

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

Wednesday, December 29, 2021

Pasadena, California, USA

Ohio State Buckeyes

Jeremy Ruckert

Press Conference

Q. What does this game mean to you, being your last game with the Buckeyes?

JEREMY RUCKERT: It means a lot. Coach Day has talked a lot about the traditions and expectations to play in the Rose Bowl and all the people who came before you. It was a big decision, and playing in this game, it's the Rose Bowl. And I don't want to leave off with a bad note, as we played in the last game. I'm excited to play in the Rose Bowl and I'm excited to play against Utah.

Q. What do you need to do to finish the season on a high note?

JEREMY RUCKERT: We need to play physical. I think we need to play tough. Just trust our training and trust everything we've done in the past month. I think we've practiced well. And I think we're really excited to be out here at the Rose Bowl and go out on a high note.

Q. Some of the guys are going to the NFL and not playing in this game. Why did you decide to play in this game?

JEREMY RUCKERT: Just be with the guys on another month and leave with a strong, good note with the team. I don't have -- nothing wrong with the decision that they made. You've got to respect it. They've got some money on the line.

But for me I wanted to go out on the right note with a bunch of my guys and have one more time putting on the uniform. And the fact that it's the Rose Bowl is very special. That's really what went into it for me.

Q. How do you feel like this season has gone for you personally?

JEREMY RUCKERT: I feel like a lot of ups and downs. I



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learned a lot this year on how to -- never been on a team that's really lost a regular season game. They've gotten stronger because of it. It brought our team together. I think this year was a success because of the fact I was around the guys another year.

I learned from the coaching staff another year about what it's like to just play the game and continuously learn every day. And I think, like I said, I'm really excited for this last game and hopefully be able to go out on a good note.

Q. Does that help preparing for the next level, like, how to overcome adversity this season?

JEREMY RUCKERT: We haven't really had that happen until later in the season since I've been here, where we've kind of done pretty well in the regular season. Never really faced adversity during that and really having to force ourselves to overcome it. Like I said, that's really helped me out as a player personally. And as far as the rest of the guys, the same thing.

Q. Obviously Chris and Garrett aren't going to be playing in this game. Are you hoping maybe that leads to a few more targets for you?

JEREMY RUCKERT: I learned not to hope for anything. Just trust and do whatever you can to help the team, and hopefully good things will happen from there. But just trust the training, trust everything you've been doing to get here. And hopefully, we'll see if something comes my way. But I'm not really worried about that. I'm just worried about winning this game going out on a good note.

Q. How have you seen some of the younger guys step up for these bowl practices?

JEREMY RUCKERT: The talent has always been there for those guys. They're special players. If you're here you're special. But really just seeing them go to work every day and try to get better and really getting put in those stress situations is important for those guys.



We're excited to see how they play. And I'll be helping them the whole way, if they need anything. I'll be there to help those guys.

Q. How have you seen Gee Scott and Joe Royer (indiscernible) impressed over the season?

JEREMY RUCKERT: I think they're doing really well. They're learning the physicality it takes to play tight end here. It's really hard to explain, but it's not easy to just pick up and do it. I had a hard time getting into it. Kind of got thrown into the fire for a little bit.

You have to see how you react. I feel those guys are coming along well. And just the effort and the want-to is there. It's just the fact of putting it on the field which is what they're doing.

Q. I know Cade is still doing cross training, doing stuff at linebacker. What's it like to see him do that, sometimes the tight end and the linebacker?

JEREMY RUCKERT: It's fun, we have a lot of fun in practice going at each other and talking smack. And it's fun seeing him over there. Looks like he's having a great time, and it's kind of natural to play that position. If we need him we'll come over here.

But if he's over there I think he's doing a great job. So we're excited for him and everything that he's got going on. And hopefully he'll make the most of it.

Q. Can you believe this is it this week?

JEREMY RUCKERT: No, it's crazy thinking about it. But it's good to have a little expectation of knowing it's there and not really having to question, like, but no better way to go out than the Rose Bowl, with guys I've been here with my whole career. I'm excited about that and hopefully going out on a good note.

Q. Have you given any thought to not playing this game? I know four guys opting out. Have to be at least some sort of consideration?

