

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

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Pasadena, California, USA

Utah Utes

Nephi Sewell

Press Conference

Q. How was the prepping? You know, you guys had to practice back home and then, obviously, practicing here, but now you guys are at Disney Land and doing some other team activities. How has it been trying to balance, stay focus, while also having a little bit of fun?

NEPHI SEWELL: I think that's one of the main things we told everyone before going on break, You know, when it's time to work, come to work and when it's time to have fun, you can have fun.

But, really, what about practice, we just got to really hone into what we're trying to accomplish here. Because at the end of the day, we're trying to win a football game. And that's probably, like, the main part of the trip.

You know, we're doing all these fun things, but at the end of the day, all you're going to remember is the game. So try to tell everyone how important it is to stay focus even throughout all these activities.

Q. So you guys have had, you know, almost a month to prep for these guys. What are you seeing as you're looking at their offense now? Because it seems like -- you guys are probably constantly watching film on them and just trying to tighten up everything, right?

NEPHI SEWELL: You know, an explosive offense, basically. You know, watching Ohio State, they have a big O-line, and they have great running backs, and then, obviously, the wide receiver core that helps their offense. It's definitely a challenge for us, but we're excited for it.

Q. Does things change knowing that Olave and Garrett Wilson are not playing in the game?

NEPHI SEWELL: Kind of. You know, a university like Ohio State, you know, they have that four/five star guys.



When you look at our roster, there's not really much four/five stars like some of these.

But, you know, I'm sure those people are who are going to step up are excited for the game and we're excited for it.

Q. Somebody who has been a part of this legacy, what's it like for you to come into this game and be a part of the Rose Bowl?

NEPHI SEWELL: I'm very grateful for the, you know, the opportunity to be here. I'm glad we came together as a team and made a strong push to finish the season.

I'm just really grateful. You know, I didn't know much about the Rose Bowl until Penei got to play in it I think two years ago. And now I'm here and I'm just taking advantage of the whole opportunity.

Q. Did he give you any advice or any secrets about what it's like to play in here?

NEPHI SEWELL: He was basically just saying treat it like another game. You know, at the end of the day, you're just playing football. And just stay calm and play my game.

Q. When you look back at this team and kind of all the ups and downs you guys have gone through, is there any one moment that'll stand out to you as, Hey, this is the moment that we all clicked?

NEPHI SEWELL: I think it was our team meeting -- well, our player-team meeting after the passing of Aaron.

We had a team meeting and kind of discussed how we want to be remembered. You know, obviously, it wasn't the start we wanted, but that didn't affect what our goal was. And our goal was to win the PAC 12.

And I think in that moment when we all came together and shared what we think, what tying with every one of us and what we do, that's where we all clicked together.



Q. (No microphone.)

NEPHI SEWELL: Yeah, it was good. At the same time, I couldn't really enjoy our wins just because my brother played for them.

And, you know, on a family aspect, the things -- you want to see everyone in your family win. But on the other aspect for, like, my teammates and the whole program, you know, I was happy for everyone just because, you know, we all came together and made it happen.

Q. What's it like representing Utah in its first Rose Bowl appearance?

NEPHI SEWELL: It means a lot. You know, Utah is one of the schools that I actually wanted to come to out of high school but I wasn't presented the opportunity at the time.

But here I am now and just trying to show everyone what our culture is at Utah football and also trying to show that we can compete with other teams.

Q. Your brother, obviously, had success against Ohio State.

NEPHI SEWELL: Yep.

Q. What has he told you about that game and has he given you any tips about Ohio State?

NEPHI SEWELL: He basically just told me to play my game. You know, try not to do more than what my assignment is. Also, you know, just keep continuing to play, despite how the game goes. You know, just like any other game.

He's a bigger body, so he was, like, The O-line men are pretty good. But for me, you know, I actually got to try extra hard to take on the O-line. But, basically, he just said play the game.

Q. Were you able to watch that game at all? He had a pretty big game.

NEPHI SEWELL: Yeah, so -- who we were playing -- who we were playing?

Q. It was the second game.

NEPHI SEWELL: Oh, yeah. So we were going to play BYU. We were in the mail room. I was watching it. I think that was the game he also got a stinger when he hit Olave, I'm pretty sure.

But, you know, they put on a great game against Ohio State. And hopefully we can do the same thing.

Q. (No microphone.)

NEPHI SEWELL: Clark?

Q. Yeah.

NEPHI SEWELL: Oh, a lot. That man, when he first -- I think I was one of the first people he met on his official visit. I told -- was he committed to Ohio State at the time?

Q. Yeah.

NEPHI SEWELL: All right. And I was, like, a lot of places don't feel the same like this at Utah. At the end of the day, it's your decision. I just know over here, you can make an immediate impact and that -- we'll all treat each other like family.

But, you know, having Clark come in, being an early enrollee, you know, has played a lot into his role, into this team.

You know, he's considered one of the leaders on this team, despite how young he is. He carries himself very well, does extra work, and then tries to bring a lot of the younger guys along, as well.

Q. Devin plays like he doesn't want anybody else on the team to get a tackle.

NEPHI SEWELL: Hey, that's just the relentless aspect of our defensive culture, you know? Devin's always going to give 100 percent -- 110 percent. Even if it's not his assignment, he'll always give more.

Q. What's it like to finish your career after your journey, which has been a crazy, wild one, to be able to finish it with your brothers at this game against this team?

NEPHI SEWELL: It's a blessing. You know, reflecting on my whole journey, especially within the last week or two with my family, making my decision. It's been a long time coming. But can't help but smile throughout it all, you know?

