAIN COVEY: 2015.

Q. Are you tired of hearing all the old man jokes at this point?

BRITAIN COVEY: Yes, because I am the fifth-oldest on the team. There are multiple guys older than me on the team and I am going to point them out one day.

Q. You certainly have a perspective.

BRITAIN COVEY: For sure.

Q. You're not some 19-year-old kid.

BRITAIN COVEY: Yeah, well, it's cool to look back at my career and realize, you know, how young these people -- these guys I'm playing with actually are, right. So it's fun to feel like the older brother on the team, and I've felt like that the last couple of years.

Q. Getting back to the punt returner thing, what the next step could be, do you think you could be a Swiss Army type of guy at the next level?

BRITAIN COVEY: I believe I can. I think that teams will be surprised at some of my skill sets when I get a chance, because like you said, this isn't a receiver-heavy offense. So I feel like I'm going to be able to prove a lot of things that I can do at the next level, and I know as a punt returner, that that's a key position there, just to even catch the ball.

So that's what I'm hoping someone takes a shot on me for.

Q. We're asking more silly questions.

BRITAIN COVEY: Love it.

Q. First question I've got to ask you, if you had any actor to play yourself in a movie what would it be?



BRITAIN COVEY: It would probably be Tom Holland because my wife says that he reminds her of me.

Q. Wow.

BRITAIN COVEY: That's a compliment. I wish I had -- he's ripped. I don't know if he has any body fat but he's kind of goofy and quirky and like a little kid. So kind of like me. So Tom, if you're watching this, I love you and my wife loves you.

Q. Second question for you, who gets the team the most hyped?

BRITAIN COVEY: Get the team the most hyped? I would probably say when he gets hyped, it's Devin Lloyd for sure because he's just the leader of our team. You know, there's no question in my mind who the leader of our team is, the overall leader, and that's Devin Lloyd.

Q. From last year what would you say the biggest thing or most noticeable thing you've improved on is?

BRITAIN COVEY: For me, the thing I've improved on is injury prevention. I know that's the main thing I focused on this off-season is small muscle groups, shoulders, groins, hip flexors, and so that's kind of what I've been focusing on. That's why I've been able to stay healthy all year.

Q. What does playing in the Rose Bowl mean to you?

BRITAIN COVEY: It's unbelievable. It's everything that when you're breaking the huddle back in March or January, that you're in a work out -- a winter work out or spring ball, you're breaking the huddle with Rose Bowl, because that's kind of your goal.

So it's really cool to have that in mind for such a long time and then to accomplish it. It's just a cool ending to things.

Q. Do you guys feel underrated or overlooked?

BRITAIN COVEY: Coming into the season, I actually felt like, you know, a lot of people have seen, or a lot of people were on our bandwagon and believed in what we could do. What was cool was everybody jumped off it after the first three games of the season when we were figuring things out and it helped us focus in on what was most important and once people wanted to jump back on the bandwagon it was great. Now we said, this is all about us in this room.

Q. Was there one particular thing that finally got you guys on the right track?

BRITAIN COVEY: I think when Cam switched to quarterback, not only did he bring an energy about him, but it also helped us go back to our identity.

Charlie Brewer was a great quarterback but we tried to I think mold to his style a little bit and when Cam came in, it just brought this breath of fresh air. I think the coaches have done a great job of creating an identity for our team, especially our offense and so we present challenges that not many other teams have faced all year. We run three tight ends and that's really difficult to match up against. What do you do, do you put a back in or a nickel in. Being able to have an identity on offense is a big one for us.

Q. You play with a physical presence. How do you match up with Ohio State?

BRITAIN COVEY: Well, Ohio State is both physical and fast, and so I think we have a healthy amount of respect for them if anything, and just understanding that these guys are all, you know, capable. Obviously Ohio State is one of the best teams in the country, year-in and year-out, so not only are they good players playing against top-tier teams, they are going against top-tier talent in practice every day, so they are used to going against physical guys or guys with speed. So it's going to be a challenge.

Q. Are there any concerns the game won't be played due to COVID-19?

BRITAIN COVEY: Those are concerns you don't want to worry about because you don't really have much control of it other than wearing your mask, right. I know it's not fun seeing a lot of other Bowl games canceled but I know this Bowl game means so much to so many people that we are doing everything in our power to keep it.

Q. What precautions is the team taking to ensure there are no out breaks and the game can still be played?

BRITAIN COVEY: It's the same precautions we've kept all year which have kept our team very healthy throughout the season. Obviously wearing masks and things, but just being smart with even fans, like the trainers are very cautious with taking pictures with fans and being around people, maskless, a lot. More than anything, it's the same things we've been doing all year that have kept us healthy.

But the trainers, you know, a lot of the players get annoyed with them but we also appreciate them because they are always driving those.

Q. Has it been tough having interaction with the fans?

BRITAIN COVEY: It has been tough this year. There have

been multiple times where I've been sad because the players have asked me not to go out and take pictures with the fans.

Q. Have you seen a difference with how Utah and California are dealing with the compliances?

BRITAIN COVEY: Yeah, I have. I think they are obviously a little more honed in on it in California and I'm not saying which one is better or worse, but I think there is a different mentality a little bit. And so it's been interesting. You know, we don't have to wear masks in Utah, but in California, you still wear masks.

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