JEREMY RUCKERT: Yeah, I'm in a different situation than those guys. Obviously it was a thought. But at the same time I kind of knew at the bottom of my heart I wanted to go out the right way with these guys. I couldn't just get up and leave.

I totally respect those guys for what they decided. They're in a different situation than all of us. Every situation is unique. But for me personally and the people I've been around since I've been here. They've made the right

decision (indiscernible) to play. It goes with who I am, and I'm excited to do it.

Q. Obviously I know that the team goals, didn't reach those. Individually, when you evaluate this year, did it go the way you wanted or not?

JEREMY RUCKERT: There's definitely some things I looked back on and wish I had done some things differently. But I don't regret anything. I don't regret the situation to come back or anything I've done.

But as far as going back and making plays, what I could have done in a game, there's a few that stick out. But personally just another year of the strength program and getting around the guys was important for me. I just wanted to enjoy this last year. Definitely had a great time with these guys. Now that we're here, enjoying the bowl trip, and going out the right way is the forefront of my mind right now.

Q. When you say some of the things, some of the plays, what sticks in your mind that got away from you?

JEREMY RUCKERT: I never really had a drop in a game. I had a few this year. And the opportunity -- you really want to make those plays. And stay up at night thinking about those sometimes.

But at the end of the day you've got to move on and hopefully make the next one. But a few missed blocks that I can think about. That's really all I regret. I think back at plays I could have made that I know I could have helped this team. Looking back at it, it's frustrating. But at the end of the day you can't look back. You've got to look forward. And excited to play Utah and hopefully be able to make those plays in this game.

Q. You've probably been asked this a million times, but now that you're at the end, did the whole experience, becoming the tight end and the (indiscernible), did that match up to your expectations and then the reality?

JEREMY RUCKERT: I knew going in it wasn't going to be easy. And I don't want it to be easy. I knew it was going to be hard. And it was really hard. Every day our unit, we're held accountable, and I never missed a practice. I never missed anything. I've always tried to be there for everybody, be there for my team.

Physically it was super taxing and super hard, but that's why you play the game. That's why I love the game. It's super challenging. I'm excited to see what my future holds

because of the days I put in at this program.

I don't regret anything. Only thing I regret is a few times I know I could have made a play where I didn't. And it doesn't sit well with me. But as far as my experience here and my time here, I feel like I've developed into a better man, a better player. I can't wait to see what's next.

Q. Having a tight end conversation, if you didn't talk about targets for this game. With Chris and Garrett out seems like it's got to be a tight end game, right?

JEREMY RUCKERT: We don't really talk about that. I don't want to jinx anything, do anything. But, like I said, hopefully if it comes my way I'll be able to make a play. And we've been training for that this whole month, some opportunities might open up.

But at the end of the day just treat it like another game and just play every play individually and not think ahead. And hopefully we'll come out on top and end it the right way.

Q. Has K.W. [phonetic] had to cover you this month?

JEREMY RUCKERT: We've gone against each other in practice a lot. He loves it over there, seems like he's home over there, back where he belongs. And practices are fun with us going at it talking smack good to see him enjoying it again. He loved playing tight end but I think linebacker is really where he wants to be. And we're excited to see that. And hopefully these young tight ends can step up because they're doing a great job.

Q. Do you think you'll lose him there permanently?

JEREMY RUCKERT: I don't know. I don't know. He loves it there. And we're happy to see it. We'll see.

Q. We were talking to Thayer about the final game. At what point do you get nostalgic? Is that after the game? Do you think about it at all?

JEREMY RUCKERT: Getting out here you get the feeling of it. It's good, the fact that you know it's your last game and you're not going in questioning it. I think you have to prepare a little bit more.

But like I said before, just looking back on my time here and all the work we've put in and how hard it was, it just makes you realize how blessed you are to be here and truly appreciate the time and this last game we're about to play.

The preparation and all the hard work that we've put in is all going to be put into this game. We're just excited, too,

and hopefully go out the right way.

Q. Every year you talk about who is going. Who is coming back? Who are some of the young guys you look at and say, the program is in good shape?

JEREMY RUCKERT: I think the standard that's been set since I got here, since way before I've been here, as the older guys it's our job to show it to the younger guys.