And ups and downs, just like everything in this world, nothing's ever going to be perfect. But just grateful to be here and end it off with, I guess, the Granddaddy of them all, they would say.

Q. When you made your decision to come to Utah,



was something like this what you had in mind?

NEPHI SEWELL: Definitely. When I told my dad when I entered the transfer portal, I want to play for a championship team. You know, I felt like that's what I had envisioned my whole college football career, playing for a championship game and playing for a big bowl game. And here we are.

Q. So what are your impressions of Ohio State as you watch them? I know you've seen them on tape. But what stands out?

NEPHI SEWELL: Great O-line. You know, big bodies. Quarterback's very good. I'm pretty sure he was, like, a Heisman candidate.

Yeah, very good. Explosive offense just in general. Good running backs. Great wide receiver core, obviously. And then, you know, just all together, a great offense, really.

Q. You think it's the best offense you guys have played this year?

NEPHI SEWELL: Probably -- most definitely. I would say most definitely. They got a lot of pieces over there.

Q. (No microphone.)

NEPHI SEWELL: No, not really. Because, like, the University of Ohio State, they have a bunch of four/five star athletes.

You know, I'm sure those four star/five star athletes are, like, ready for their opportunity. So I wouldn't change our prep in any way. Because those kids have been waiting their turn. And I'm sure they'll take advantage of their opportunities.

Q. Thank you.

NEPHI SEWELL: Yep.

Q. So what's it like to finally be here? I know you guys took your pictures the other day. I mean, has it sunk in that you're at the Rose Bowl and ready to go Saturday?

NEPHI SEWELL: Yeah, it's a surreal moment being here. Never really thought it would be this big. But being here, it's definitely sunk in. It's just been a blessing to be here. And I'm excited as the week goes on, closer and closer to the game.

Q. How important now is that, to switch it over and

now get ready to actually win this thing?

NEPHI SEWELL: Very important. That was the main thing we were here for, is to win the football game. Despite all the activities we've gone through, we always emphasized, At the end of the day, we're here to win a game.

Q. Defensively, you guys have been good. Injured a lot with some players at different positions, like yourself a little bit. But how -- what was the key of this defense to really perform at the level you guys needed to this season?

NEPHI SEWELL: I think it's, really, everyone owning their 20 square feet. Not doing more than what they're asked for. You know, in our defense, you have an assignment. And, usually, if everyone does their assignment, even though we may not make a play, the play will happen.

I think everyone is selfless. You know, no one wants -- everyone -- well, no one wants -- like, if someone else makes a play, everyone is happy, you know? And at the end of the day, that's what we're doing.

Q. (No microphone.) And it's sometimes bigger than football, right?

NEPHI SEWELL: Nah, it for sure is. For sure it is.

Q. Does that make it even more cool, to be here -- I mean, not that your brother didn't want to be here, but, you know, the fact that this is such a great thing and an accomplishment for the Utes with you guys being here for the first time in history.

NEPHI SEWELL: Yeah, for sure. All my family's excited. Tickets was a big problem for my family. But got the main people that are coming.

But, you know, everyone's excited. After that game, I told my brother, You know, you're one of the best linebackers in college football, no reason to put your head down. You've accomplished a lot throughout the season and you're only going to get better. But to be here, it's definitely exciting for me and my family.

Q. Well, let me ask you this: We're in Hollywood where they write the screenplays and Hollywood endings. What's the -- you've had some big moments at Utah, pick six, things like that, what's your Hollywood ending in the Rose Bowl? If you could create whatever scenario --

NEPHI SEWELL: My Hollywood ending? I guess it would just be on the podium holding that trophy at the end, you

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

know? Regardless of my stats or anything, as long as we're up there as a team, I think that'll be a Hollywood ending to me.

Q. What's the first thing that jumps out about them when you watched them on film?

NEPHI SEWELL: Their run game and the passing game, and the play of their O-line. Kind of everything. You know, great offense, very explosive. And I'm excited for the challenge ahead.

Q. That challenge; I think they're, like, the number one scoring team in the nation. How much do you look forward to that?

NEPHI SEWELL: A lot. You know, these are the type of teams, as a defense, you would want to face to really test your culture against their culture, you know? You know, really see how you hold up against a good team in the whole nation, basically.

Q. Do you look at what Oregon did to them and what you guys did to Oregon, and do you correlate the two?

NEPHI SEWELL: Kind of. You know, the game was kind of early in the season. I'm sure they caught fire as the season went on. So tendencies have shown up throughout the season with the amount of film we've all gotten.

Definitely could use a sprinkle or two just on how I play with my linebacker play. But it was kind of too early of a game to consider what I could change.

Q. But when, you know, you see the number one scoring team in the nation, the number one total offense, but then you're, like, Yeah, but we see what Oregon was doing, does that give you confidence that numbers only mean so much?

NEPHI SEWELL: Kind of. You know, Oregon faced -- just like everyone throughout college football, they faced some injuries. But, you know, just basically playing our game and staying calm throughout the game should be good.

Q. And then what's it like winning the PAC 12 and making it to the Rose Bowl?

NEPHI SEWELL: I guess, a good -- a great story ending. You know, not many people have the opportunity to play at this beautiful bowl game. You know, it's been a blessing to be out here. Just grateful, really.

Q. What did you think of the helmets?

NEPHI SEWELL: Oh, I love them. I knew we were going to wear our throwbacks, but I didn't know what helmets we were going to wear. And then they came up with the new logo, and I was, like, Oh, that's good to know, we don't get to see what we're wearing until later -- I guess when everyone gets to see us. Nah, I love my jersey, I love the helmets.

Q. Will you be able to keep them?

NEPHI SEWELL: They will say no, but I'm going to say yes.