I think with COVID last year it was a little tough for those younger guys, they didn't get the full workout, all season training that we usually do, just the normal things, the little details, because of COVID you couldn't really do it.

This year it was tough to try to get that back on track. And I think we've done a pretty good job of that. And all the guys coming back in my class, and the older guys, the younger classes, they will do a great job of continuing that standard and continuing the legacy of playing at Ohio State and being a dude here.

Q. As one of the few guys who have been in this venue, what do you remember about that past team and what...

JEREMY RUCKERT: I remember walking out on that field and seeing the sunset over the mountains. It was beautiful and breathtaking and super cool.

Now we're coming back, four years later, and I'm more of a crucial part of the offense and this team. And I only got to play a little bit last time I was here. I'm just excited to get out there and just take in the whole moment and then just lock back in and play the game.

It's kind of what separates this place from everywhere else, is just the atmosphere and the week leading up to it and how beautiful the scenery it is and the traditions that have been played on that field, is exciting for me and I can't wait to go out that way.

Q. This will be your last game. Did you ever think you could come back, everybody could use like that extra challenge?

JEREMY RUCKERT: Hadn't really been a thought. I knew going into this season this would be it. And trying to leave everything out on the field. Never really was a thought of coming back. I just wanted to focus on this year and hopefully what's coming next. So hasn't really been a thought about that.

Q. How do you think this year coming back (inaudible)?

JEREMY RUCKERT: I think it's really fortunate to put myself in a leadership role, especially in my unit. We had those older guys from my unit the whole three years I had been there before this year. It really forced me into a position of leadership, which was good for me. I think I learned a lot about myself, a lot about what it takes to lead guys.

I think I've done a pretty good job of it and hopefully I've left those guys with something they can remember and something they can set a standard for in the future.

Q. It's a really young room here. (Indiscernible) COVID years, (indiscernible) development. Even guys like Gee Scott and (indiscernible), tight end. Where have you seen guys like him grow a lot?

JEREMY RUCKERT: Like I said before, playing tight end at Ohio State is -- not only is it so physically taxing on your body, so hard, but mentally and schematically. You have to be at your A game so many times because we're doing so many different jobs.

I think the big thing, when you're transitioning to tight end, especially for me, was just being able to know everything you've got to do, know all your techniques and know all your assignments and be able to know it so well you can play it full speed. Because that's the biggest thing, if you're thinking too much when you're playing, it doesn't really help you. You start to miss little things, forget little details, can put you behind the 8-ball.

But I feel at the end of the day, those guys are coming along so well. As an older guy, I feel it's my responsibility to help them in the way and lead them in the right direction.

And if they're doing that, they'll get a lot of opportunities in this game to show that.

Q. Seems like you personally have a lot of responsibilities (inaudible) block and not having Chris and Garrett in the back game, need to be (inaudible) - have you seen this game, as obviously a tight end you do a lot, but especially with the matchup?

JEREMY RUCKERT: Yeah, I mean, their defense is very stout. We knew that going in, watching tape every day about them. And their linebackers are really good. Their D linemen are really good.

We're excited to go against those guys. And in order to win this game, we know we will have to run the ball. The best way to go into a game is to show your opponents some respect.

And if you don't respect your opponents and you are not going to take them seriously -- we truly respect them, respect everything they've done this year. They've had a great season. We know when we're going to get into that game, it's going to be physical and tough. And we'll run the ball. I think that's what's important. And what we're stressing over here is that we can't get pushed around. We've got to do our jobs and hopefully if we do that we'll end up the right way.

Q. When you say their defense is stout, what stands out the most when you watch them on film?

JEREMY RUCKERT: Their two linebackers are really good. They're really fast and physical. They're always in the right place. Just really being able to understand their tendencies. And where they like to go around on the field is important for the tight ends, where we fit our blocks, and hopefully in the pass game.

And just knowing what we're going up against is important for us. And when you get out there, anticipating versus reacting is important.

So the more tape you can watch, the more we can understand your opponent, the better you can play.

Like I said, it all goes back to the respect that we have for those guys and that we know we're going into a game where if we're not on our A game we can get hit right in the face. We're excited for that. Like I said before, we can't wait to put it to the test.

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